

SS

CASTLES & CRUSADES[®]

OF THE HORNED GOD'S WINTER



STEPHEN CHENAULT

CASTLES & CRUSADES

OF THE HORNED GOD'S WINTER

BY STEPHEN CHENAULT WITH TODD GRAY

EDITOR: STEVE EGE

FRONT COVER: PETER BRADLEY INTERIOR ART: PETER BRADLEY, JASON WALTON, BRYAN SWARTZ

ART DIRECTION/ CARTOGRAPHY: PETER BRADLEY



1818 North Taylor, #143, Little Rock, AR, 72207

email: troll@trolllord.com

website: www.trolllord.com or

www.knightsofthecrusade.com

©2021 Troll Lord Games. All Rights Reserved. Castles & Crusades® is a registered Trademark of Chenault & Gray Publishing LLC, d/b/a Troll Lord Games. SIEGE Engine™ is Trademark of Chenault & Gray Publishing LLC, d/b/a Troll Lord Games. Amazing Adventures™ is a Trademark of Jason Vey. The Troll Lord Games, Castles & Crusades, SIEGE Engine, Troll Lord Games logos are Trademarks of Troll Lord Games. The Amazing Adventures logo is Trademark Jason Vey. All Rights Reserved. 2021.

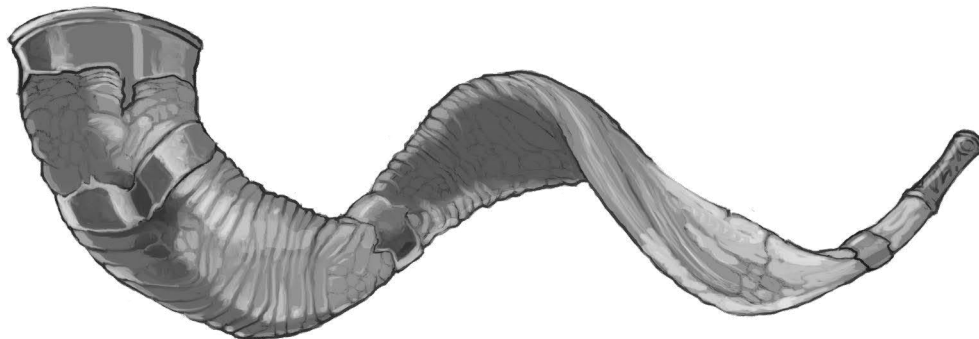
Art, artwork, cover art, cartography is copyright Peter Bradley of Ravenchilde Illustrations, 2021 or Troll Lord Games. All Rights Reserved. All content copyright 2021 Troll Lord Games. All Rights Reserved.

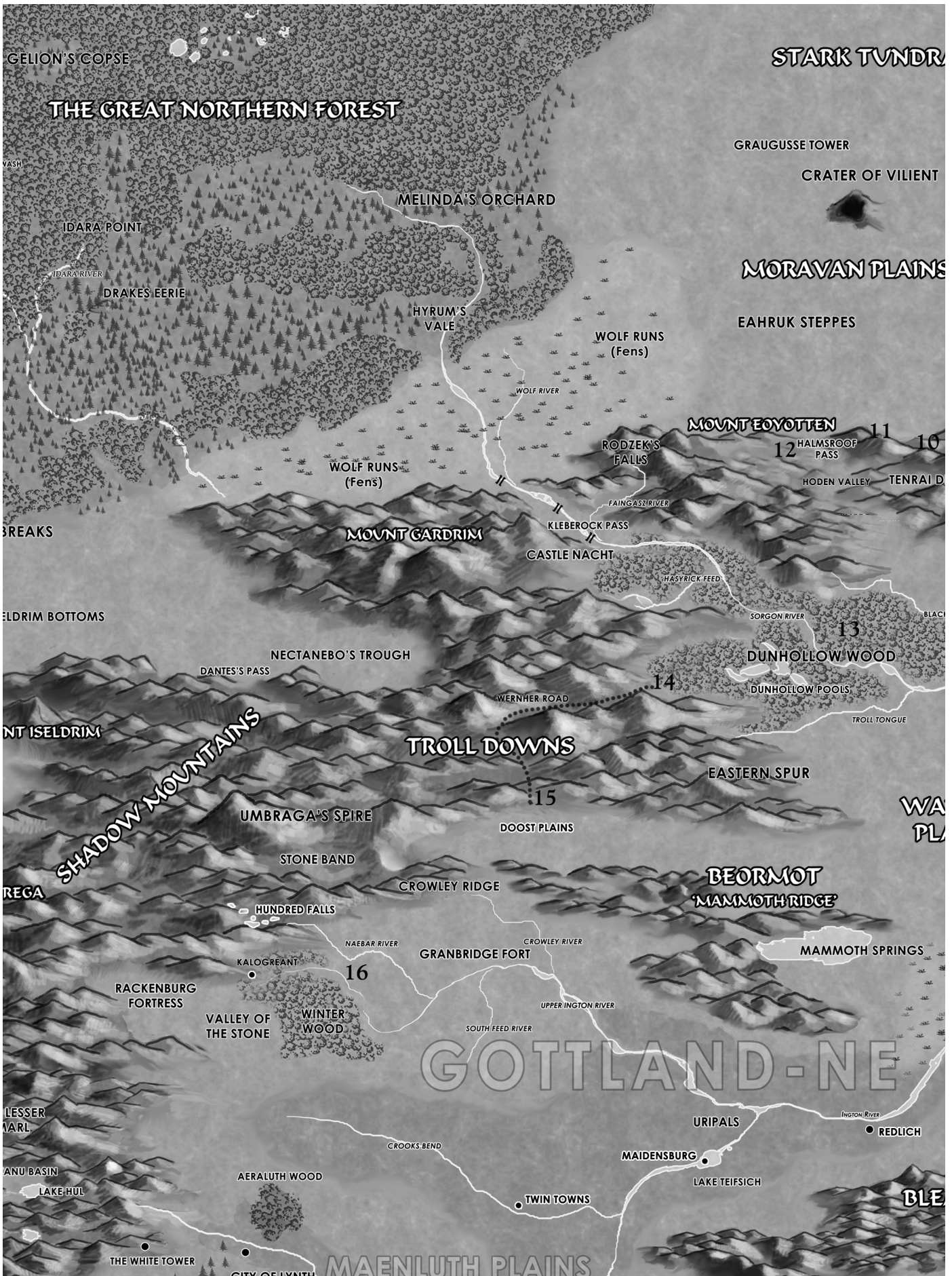
Printed in the United States of America



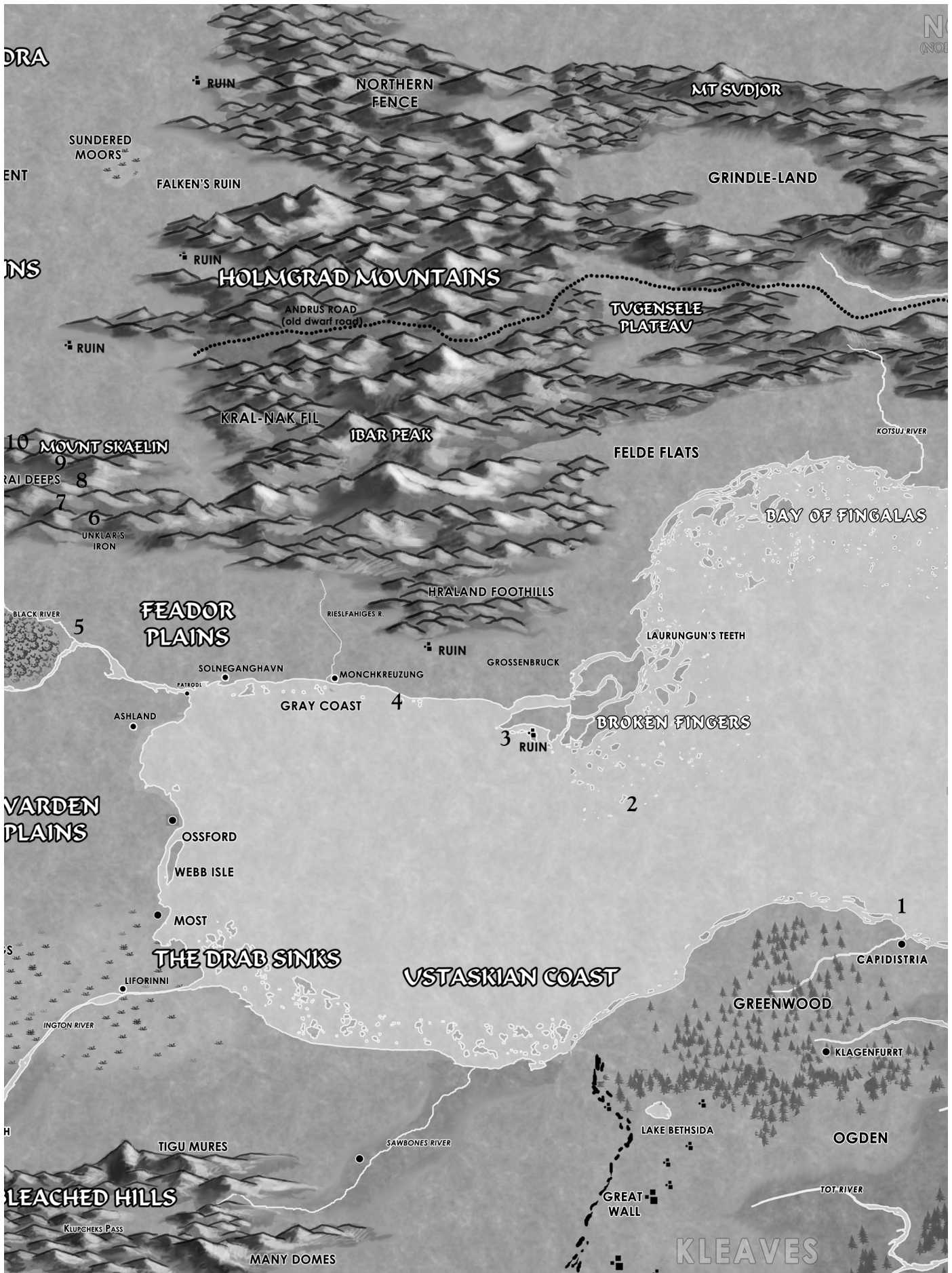
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
1 HARBORS FOUL	7
2 RAGE OF VANDEYA	12
3 HOLFGAR'S HOWE	15
4 DWARVES IN THE SAND	18
5 IZARIAN'S PARAMOUR	20
6 HEIGAR'S WAY	31
7 BARREN STONE	33
8 GOLDEN THREADS	36
9 JUNLUTH'S HOUSE	38
10 OVER CHASMS DEEP	39
11 THE LONG STAIR	42
12 HALMSROOF PASS	46
13 INTO THE DUNHOLLOW	52
14 ANDRUS ROAD	56
15 DOOST PLAINS	64
16 OF THE HORNED GODS WINTER	67
OGL	71





4 CASTLES & CRUSADES



INTRODUCTION

Rune Lore presents over a dozen adventures and encounter areas originally designed to help introduce the Rune Mark, as presented in the already published Adventurers Backpack and the magical spell runes into your game. It is not necessary to play a rune mark to use and enjoy the adventures. The adventures take place in the Gottland-Ne, the Land without Gods, (see **Codex of Aihrde Expansion: Gottland**, in the world of Aihrde (see the **Codex of Aihrde**). However, they are easy to transport to other locales in the world of Aihrde, or even to other worlds and settings.

These adventures are designed for low to mid-range level characters. The CK should adjust the numbers of monsters or their hit points as needed to make each adventure more, or less, difficult. They are written and laid out to allow a continuous flow of adventure from the first to the last; however, if the CK desires, most of them stand independently, allowing the CK to use them in no particular order.

For those Castle Keepers who wish to follow a linear adventure path, they should play the adventures in the order that they are presented in this book. The

HARBOR'S FOUL: A city adventure that embroils the characters in the machinations of a local thieves guild and begins their voyage on the Inner Sea. Town and sea adventure involved.

RAGE OF VANDEYA: This sea adventure is designed to break up the sea voyage. It takes place on a small island dominated by a castle and involves encounters with the undead.

HOLFGAR'S HOWE: Having met the ghost of Holfgar in the previous adventure the characters stumble upon his burial tomb built into the cliffs of the Gray Coast.

DWARVES IN THE SAND: Putting in for water for the ship, brings the party into a deadly encounter with a monster of the old world. Some overland.

IZARIAN'S PARAMOUR: A longer adventure that involves some village encounters and entering a stronghold that is a hold out of the Unklarian forces. Some sea, overland, and dungeon adventure involved.

HEIGAR'S WAY: This adventure is set on the footsteps of the Holmgrad Mountains and introduces the party to the mountain terrain to come.

BARREN STONE: This adventure finds the characters traveling on a section of trail that snakes along the top of a large ridgeline with little or no shelter.

GOLDEN THREADS: The encounter takes place along the hills or slopes of any mountains. It involves the characters discovering a small waterfall, behind which is a cavern filled with the debris of the ancient world.

JUNLUTH'S HOUSE: The encounter takes place along the Dwarven Road that winds through the spur of the Holmgrad

Mountains. This encounter should allow the characters to rest and refit their gear and also allow them to learn the early teachings, if such is necessary, of the Rune Lore.

OVER CHASMS DEEP: The encounter takes place along an old dwarven track that winds through the Long Spur and over a deep chasm watched over by the dogs of Unklar.

THE LONG STAIR: This adventure takes place upon the eastern slopes of Mount Skaelin. Following the adventure path from Over Chasm Deep, the characters encounter a long winding stair that climbs up the cliffs of a mountain pitting them against the elements and their masters.

HALMSROOF PASS: This encounter area follows the Long Stair and takes the characters into the high mountains overlooking the long Greenbriar Valley. This encounter is longer and more involved with a clear set up for the characters to be captured by frost giants. It involves an elaborate dungeon.

INTO THE DUNHOLLOW: Leaving the mountains and entering the Gottland the characters find themselves upon the banks of the Sorgon River where they encounter a rune mark of some skill. But their purpose lies further into the Dunhollow where a druid of some might requires aid.

ANDRUS ROAD: This encounter involves travel through the long Tugensele Valley; here an old Dwarven Road, the Andrus Road, begins and follows the length of the valley. The Adventurers must pit their wits against monsters, weather, and terrain to negotiate the road and bring themselves safely out of the Warden Plains and on the road to the Winter Wood.

DOOST STEPPES: This encounter is set for higher-level characters. It involves travel over broad plains that stand between the Shadow Mountains and the Mammoth Ridge. Overland adventure with some strange encounters.

OF THE HORNED GOD'S WINTER: An overland adventure that finds the characters in league with (or against) another druid, sister to the one from Dunhollow, and fighting battles against trolls and other creatures.

THE TREES OF THE GOTTLAND

Lonely things, these dead husks stand with feet firmly rooted to the ground. Folks say that these are none other than the souls of dead trolls. As is common knowledge, trolls do not die like mortals, but live on until their life's evil deeds weigh them down, planting them to the ground. The most ancient of Trolls, though they speak, cannot move for the weight of their own evil deeds. It is known to the wise that trolls are in fact the spirits of evil trees that walked the world in the Days before Days.

The Trolls, the tales relate, are really the manifestations of the souls of those evil trees and when a troll dies, the twisted tree's souls rise to feed upon the corpse, to grow again into the trees of yesteryear. Around the base of the "Gottland Trees" grow small patches of violet flowers, and when pulped into a mush and used as a salve they can heal wounds (1d4 per treatment).

6 CASTLES & CRUSADES

1 HARBORS FOUL

The encounter takes place in the busy port city of Capidistria. This city can be placed on any coastal region in the Aihrde setting. Capidistria lies upon the southern shores of the Inner Sea, in the Hanse City States. Harbors Foul serves as a kick-off for the overall Rune Lore adventures, that eventually lead the characters into the wilds of the Gottland. If the CK desires the adventure can be moved to any locale, including the towns of Most and Ossford in the Gottland. Otherwise, it ends with sea voyage that brings them to the Gottland.

Note: The sea voyage is designed to allow some passage of time in order for the characters to study the retrieved stone.

Brewel, a seasoned halfling rogue and thief, slips a rune stone into the pocket of one of the characters; his goal is to get the stone into the town secretly. Once there his compatriot, watching from the wall above, attempts to steal it from the character's pocket to sell it to Mendlethrone, a sage who lives on the Harbor. The rune stone is an Aihrdian Rune Sepll. Their hope is to use the characters as mules, knowing that they themselves will be thoroughly searched as they enter the town, as both Brewel and his companion Sal are being watched by the local thieves' guild, Muddles Inc.

True to form, Muddles is watching the two would-be rogues and the item is seen being slipped into the character's pocket. They naturally assume the party is in cahoots with the two rogue thieves and set up to get the item back. On sudden, the party finds itself in a war with a powerful rogues' guild and little hope but to fly north.

The city gates stand open before you, and before them a great press of people and livestock jam the cobbled way, attempting to get into the city before the portcullis drops and evening sets in. Braying mules, barking dogs, grumblng traders, layabouts, and bums all try to squeeze past the guards and walls to the safety of the city. In the midst of the chaos are the city guards. Hard bitten men, wearing a variety of armor and carrying different arms. Several sport a tattoo of a sword upon their forearm, marking them as members of the Cult of the Swords. Capidistria opens her arms to you, welcoming you to her bosom.

OPENING GATES

As the party approaches the main gate, they may notice a small figure (CL 8) wrapped in a loose-fitting, faded blue cloak. His small stature is lost in the folds of the garment and he leans heavily upon what appears to be a wooden staff. He stands out from the crowd of tradesmen, farmers, and shop keepers; his posture is stout and his face bears deep furrows of a man well-versed in the windy steppes.

The man is a halfling by the name of Brewel. He is an outcast and well-known thief; he lingers here upon the edge of town because he has been targeted by the local thieves' guild, Muddles Inc., and cannot easily enter the town, something



he desperately desires, for he has stumbled upon a *rune stone* and wishes to sell it to a local sage, Mendlethrone. To do this he has placed his trusted companion, Sal, upon the wall and instructed him to watch out, for he intends to make a 'mule' of some passing strangers. Once the mule has been chosen, Brewel drops the rune stone in one of the mule's pockets; it is Sal's task to steal the stone back and sell it. Sal is stationed on the wall above, watching carefully.

No fools, the local guild, Muddles Inc. watches both Sal and the halfling. They control the gate guards and the Captain is on their payroll; this is why Brewel and his henchman are always being searched.

When the party finds itself in the crush of people moving to get into the gate, and it is always a crush with the guards hurrying people through, Brewel moves past them. He chooses a character with an obvious pocket, pouch, back pack, satchel, or anything else where he can drop the stone and Sal might have a decent change to pull back out.

It will be difficult for the party to notice the fellow in the crush, but if they are keeping careful watch on those around them, they might single him out with a successful wisdom check (CL 7). Once Brewel has marked his target, he drops the stone in the pocket. The unsuspecting victim might notice the slight move (CL 9), but Brewel is a skilled and seasoned rogue.

If they succeed and notice him attempting to do something, they might search but will find nothing stolen. Brewel apologizes for the bump and moves on with them to the gates, helping to push them through. If they talk to him, he is very friendly, telling them where they should go to drink, etc.

It will be extremely difficult to stop and search their packs; doing so will interrupt the crowd and many people around the party push back, shout, and call for the characters to move out of the way. This draws the attention of the guards who wade through the crowd and order the characters off the road or to move forward.

If they break from the line and find the stone, the gates soon close. Brewel has vanished and Sal is forced to hang out on the walls and watch them a little longer. In short, nothing changes. If they discover the stone Sal still attempts to steal it back after they enter the town.

Sal makes his move as soon as he sees the party pass through the gate. He clammers down and begins following them.

Long shadows cast by the buildings and setting sun greet the character's entry. Beyond the gate the city opens up to a broad, cobbled thoroughfare, where stone houses line the street. People crowd the way on both sides. A long run of filthy liquid flows down the street's center. Shops hang their wares out and people lean out of doors or windows watching the busy traffic, shouting at passers-by, hanging out laundry, dumping latrine buckets, etc.

UNFORTUNATE SAL

Sal attempts to pick-pocket the characters, stealing back the stone. Muddles Inc. strikes at the same time, fearing if he gets the stone, they will lose him in the crowd. A well-thrown knife strikes Sal in the back and he lurches into whichever party member carries the stone. With a gurgle he stumbles forward, dying in that character's arms, mumbling the name Mendlethrone. He says it three times.

"MURDER!" screams the Muddles man. **"GUARDS! GUARDS! COME QUICK! MURDER!"**

Men and women scramble from you, fleeing to doors and sidewalks. Guards from the gate look up, scanning through the crowd, attempting no doubt to see who has done what. In the midst of the chaos someone moves in front of you. "Follow me now if you wish to live!" He slips into the crowd and up a side street, beckoning the characters to follow.

In the utter chaos, no one knows who has done what. The body hits the ground and guards begin shouting. People are running to and fro, pulling carts and whatnots from the street. Shouts, curses, slamming doors, and all manner of bedlam cascade down upon the street. Whether the characters follow the man into the side street or await the guards, it makes no difference to the Muddles people. The man trying to lure the party off the street is a Muddles Man and the local constable is controlled by Muddles.

8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Regardless of what the characters do, they are in for a fight.

The man leading them down a side street brings them down several winding streets and into an courtyard where four toughs stand.

Note: If the characters wait in the street for the guards they are escorted, with weapons, down this same street, told that they are going to talk to the local constable. They are led to the same court yard.

If the party flees and attempts escape into the city, they should wind up in the courtyard.

ROGUES, 5 (*These chaotic evil men are 1st level rogues whose vital statistics are LV 1, HP 5, AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with swords and clubs for 1d6 points of damage. They can attack from behind with a +4 bonus to attack and doing double damage. They have leather armor, swords, or clubs. They may also have daggers; each carry 4 gp on them.*)

The rogues fight to the death until only one is left; this one attempts to flee or surrenders. He is more than willing to talk in exchange for his life, and tells the characters that he and his fellow rogues were told to kill them and take some "magical stone" from them. He doesn't know what the stone does, but if pressed about it he mentions that a sage down at the Harbor has dealings with such stones. He runs a shop called Mendlethrone's Rarities.

A search of the packs reveals the loose rune stone, a small piece of crystalline talc with a rune emblazoned upon it. It is clearly magical, reeking of it.

Meanwhile, the rogue who slew Sal follows the pack of characters from the rooftops. He watches the fight. If it goes badly for his men, he attempts to figure out what the characters are going to do.

ALL ROADS TO THE HARBOR

Now it is up to the characters to figure out what to do. They have not been spotted or singled out, nor are they under any threat of being seized for Sal's murder. They can go to Mendlethrone to see what he might know, or they can move out and about in the town or find some other track to follow.

CAPIDISTRIA

Capidistria sits upon the southern shores of the Inner Sea, its sprawling streets and jumbled houses walled by a 14-foot stone fence, complete with catwalks and towers. The harbor too is protected, a large jetty extending out beyond the quays and into the sea, keeping ships safe from both pirates and surging seas. Here merchants vie for power with one another, waging wars of the pocket book alongside clandestine battles of murder and assassination.

Capidistria is a clean town with cobbled, albeit narrow streets; neighborhoods and districts are divided by frequent archways that are often topped by catwalks, making a virtual second level

to the city proper. Much of this construction is the handiwork of the Stone Masons, the most powerful of the guilds in the town.

CAPIDISTRIA

Total Population: 8000+/-

Human: 7000+/-

Orc: 0 +/-

Hobgoblin: 0 +/-

Gnome: 450 +/-

Halfling: 200 +/-

Dwarf: 250 +/-

Elf: 50 +/-

GOVERNMENT: Capidistria is ruled by an oligarchy of guilds; the Stone Masons' Guild, the Fishmongers, the Weavers' Guild, the Shipwright Guild, and the Ironmongers' Guild ("Blacksmiths"). The Fishmongers are controlled by Muddles Inc., the Thieves' Guild. Capidistria is also part of the League of Free Cities and as such sends representatives to the League Congress; each guild is afforded one representative.

MILITARY: The city has no standing army, but does employ, through the Guilds, over 200 members of the Cult of the Swords. This warriors' guild supplies sturdy, dependable city guards. Kar "Barrel Chest" Sivch serves as the Captain of the Guard.

ECONOMY: Capidistria has a thriving trade economy, trafficking in goods from the north countries through Anglamay and even to the Hob Goblins realms to the west.

RELIGION: There is no religion here; Temple Row has many temples and churches to varying gods.

MAJOR GUILDS: Stone Masons' Guild, the Fishmongers, the Weavers' Guild, the Shipwright Guild, and the Ironmongers' Guild "Blacksmiths" compose the strongest guilds in the city.

Any and all requests for food and lodging draw the same response, the Mermaid's Rock. Any characters who are familiar with the city or area have heard of it. The tavern sits upon the harbor and is easy enough to find. It's next door to the Mendl throne's Rarities.

HARBOR SQUARE

The Harbor of Capidistria is one of the oldest in the region, with trade routes crossing the northern waters and passing through here and on to the well traveled routes to the south. The harbor is clean and orderly, well patrolled by the city and the local guilds. Too much wealth passes this way for it to be any other way. Harbor Square itself is a large square, fronted by a half dozen large docks. Smaller docks line the harbor itself, allowing for smaller craft or smaller firms to traffic in whatever goods they move.

Large buildings front the square, warehouses, counting houses, the stone masons, several small taverns and the large Inn and Tavern, the Mermaid's Rock.

During the daylight hours the harbor is flush with activity. Dock workers load and unload ships, their goods piled in crates and sacks; merchants and their assistants check and recheck inventory; mule-drawn carts pull loads out of the harbor or into it. People mill about, some looking for work, others on their way to the Gottland for glory and gold. Northerners hawk their goods with the shorter men from the south and so on.



At night Harbor Square takes on a different light. As the mercantile quarter settles down, others come out. It becomes crowded with a different sort. Hard work means hard drink, and men gather to talk the days ills over, tip back brew from The Rock, and fight. Ladies of the evening gather as well, along with minstrels, card sharks, other entertainers, and the like. Of course, along with them come all the sorted people who gather about the stench of corruption. It is a favored place to duel and rare is the day that one person or another isn't slain on the cobbles, the stone of which is stained red for the loss of life over the many years. Rumbles too take place in the Square when guilds fight, most commonly the Stone Masons and the Fishmongers; clubs and fists replace swords and magic as the two guilds pummel the devil out of one another.

The Square at night is dangerous; rogues and thieves ply their trade, picking targets and their pockets.

MERMAID'S ROCK

On the waterfront is the tavern, a square building of two floors, stone throughout. A broad wooden veranda overlooks the gray-blue waters of the harbor and the sign that hangs over the cobbled street portrays a mermaid alone upon a rock. It is always open and always lively.

The Mermaid's Rock is a tavern and eatery with one great dining hall and several large and small private chambers that offer the establishment's patrons a safe environment within which to conduct their business. The Great Hall has a floor of slate, but the walls are covered in fine oak planks. Here a central fire pit, 12 feet in diameter, offers patrons warmth and comradeship. The Mermaid usually has some type of musical act playing, bards and the like plying their trade in the great hall.

It is here where all who come to Capidistria end up, and the tavern is often crowded, smoke-filled, and loud. It is particularly loud on those nights when several bards contend with each other for the crowd's favor. The food is good, the company warm and the Mermaid's Rock the only place to be.

It is here that the sage, Mendlethrone, spends many a waking hour. He is a heavy drinker and though he can handle his liquor, he often drinks to excess. If the characters have arrived without going to his shop, he will be on the look out for them as Brewel alerted him through messengers that the stone went awry.

MENDLETHRONE'S RARITIES

Mendlethrone is a young man with a great deal of knowledge about a great many things. He is a voracious reader, spending much of his time pouring over books that he has ordered, purchased, or scrounged up. He is notorious for offering high pay for books, texts, parchments, scrolls, and even scraps of paper that might contain some knowledge of the world around, old and new. He is wealthy, though few know where he acquires his money, for he never seems to charge for his services. His pockets fund many journeys for would-be adventurers; sending them on quests for more items to flesh out his library. Entering his shop is a wonder.

10 CASTLES & CRUSADES

The door opens to the sound of a small chime. The room consumes the tender voice. All about are books: stacks of books, rows of books on shelves, books piled upon books, books laying across the floor. Scrolls, some cased, some open, stand amidst the thick leather-backed volumes; sheaves of paper scattered about the room mingle with its debris. A book-walled hallway reveals a deeper recess, this too lined with books as far as the eye must roam. Over it all float several lamps; unattached to wire or wall, they hang in the air, spilling a gentle light across the whole scene.

Mendlethrone may or may not be present. He has been alerted to the rune stone and is on the lookout for the party, though they may track him down in the The Rock. Either way, he greets them pleasantly, apologizing for his poor hospitality and inviting them instead to a discussion over fresh brewed mead at The Rock. He asks for no money, and offers to pay for the food and drink.

If the stone, whether planted by Brewel or picked up in Lion in the Ropes, is presented to the sage it takes him only a minute to determine that it is indeed a *rune stone*. He knows too that this particular rune stone was made by a human Rune Mage. If asked what a *rune stone* is, he will explain the following:

Read or paraphrase the following:

Long ago the dwarves mastered the language of creation, taught to them by the All Father. They could speak it, though in practical application it failed them. Its subtleties escaped the hard-minded dwarves and their craft suffered for it. The Little All Fathers, the magi of their realm, managed it better; but even they suffered in its use. Their creations require the hammer to shape and the mind to mold; the language draws its power from the everlasting Void.

Long ago the dwarves understood their limitations and set to crafting the words of the language into constructs. The power of the language was captured in a complicated and vast set of written characters, the runes also called the ondluche-eroan. The runes contained power, often one power layered upon another; these runes the dwarves used, crafting them into items and objects of their own desire. In the end they found the runes largely unstable, losing their potency after a short while, or worse, never holding the power envisioned for them. Long study and much trial and error revealed to them the best vessels for each word, for each phrase, for each understanding; minerals of the natural world proved the proper host. Thus, the rune stones came to be.

If the characters desire, he offers them use of his library to research the stones further. He goes on to explain to them that there are Rune Marks, a class of warrior wizards who devote themselves to the mastery of the sorcery of the runes themselves, deriving magic from use of the runes, much as a wizard does his spell.

Mendlethrone always allows the knowledge (and it is common throughout the area) that if he dies, the door to his library closes

permanently, and any within the dimension will remain trapped there until the wizard who created his athenaeum returns to open it. He, of course, would not be amused at his fallen sage.

THE LIBRARY

His library is well known to those with whom he works. It is large, one of the largest in the world, and kept in an extra-dimensional space constructed for him by a wizard with knowledge of such worlds. A series of mental tones, known only to himself and the constructing wizard, open the gate to the library and allow Mendlethrone access.

One enters the library from wherever the sage is located and if he desires to allow admission, Mendlethrone has but to open the gate and a stairwell materializes in front of him, allowing for travel up and into the small dimension. Here there is a tall room, about 60 feet in height, lined with shelves filled with an uncountable number of books and scrolls. The room is comfortably carpeted in blue, well lit with more of the floating lamps (which come at his call), and offers a host of chairs and seats to occupy.

Here any amount of mundane knowledge can be found, including the history of the rune stones, the rune marks, the coming of Unklar, etc.

After much research, the characters discover the rune is one of the Four Pillars, a rune of chaos and entropy called the *Rune of Enchantment*.

OPPORTUNITIES

Mendlethrone offers the party a job. A ship is leaving harbor in the next day or so. It is traveling north, across the Inner Sea with trade goods bound for Gottland-Ne. There is a dungeon there, which houses a series of Imperial Annals scribed by the Sanjaks of those provinces during the early days of the Empire. The sage desires them and will pay 500 crown per party member for their safe return; he will further grant a party fund of 500 crown to supply, equip, and cover the cost of the passage across the sea.

To give them added incentive, Mendlethrone explains that he has it on good authority that the Muddles Guild is hunting them.

Assuming the characters take the job, they are told to see the Captain Beritod of the Red Make and he will take them to the Ossford, with directions on how to get to the stronghold of Izarian.

LIVING HAS A PRICE

The Muddles Guild has not been inactive since the deaths of their several compatriots. They have tracked the party's movements and are planning revenge. They send several low-level rogues to rough up the characters, and if these are dispatched the guild will become a little more devilish.

The guild is extremely wealthy and possesses many strange and exotic magics and beasts. One such beast is an ettercap, trained to serve the guild's masters. The Muddles wait until the party

is moving at night and they unleash the foul tempered beast upon them.

ETTERCAP (*This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 14, HP 37. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with 2 claws for 1d4 points of damage and 1 bite for 1d8 points of damage. It has improved grab that allows it a +4 bonus to hit with bite or poison attacks. They are able to web their victims from glands in their forearms. Their poison causes temporary paralysis.*)

The boat lies in the harbor and the Captain is ready to depart.



2 RAGE OF VANDEYA

This encounter is designed for low to mid-level characters; adjust numbers and hit points as needed. Rage of Vandeya is designed to break up the monotony of the sea voyage across the Inner Sea. It can follow directly after Harbors Foul, or can be one of several adventures on the water. The island should be placed where convenient for the CK, or altered to a castle on the land if need be. If in the Ahrde Setting, the Isle of Vandeya lies about 175 miles north and west of the Hanse City States, midway between them and the lands of Gottland-Ne to the west.

The adventure takes place upon a small island dominated by a ruined castle. The island is haunted by the enraged spirit of a northman King, Holfgar, who drowned while attempting to swim to the isle from his homeland, far from the Broken Fingers. When challenged by one of his followers to swim the 20 leagues, he took to the waters, somewhat inebriated, and attempted the trek. He was never seen alive again.

His tale however, is a strange one. Holfgar swam many many miles out to sea where he encountered a beautiful woman, a caradulz, the Lady of the Deeps. She promised to bear him to his destination if he promised her a child. Making the pact, the caradulz changed herself into a horse and he leapt upon her back. She rode upon the crests of waves, bearing him across the wide expanse of the ocean deeps. After only a few days he sighted the island. There she stopped and compelled him to live up to his end of the bargain. Holfgar swore at her, saying he would not do so until the island was under his bare feet. She would not carry him further without pay, for she did not trust the northman's word. With the island in sight, Holfgar cursed her as an unfaithful sea witch, and leaping from her back he made to swim the distance to the island on his own. The maid became enraged and called the waters forth to batter him, but he broke through them and pushed on. She hounded him with fish summoned from the deeps, but these too he knocked aside so that at last she shifted her shape again, assuming the form of the long kelp that grows along the sea bottom. In rage she took his feet in her tentacles and pulled him under. Deep into the water she towed him, clouding his vision with her form until Holfgar drowned and died.

His ghost however would not give up the trek and crossed the remaining distance, but even his spectral feet remained caught in the tangle of kelp, preventing him from ever leaving the water. There he remains, a haunt upon the edge of the sea, looking at the beach he'll never cross.

WHEN WATER RUNS DRY

A longboat carries the party north. Built to carry trade goods rather than men, it is deep and wide. The waves lap the sides of the ship, often sending spray over the gunwales. The crew and characters must sleep on the running boards and benches where the oarsmen sit. The ship's goods, water, and food are all kept beneath canvas tarps in the middle of the boat.

On the fourth night of the journey one of the characters, chosen randomly, awakens to a tittering noise sounding much like a



child's laugh. Looking about the boat he spies one of the canvas tarps has been pulled up and staked back, exposing the goods beneath. Small figures, naked in the moonlight, cluster around the edges of several barrels that they have obviously opened. Some swim in the water barrels.

These are sea nymphs and they have opened the barrels of fresh water to bath and play in it. Upon being spotted they flee immediately, leaping over the sides of the ship to vanish into the water below. If cornered they fight; if they make it to the open water, they follow the boat, swimming through the waters. If watched or bothered they try to cajole someone to jump in. Anyone so foolish is attacked immediately.

SEA NYMPHS, 14 (These chaotic neutral creatures have HD 1d4, AC 12, and HP 2 each. Their primary abilities are mental. They attack with small darts that deal 1 point of damage. The darts are poisonous, however, taken from the spines of the lion fish. Unless a successful constitution save is made, they cause the victim to hallucinate for 1d6 rounds. The nymph is able to shape shift into any type of fish it desires 3/day. They often transform into barracudas or similar fish and are able to do 1 point of damage upon a successful bite.)

12 CASTLES & CRUSADES

The Captain wakes up from the commotion, and upon learning what happened he investigates the water barrels. In a moment he reports that the ship is without fresh water as the nymphs broke the seals and befouled the water in every barrel. Anyone looking at them clearly sees the slime upon the surfaces; the water is undrinkable.

“These creatures haunt all the waters of the Inner Sea, a constant nuisance, but no matter; we have no water and must put in to the Isle of Vandeya and fetch some.”

Anyone familiar with the area may have heard of the haunted isle. Upon a successful intelligence roll (CL 3) the character remembers the story behind the island. Regardless, the Captain relates the tale as noted above.

He asks the party if they would go ashore to fetch the water. He offers four of his men to carry the water, and leaves it up to the party whether they want to dig a hole to tap the ground water or to use the well in the castle. If the party proves reluctant, he tries to entice them with the rumor of the master of the castle’s lost treasure, which men say sits beneath a flagstone decorated with the map of the world before his high chair in the great hall.

THE ISLAND

Vandeya is a long, narrow island dominated by one large hill. Roughly 10 miles from end to end and not more than a half mile wide, a man could walk around it in a single day. There are many open and sandy beaches, though they are strewn with rocks and ocean debris. They give way almost immediately, however, to a thick tangle of deciduous trees. Upon the hill, overlooking it all, stands a castle.

The island fades in comparison to the massive stone structure that commands its one hill. A polyglot of stone walls, 50 feet high, push out from the hill, clinging to the cliff’s edge, giving the viewer to think that the walls are pushing the tumble of boulders that surround its base down the rocky slope. Despite the imposing structure, it is in a state of ruin; the central ceiling has collapsed and the debris of it pushes out through the front gate and wall, making the center of the place a jumbled heap of masonry and wood standing naked to skies above.

The Captain explains that he cannot stay on shore long, he’ll drop them and the barrels of water on the beach with his men to port it.

As soon as the landing party is on the beach the Captain puts out to sea and heads into the deep waters, well away from the haunts of the ghost of the Viking King.

THE LANDING

The barrels are stacked high on the beach and the porters gathered with 10-foot poles, off the each ends of which hang huge water bladders.

If the party attempts to dig into the ground, their first four attempts to reach water fail. Each attempt consumes about 30

minutes of daylight. On the fifth attempt they tap into a small flow of water. It takes a good 15 minutes to fill up one of the bladders. Each barrel takes about five bladders to fill, and it becomes painfully obvious to all that it will be dark before the task is done.

A number of trails lead up from the beaches to the stonework of the castle.

THE FOREST TREK

The party enters the tangled forest following a path beaten by other sailors who have no doubt suffered a similar fate as that of the Red Make. The going is slow and difficult, pushing up through the thick brush, though the trail leads steadily up toward the castle.

Upon a successful wisdom check (CL 3) the characters begin to notice odds and ends laying about the trail. An old broken bow lays beneath some leaf fall; a satchel is torn and emptied. Here lies a bedroll, wet and bedraggled; there three arrows protrude from a tree. Upon closer investigation more items are found, old, torn, and rotted away; a careful look by a ranger (CL 3) reveals signs of battle, some older than others, throughout the length of the trail.

If this knowledge is imparted to the porters, they begin to grow fearful.

THE CASTLE

The castle is in ruins, all its floors collapsed into a heap. This debris clogs the front of the place. Only two things survived. The well just inside the castle, to which a trail has been dug, and in the central hall, the high stone chair of the castle’s one-time master. Before it, the floor is open, and etched into the cobbles is a map of the Cradle of the World. The forest gives way to stone steps that climb up the slope only to vanish into the heap of ruin that is the castle front. The only way in is over that heap.

Huge stones tangle with beams of rotted wood that once comprised the front wall and ceiling. A pale haze hangs over it all, but standing on top of the mountain of debris affords you a perfect vantage of the forest behind you, the sea to the north, east, and west, and the inner sanctuary. Upon the waters to the west you see the Red Make wrestling with huge green-foam capped waves, its single sail unfurled as it breaks for smoother water. The forest is dark behind you, and in front of you the inner hall is exposed. There a great chair made of stone looms over the hollowed-out chamber, allowing the occupant to view a map of some design upon the hall’s floor.

As the characters decide what is going on, the Red Make is under attack by the caradulz. She has risen from the deeps and slammed the boat with wave after wave, attempting to drive it into deeper water, which she successfully does. Anyone watching the boat for several minutes is able, upon a successful intelligence check (CL 4), to realize that the ship is being driven out to deeper water and cannot return before nightfall.

THE WELL

The well is situated within the debris of the ceiling, cleared by sailors who found themselves in a similar predicament. It takes roughly two hours of filling bladders and carting them back to the beach to get the barrels of the Red Make full and ready for pick up.

THE THRONE

The stone chair is wide, built to impress the onlooker. Its back is plain, round and smooth, but it is a seat that connotes power and strength. It overlooks a detailed map carved into the floor that depicts the Cradle of the World and all the lands of man and dwarf (swap this with any world map if not in Aihrede). The bottom of the map is at the foot of the throne.

Around the map are carved the following words: “*When the throne’s feet stand upon the top of the world, the treasure of the world’s feet is revealed.*”

The map is a cover for a secret door. If examined the character notice a groove around the whole map about three inches deep and an inch wide. Looking very closely reveals four separate holes in the groove, evenly spaced about the map. The holes are slightly smaller than one inch. To open the door, four poles, or anything that will fit into the holes, must be inserted and the map rotated counter-clockwise until the top of the world is at the throne’s feet. This is followed by a large metallic click.

A gentle push on the door swings it open on two hinges in the center, revealing a set of steps that leads down into a treasure vault.

The vault has not been disturbed for many years. Weapons line the walls along with several suits of armor. Shields, helms, some polearms, crossbows and the like are neatly arranged about the room. In the center of the room is a chest, roughly four feet long, two feet wide and two feet tall. It is closed and locked (CL 3). Within the trunk are the following items: 500gp in gold and platinum; a silver necklace with a lion pendant worth 25gp, a +1 *dagger* in a finely worked scabbard, a +1 *morning star*; a small *buckler of defense* which allows the user to gain a +2 bonus to either AC or to hit with the shield, and a *candle of invocation*. In the midst of all this wealth is a rod about three feet long, carved with three runes: *motion*, *tongues*, and *warmth*. The rod is actually a relic of a long dead rune mark. It can serve as a starting point for a beginning rune mark. One of the armor racks has a suit of +1 *chainmail* hanging on it, and a +1 *shield* at its feet with a horn woven in flowers emblazoned upon it.

THE RAGE OF VANDEYA

When the sun sets, dusk begins and the ghost of Holfgar rises from the deeps. He stalks the beaches of the island, passing through the surf, cursing the dry land and all that live upon it. His curses, unlike those of mortal man, carry weight in the halls of the Wretched Plains. Every night he howls for what he cannot have, and every night the dead that lay scattered all about the island - testaments to the battles of lonely sailors against the undead - rise from grave and stalk the island, seeking anything living upon which to meet their vengeance.

The howling mingles with the surf and few can detect it. However, anyone with sharp ears does have a chance; on a successful wisdom check (CL 5) a character can discern the howling of the doomed ghost.

The island is inhabited with scores of zombies and skeletons, and when they rise, they wander through the brush, down the beaches and to the castle. They move in groups of one to two, two to eight, and one to twelve. They have no order, nor any ability to communicate with the viking ghost. They detect the motions of the living and follow them; when they see them, they attack.

Note on the Battle: The CK should throw a zombie or skeleton at the party just after dusk. Start the encounter with one. Add to that another two or three after a few minutes. Wait a few more minutes and hit them again. In this way, create a running battle all through the night.

SKELETON (*This neutral creature’s vital statistics are HD 1d8, AC 13, and HP 3. Their primary abilities are physical. They attack with weapons for 1d6 points of damage. They carry nothing of value unless it is the weapon, which has a 5% chance of being magical.*)

ZOMBIES (*This neutral creature’s vital statistics are HD 1d8, AC 14, and HP 5. Their primary abilities are physical. They attack with one slam attack for 1d6 points of damage. They carry nothing of value normally, though there is a 5% chance per zombie that it has a valuable piece of jewelry worth 25-50gp.*)

MEETING THE GHOST OF HOLFGAR

The ghost of Holfgar is plain to see from the castle upon the hill. He moves slowly through the surf, glowing an eerie green, shuffling along, howling his pain. If the characters approach him, he stops his endless walking and calls to them for aid. He is able to talk to them, and in halting, relates his heroic deed of crossing the sea only to be drowned by the same sea witch that hounds the Red Make out into the surf.

He ends his tale with the following: “In the north my beloved built a tomb for me, but within it there are no bones that are mine. My rest can only come from going home to lay in the land I called my own.”

There is no comfort for the lost soul unless his bones can be retrieved from the sea and carted to the far north and buried in his Howe. For more on Holfgar’s Howe, see that adventure in this book.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters may attempt to retrieve the bones of the viking. They lay in about 15 feet of water to the north of the island, wrapped still in kelp. To retrieve them they must fight the undead that rise every night and the caradulz (for more on her see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrede**).

14 CASTLES & CRUSADES

3 HOLFGAR'S HOWE

Holfgar's Howe is an encounter set for 3-4 characters of middling level. The CK should adjust the adventure as needed, adding or subtracting monsters, or ratchet hit points and armor class up or down, depending on the size and level of the party. The Howe sits just upon the Gray Coast. Place as needed. It ties in with the previous adventure, *Rage of Vandeya*, where the characters met the ghost of Holfgar. The Captain has sailed across the Inner Sea to the Gray Coast, which he will follow to the mouth of the Sorgon River so the characters can conduct the task set before them.

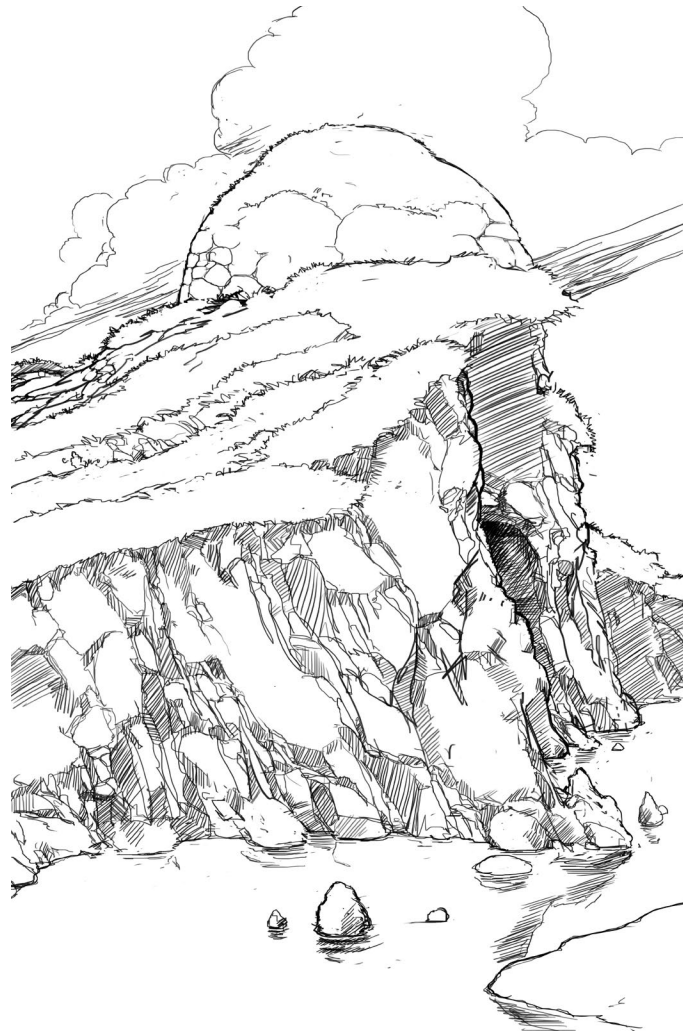
Many years gone, the northman Holfgar rode the waves of the Deep Quiet, plundering towns and villages; Holfgar proved the terror of the Inner Sea for many years. In his raids he gathered a small army of stalwart followers and they amassed a treasure worth a King's envy. In time Holfgar built himself a kingdom upon the southern slopes of the Holmgrad Mountains. His wooden hall stood 100 feet long and 40 feet high, fashioned of timbers as thick as a giant's leg. There he settled his men and they made merry after each raid.

In time Holfgar's power waxed great and he took to wife the daughter of a King of Trondheim, Barahul by name. Upon the birth of his son, Dan, Holfgar made himself lord of all the lands between the Stovnet and Nosejuen Rivers, which men called the Gresselrun, and he took for himself the title of King and named his kingdom the Holfmark. It was a boisterous land, filled with men of violent nature and built upon the conquests of many raids. Much drinking and boasting went on; fighting amongst his thanes was common and Holfgar encouraged it all.

During the third year of his reign, amidst a feast that shook the great hall, one of Holfgar's closest Thanes, Earagon, boasted to a visiting dignitary that his lord was the greatest swimmer the world had ever seen and that if need pressed, he could swim from his hall overlooking the sea to the Isle of the Neidelung. Now truth be told, this isle lay over 40 leagues out to sea, that being over 100 miles as the fish might swim. The act being doubted and the strength of his lord questioned, many blades raised until the King himself, more in bed with drink than reason, shouted that such a swim was like a dip for him and he would prove it to any man who dared doubt. Barahul, horrified at the boasting, attempted to calm her lord's rash temper to no avail. Stripping to his dagger and a loin cloth, the King dove from the cliff beneath his hall and vanished into the turbulent waters of the Inner Sea.

He was never seen again.

Several weeks passed and those in the hall looked for their Master's return, but their drunken boasts soon turned to bouts of anger, and fights erupted. Over them all Barahul brooded; bereft of her husband and her son's father, she raged a hate upon all those in the hall. After many more days, when all had given up hope and many began to squabble over who would take the mantle of Kingship, she called for a feast. "Let all those who loved Holfgar in life, honor his memory with a feast. Though not you Earagon, as you brought his life to an untimely end. When next you boast, boast of your own prowess and not another's."



All in the hall readily agreed, and gathered again in the Great Hall, except for Earagon whom they drove out into the cold. In the hall Barahul delivered each and every one a draught of mead. "Drink my Lords. Taste the generosity of your King's wife." So, they did and toasted the fallen King as well. Unbeknownst to them, the drink was poisoned with a sleeping draught so that within a few hours all in the hall had swooned and fell to deep slumber.

Barahul left the hall and called upon the earth gods to deliver to her a mountain of dirt to cover the hall and make a tomb for all those within. Angletor, the master of earth, heard her pleas and came in answer. "What would you give me for wergild to bury this hall of your king and husband."

"My life is passed now and I have no love of it. Take me as your bride if you will," she replied, and so the lord of earth and rock moved a small mountain of earth to cover the Great Hall and make of it a Howe wherein the men of Holfgar's hall were entombed. He fashioned a single entrance to the Howe overlooking the sea, but this he bound with magics from within. "May you all rot until your Lord and King returns. As for you, Earagon, take your Lord's son far from this place and keep him until such time as he may make his own path in the world." With that, she gave over to him her son Dan, for she knew so great was Earagon's guilt that he would do this last service for his lost King.

So, the Great Howe of Holfgar came to be, overlooking the northern shores of the Inner Sea, though Holfgar himself never lay his head within his own tomb.

It is said by those who dare the Isle of Neidelung that there dwells a shadow of great body and strength there, and he rages against the sea and curses all those who would boast of it.

The Howe and the Promontory are either covered with thick grass or snow, depending upon the season.

Yurn's Path gives over to a winding ledge that snakes along the length of a great cliff. The cliff itself overlooks a wide promontory of land that juts out into the sea. It rises from the foot of the cliff until it stands equally as high as the dwarven Path. Upon this rise stands a great mound of earth, shaped like a perfect dome. Even the most unobservant realize that it is not a natural landmark, but must have been made by the hands of men or gods. It appears to be a Howe, a burial chamber for some great chieftain.

A trail of smoke rises from the far side of the Howe, winding its way into the heavens above.

The cliff is steep, about 120 feet high, but a quick observation reveals a stone stair built into it, crisscrossing up the height of it to merge with the Path. It is very negotiable and the travelers quickly learn that it is built in a cup of the cliff, shielding them from the worst that the weather has to offer. In a few quick minutes they are at the bottom of the cliff and at the beginning of a foot path that winds its way up to the Howe.

The ground is open, with little more than scrub and grass, mingled in the rocks and gravel of the rise. The Howe dominates the view. The approach is easy and without incident.

The flames of a large bonfire built by a sailor whose small craft has suffered a broken mast comes into view. Unable to repair the craft on his own, he climbed the long stairs from the beach to the Howe and built there a bonfire made of scrap wood to signal any passing boats. He has made no attempt to hide his camp, of course, and welcomes the newcomers. If they attack him, he does defend himself but attempts to flee down the path to the boat below.

Egil of Skon by name, he hails from Holmgald and was traveling east to the lands of his cousin Grundier to visit his kin. He is a big fellow, six feet tall and broad of shoulder. His hair is dark blonde and his eyes a burning blue. He wears four-in-one ring mail with a battle axe at his belt. A huge wolf skin cloak drapes over his shoulders and covers the thick woolen pants and shirt he wears. His seal skin boots are tough and water proof. Egil is friendly, but also able to defend himself.

EGIL OF SKON (This chaotic good 4th level barbarian's vital statistics are HD 4, AC 17, HP 52. His primary attributes are strength, constitution, and wisdom. His significant attributes are dexterity 18. He fights with a +1 battle axe and normal shield. He also carries a seax [a single-edged long dagger] and has a bow and arrows. In his leather wallet he carries 42gp and a gem worth 100gp.)

On his journey, his mast broke and he put in here. Unable to fix it on his own, he was attempting to signal passing boats. Barring

that, he was going to walk down the coast to his cousin's house. He has plenty to eat and offers the party the fire and food, mostly salted fish and beer.

Egil is well versed in these coastlands and freely tells the characters anything they want to know. In the course of the conversation he offers them supplies from his boat here and from the village of Skon (that is on their way) if they will help him fix his boat. They need only climb the mountains to find a suitable tree, cut it, limb it, and bring it down to the coast. He does mention that the Howe would no doubt have timber in it big enough to use, if not masts he could use, but he himself will not enter.

He then tells them the story of Holfgar's Howe.

If the characters do not aid him, he enjoys their company and their westward journey can continue. If the characters do offer, they should be aware that it is a two-day hike to the nearest forest and at least four days back carrying the tree. The weather is bad and the trip dangerous. The Howe, on the other hand, offers booty as well as timber for the boat.

If they opt to climb the mountain path to cut fresh timber, roll normal random encounters and carry on the adventure as normal. If they decide to enter the Howe, continue below.

HOLFGAR'S HOWE: ENTRANCE

Egil shows them a low indentation in the ground that leads underneath the Howe. It was made by the elemental lord when the Howe was created.

The entrance follows a low run that dips beneath the bottom of the Howe. Stone walls line the run until they come to an entryway fashioned of many flat stones, one stacked atop the other. This opens into a short five-foot corridor and ends in a huge flat stone that serves as a door. There are runes marked upon the door.

The Runes read: *"I Earagon waited here. May the dead find peace."*

The stone blocks the entry way and is impossible to move from the inside. However, from the outside it can be rolled aside on a successful strength check (CL 12). It is heavy and defies easy movement. Any number of normal spells may open it, a *knock* spell or similar. A *charm of opening* serves as well of course; one can be found in Izarian's Paramour, Area 8E, the Chimera's lair.

GREAT HALL

Once the door opens, a foul air spills out across the party. It reeks of decay and rot. The stench is overpowering and after two rounds, everyone with the exception of half-orcs has to make a successful constitution check (CL 5) or risk nausea for two to four rounds.

The hall consists of one huge room and one side room. The hall has several Areas that warrant their own exploration. The side room was the King's Chamber.

It is completely dark in the Howe, the only light being that which spills in through the door. The ceiling is over 100 feet high. Once within the hall, it looks much as it would in normal times with wooden walls fashioned from huge beams, a ceiling of similar

16 CASTLES & CRUSADES

beams crisscrossed for support. Several shuttered windows dot the walls here and there. The floor, however, is dirt.

AREA 1 - GREAT HALL: The hall is dominated by a huge pillar that rises from the center of the room and spreads out in a many-fingered web of what appears to be timbers in the ceiling. These are in fact bones, and this is the boneraker, the collection of cursed souls that occupy the space.

Your light chases ancient shadows into the corners and crannies of this once opulent room; over a hundred feet long and half again as wide, the hall is walled in thick, round timbers. It is dominated by a misshapen pillar that looks more like an old tree than anything else with many finger-like roots snaking across the floor until they combine into tight cords, rise up from the floor, and scatter again, web-like, across the room. The tree glistens white here and there. All about the place lies debris of what was once furniture.

If the party inspects the pillar, they notice that it consists of a very hard, white bark. Most will recognize this bark as looking very similar to bones; a successful wisdom check CL 2 reveals this, a successful check CL5 reveals they are actually bones wrapped in mud and clay.

Upon entering the room, the boneraker begins to animate, though it takes a few rounds before it comes to life. When it does, it immediately attacks, pulling itself off the ceiling, winding itself up into a ball and attacking the characters.

BONERAKER (*This evil creature's vital statistics are HD 6d8, AC 16, and HP 48. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with a slam attack for 1-10 points of damage. The boneraker is able to rejuvenate hit points at the rate of 1-8 hit points per round for 8 rounds of combat.*)

AREA 2 - THRONE: The throne sits on the far side of the room and has long since been destroyed, bits and pieces of it scattered throughout the back of the hall. The dais upon which it sat

remains, sitting about four feet higher than the rest of the hall. There are more pieces of treasure and armor here than anywhere else in the room.

AREA 3 - FLOOR: The room served as the sleeping quarters, kitchens, and eatery of an army of 50-75 men. Many tables and benches, now ruined, lie about as do a host of iron cooking utensils. These have sunk into the mud, though are easy enough to salvage. Everything one would need to set up large living quarters is here. There are also several choice timbers that would serve Egil for a mast.

TREASURE: Scattered throughout the great hall are all manner of pieces of armor, shields, swords, axes, spears, helms, and the like. If the characters are careful and spend a great deal of time, they can piece together four suits of good armor with shields and the like: chain/shield/helm, chain shirt/shield/helm, 4-in-1 ring mail/shield/helm and ring mail/shield/helm. They can also gather 1-8 axes, swords, and spears. They also find the following magic items: +2 giant slayer longsword, handy haversack, bashing shield, a stone of alarm, and a sash of comprehend languages. They also find 1000gp in assorted coins and gems.

AREA 4 - KINGS ROOM: This room is set aside, to the back and left. The door is open and within are the remains of an old bed, chest, a closet of sorts and other bric-a-brac. Earagon took all the Kings possessions to give to his son Dan when the time came. Where they went or if they were ever used is beyond the scope of this tale.

Egil thanks the party profusely for their aid and grants them small tokens of his appreciation. Each are given a hammer pendant with a rune on it. "Show these to the men of Skon and they will house you properly as friends and allies." He also promises to bring the tale of their deeds to the people of Holmgald so that their songs will be sung for years to come.

His word is true. If the characters should ever travel to Skon (a small land that lies in their line of march), and show the hammers, they are given free housing and food for up to a week. After that they begin to wear on their hosts. For more see Skon below.



4 DWARVES IN THE SAND

This encounter can occur from the sea or the land. If following the landward trail, the below description should be modified to accommodate the new approach. If coming from the previous adventure, Holfgar's Howe, the Captain of the Red Make must once again put in for water.

He puts in for 2 days, allowing the characters to take a jaunt about and stretch their legs.

Before you, a short narrow peninsula juts out into the sea; a creek of fresh water cuts through the sand, spilling its precious wealth into the salty sea. Here, low sandy beaches give way to a small ridge where thick grass grows, which in turn gives way to broken, low-lying hills where giant larch mingle with thick barked yellow pines. All this lies at the very feet of the mighty Holmgrad Mountains, the snow-capped peaks of which vanish into heaven's clouds above. The air is clear and crisp and cool as it blows from the heights. It is truly the land of the gods, unspoiled by man or elf.

It is spoiled, however, by the Dwarf, Igundale, who lives in a small cave protected by a wooden palisade beneath the eaves of the larch and pine trees. Igundale is an elderly Dwarf who has lived in these inhospitable mountains for the better part of a century. Born a slave in the mines of Aufstrag he followed the indomitable Dolgon the Dwarf King in war and rebellion, gaining his freedom in the Trench Wars of those ancient days.

Unlike many of his kin who came to people the halls of Grundliche Hohle, Igundale swore off the world and all of its folk. With little but his armor, pack and weapons he set off to find himself a home far from the paths of the civilized world. After long days that stretched into years and many adventures the Dwarf came at last to the Holmgrad Mountains, and the small jutting peninsula he named Dun'sHolm, which is "Darkhome" in the Vulgate.

Igundale travels about the area, panning for gold and the like. He spends a great deal of time in the palisade, where his main mine lies.

When the party approaches, he crawls up on the catwalk and greets them with guarded friendship.

If they are threatening or act dangerous, he waits his chance and slips out the back of the palisade with his treasure and flees up the coast. He keeps a small fishing boat for use in time of need. If the party treats with him, he invites them in, offering them food, drink, and shelter. He is a little hungry for news from the outside world. He lets them stay for a week or so before he begins grumbling. At some point he offers them the deal below.

IGUNDALE (This chaotic good 8th level fighter's vital statistics are HD 8d10, HP 76, and AC 22. His primary attributes are strength and constitution. His significant attributes are strength 16, dexterity 14, constitution 16. In battle he wears full plate with a shield and carries a +2 battle axe. At times he wields a +1 bearded axe two handed. He possesses a heavy crossbow but is down to 15 bolts. His mining has been somewhat successful



and he struck a vein of silver. He has extracted 16 bars of silver over the years. Each bar is worth 500gp.)

Inside the palisade are several simple stone structures: his one-floor house, the entrance to the mine, a forge, and a small covered store room. All these structures are connected by tunnels cleverly concealed beneath. There are several escape tunnels as well.

Igundale is well versed in the Lore of the Runes for his father's father was a Rune Mark of the Forge. He has picked up a bit of rune magic and practices the Rune Spells on his armor and weapons. More importantly he keeps a small piece of parchment in a small cylinder around his neck.

The scroll has the first stanzas of the Prophecy of the Rune Mark scribbled on it.

*And the Rune Mark shall come
Who with courage born of man
Must walk the tide of worlds
Entering the Great Empty
Speaking words of Power.
The Rune Mark must long endure
The suffering of Squandered words
For to rise above the Vulgate
Entering the Great Empty
A master of the Language of Gods
From The Will of Unklar's Iron*

18 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Here the parchment is torn away. The Dwarf knows of the parchment's value and is not averse to parting with it. If he learns or suspects there is a Rune Mark in the party, he offers them a deal. His language is broken as he rarely speaks to people of any race.

“Hear me out and see what for wisdom is used. I’ve a treasure worth more than gold to the likes of you, but there be mountains above with monsters o-lore. I needs but them slain and the treasure is you and yours.”

For the past several years the old Dwarf has fought an ongoing battle with a remoraz worm, as they feed upon the same food source, the herds of yak and mountain goats. The worm itself is nestled in the mountains above and the Dwarf wishes for the party to hunt it down and kill it.

He explains all this to the party and points them to the track the worm uses to cross the mountains. It leads, he explains, to a series of overhangs that house the beast.

REMORHAZ (This neutral creature’s vital statistics are HD 7d10, AC 20, and HP 48. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with a bite for 6d6 points of damage. It is able to swallow its victims whole. The worm radiates heat that can cause up to 5d8 points of damage and melt normal weapons.)

TREASURE: The remoraz has little in the way of treasure, for his hunting on the Roof of the World brought him little but goats and yak. However, some victims have fallen to his fangs. In his cave lies a +1 longsword, +2 chainmail, a blinding shield, as

well as *restorative ointment*, a holy symbol to the Cobbler (god of courage and travelers, whose symbol is an elaborate X, narrow at the crossing, but flaring out upon each arm) that grants a +1 to any who wear it on all attribute checks, and a small book with two rune spells in it: *rune of glyphs* and *rune of contact*.

If the party succeeds in killing the remoraz, Igundale awards them the parchment with the prophecy. Also, he grants them each a necklace of bone links, finely crafted to resemble interlocking geometric shapes. Each holds a golden brooch with an emerald in it. They are his greatest creations, worth 1000gp apiece and granting the wearers an unusual amount of luck (+1 to all constitution saves).



5 IZARIAN'S PARAMOUR

Izarian's Paramour is a much longer adventure, but picks up during the ocean voyage along the Gray Coast, after Dwarves in the Sand. It takes place in and around the delta of the Sorgon River and the town of Patradl. The Red Make continues her voyage, putting in at the town where the adventure begins.

A DIVINE BOAST

"At last the power becomes mine! I have searched for so long to have it. Now not only the Troll Lord will have the power to manipulate the powers on this plane! It is said that once you have acquired any of the runes, the power draws you towards the others!"

"I shall play my hand slowly, not to draw any attention too soon, but, I will succeed where others have failed. I will be patient and my powers will grow. Then will the great Unklar reward me when I return him to the world to confront his enemies."

"I need to pay homage to the horned one. I must have a pure blood sacrifice. Nothing would please him more than to give as sacrifice the blood of Ore-Tsar's finest, the young priestess Miradona. She is young and pure; we must have her."

The wizard's vile servant stretched his neck and scratched his hairline absentmindedly. *"Alas, yes, my dread lord, now you will drink of the blood of the innocent, and laugh in the face of those who oppose you!"*

"Unklar shall soon return!"

BACKGROUND

A FOLLOWER'S ANSWER

After the fall of Unklar's reign, Izarian the wizard still held fast in the Gottland. He was a devout follower of the Horned God, and was grief stricken at Unklar's fall. He governed his land with an iron hand and managed to keep law within his domain. However, after years of brooding upon his reduced realm and fallen lord, Izarian grew angry. There must be something done to avenge his fallen lord and bring law back to the plane. He spent much time in study, bent over tombs of the ancients, scrying the stars, and poring over scrolls and manuscripts, all in an attempt to find his long lost lord.

It was during these years that Izarian discovered the rune lore, the spells crafted from the Language of Creation that allowed the wielder to command the magic of the All Father's creation. With these, Izarian would be able to return both law and his beloved lord to the land, and his dream would then be fulfilled. Using every bit of power and ability he possessed, Izarian found some of the runes in the mountains, far north in the Tenrai Deeps. These he treasured above all things, almost to the point of madness. The finding of these runes marked the beginning of the return of his dark lord, or so he hoped and believed.

THE FITTING SACRIFICE

Now that the power seemed to be in Izarian's grasp, he sought to pay homage to Unklar. No petty sacrifice for the Horned God



would do; he needed something to gain his Lord's attention. The sacrifice must be a statement to the world itself, and be as monumental as the runes that had been recovered as well as the many others that time would deliver. The sacrifice should be of a divine nature.

The answer soon came to him. His spies in Ossford stated that a cleric and follower of the god Ore-Tsar, the Lady Miradona, would be building a temple in the city of Patradl. It was relayed to Izarian that the cleric was young and very beautiful. This offered Izarian an excellent opportunity, a "prize" that delivered itself. Izarian dispatched a group of his henchmen to bring the priestess to him. He imparted to the abductors that the job was to be done with much haste; waiting was not an option.

The city of Patradl was very excited to have the temple of Ore-Tsar. The first service was a great success but the joy proved short-lived for as it ended, the front door to the temple burst open and Izarian's henchman entered the hall. There was a brief fight, but being unarmed, Miradona could not do much since she was not prepared for battle. They took her from the hall and carried her to Izarian's tower in the west upon the Feador Plains.

When Izarian first laid eyes upon Miradona, he was instantly infatuated. He felt for the first time that which he had never felt before, love. For months he struggled with the feelings he had for the cleric, but at last he came to realize that he must continue with his plan. If he could not possess her, at least he could give the object of his affection to his greatest love, the god Unklar.

20 CASTLES & CRUSADES

When all was finally prepared for the sacrifice, he sent for Miradona. She prepared herself for what must come and when they came for her she fought them, calling upon the power of her god and fighting with desperation and determination. Izarian needed to sacrifice her alive, but in the battle her assailants were very rough with her. She had been struck many times to weaken her resolve, but she kept struggling. One last effort was made to break free, she was struck one last time in the face and this proved to be fatal. Her lifeless body fell to the floor.

The minions gathered the body and returned it to Izarian. Insane with rage, Izarian called upon dark sorcery and banished his guard to the halls of the Wretched Plains. Angry and heartbroken, he had the body removed to another part of his keep and prepared for burial. Now, not only had he lost the precious sacrifice to his god, but his love as well.

ORE-TSAR'S ANGER

Miradona was raised and sculpted for service in the church of Ore-Tsar. She was young and beloved of the god. Great plans had been made for this young cleric, but she was the product of an untimely death at the hands of a great enemy. Now the lands responsible would feel loss and suffering.

Ore-Tsar gathered his power and laid such a curse upon the lands, such that all felt its sting. Black clouds gathered and a great storm of lightning descended upon the lands; fires burned in towns, fields, and forests. After the fire ravaged the land, the rains came; great torrents of rain saturated the area causing widespread flooding. The rains continued unabated and the lightning came in huge balls of terror, scattering what little people had built. The temperature held common and the rain never froze, but the lands wilted beneath the soggy embrace of the god's curse.

Since those days, all plant life has become brown and lifeless. No new plants have grown, no crops are there to harvest, and no flowers bloom to be seen or enjoyed. The landscape is quite desolate.

The curse carried to the people and the livestock as well, for no babes have been born, of any race or animal.

A call was sent out to the followers of Ore-Tsar to avenge the death of Miradona. From the area of Angouleme, the Knight Hospitaller Marc le Graf and a group of fellow knights answered the summons. They came to the northlands to avenge the priestess and set against the wizard. They hounded him for a long season, scattering his folk and slaying his minions. At last they cornered him in his tower. The battle and siege that followed was truly great. Before all was said and done, several of the knights were slain, the keep of Izarian was assailed and left in ruin, and its master and all of his followers had fallen.

The knights left victorious, celebrating for a while, for all thought for certain that the curse would be lifted. The knights returned to their lands across the sea, but the curse remained, for the body of the priestess was not returned to Ore-Tsar, and that god looked no more upon the lands of her charge.

Thus, things stand.

UPON THE NORTHERN SHORE SAILING INTO THE CURSED LAND

The ship, the Red Make, and its captain Beritod carry the company across the Inner Sea with a crew of 10 aboard. Beritod seems perplexed at this group wanting to travel to this area in the north. Usually the only ones who do are either foolish treasure hunters who are often never heard from again, or those who go to sell their goods for outrageous prices. He is well versed in the story of the Priestess and Izarian; as a young man he was taken from his village in Patrodl and forced to serve as a galley slave, before Izarian's fall. If he finds out the purpose of their quest, he offers them any information they seek, for he loves the land of his youth and would see the curse removed.

**As you near the coast, black storm clouds cover the sky.
Lightning flashes and thunder rumbles in the distance.
There is a light but steady rain falling.**

The lookout suddenly shouts that there is land ahead. Upon the distant horizon, small masses of land crop up. The captain says to the party that these are the small islands of the gulf, and that there are a great number of them. Many an unwary sailor has been slain in these waterways, so all had better keep their eyes open.

The first island is reached by mid-day. The water has become shallow and spotters have been placed in the front of the ship to watch for reefs or any obstacles. The going is slow. The ship has to change course twice because the way is not passable. By early evening, the ship has reached the last island, which lies a short distance before the entrance to the wide, slow-moving river Sorgon. The captain announces that he will drop anchor off the shore of this island and begin the journey upriver in the morning.

The night is very calm, with only a light rain. There is a slight breeze blowing, and the moon has broken through the clouds, its filtered light cutting the darkness. Late in the night, a loud disturbance comes from the landward side of the ship.

The crew is startled awake by a loud pounding noise on the side of the ship. When looking over the side into the water, a thin scaled creature is seen hammering with an axe on the side of the ship. At that same moment, a loud cry is heard as more of these creatures haul themselves over the side of the ship onto the deck. The creatures stand five feet tall, have yellow-green scales and some have crossbows in hand, but all have a wicked-looking long spear. The creatures with crossbows loose their bolts and the others attack with their spears.

Unbeknownst to the captain, he stopped the vessel directly over a hunting party of locathah. These creatures are attacking to damage the ship (not to sink it) and kill or capture the crew (hoping for ransom). The locathah attack with spears or javelins, hurling the weapons and dropping back overboard to refresh in the water, retrieve more weapons, and come back up. They will fight as long as it is to their advantage, but should the fight go badly for them, they will attempt to flee.

LOCATHAH (10-20): *(These neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 2d8, HP varies, and AC 14. Their primary attributes*

are physical. They attack with a weapon for 1d6 or 1d8 points of damage. They always base their attacks around the water.)

TO PATRODL

The following morning, once again the water is calm. Strangely enough, it is not raining. The captain seems perplexed by this. If asked, he relates to the party that it has been constantly raining in the area for five years, and even when he has happened anywhere near the coast it has been so. That being said, the order to raise anchor and get underway is given.

Within three hours time, the ship comes to the large waterway that empties into the gulf. The course is changed to move up the Sorgon River. This waterway has very dark, murky waters. They almost have a foul odor to them. It seems as though the evil of former days runs thick in the water. The waters are very deep from the rains of the past several years.

The captain remarks that he must stop off in the town Patrodl before he can take them up the Sorgon River where the stronghold of Izarian lies. The waterway is wide and deep and he promises to take them to the mouth of the Black River. It's up that waterway that the stronghold lies.

PATRODL

The town of Patrodl holds the first friendly seaport near to Gottland. It lies upon the western shore of the Gray Coast on the islands of the river delta. It is walled with a short 12-foot wall, but one that is 10 feet thick at the base. The houses are stone with thatched roofs and the streets are muddy and unpaved. No castle sits in the town, but a rather large residence in the town's center houses the Lords of Patrodl. The town is dirty and poor.

It was a very busy trade town in normal times. Business now borders on madness as few merchants visit the city, for the land yields little in trade. Presently the town is filled with local chiefs, traders, and people from all over the surrounding country hoping to gain supplies and foodstuffs they need for their people. They eagerly await incoming ships.

Unless the characters really wish to, there is no need for them to stay in Patrodl for any more than one night. The ship has some cargo to offload and is leaving the following morning. There are several taverns and inns on the town square, and a hostel for the poorer travelers in the northern city. The hostel offers good beer and a very friendly atmosphere.

Should the characters want to leave the ship for the evening, there is a trader's shop with all kinds of equipment (double the normal price), an armorer/weaponsmith shop (double the normal price), an inn, and several other small shops all on the square.

If the character(s) leave the ship, there is an old beggar sitting on the docks by the ship.

The beggar is very old, and her skin mostly wrinkled. She is sitting on the ground, a worn dark cloak pulled around her. Even though the hood is pulled up, it is clear she has

bright grey eyes and no teeth. The bulge of a hump can be seen on her upper back, and the skinny arms appear to have sores upon them as she holds up her cup.

If the characters place alms in her cup, she says:

“Thank ya kind people. This land ain't much of a kind place these days. Might be, though, some day, if them bones of the Miradona is rightly covered.”

Cackling, she stands up, saying nothing more, and walks away - literally disappearing into the crowd.

THE ROAD TO THE STRONGHOLD

On the ship the day passes pleasantly and the weather remains calm. It seems the further west the ship travels, the clearer the sky becomes. The air is slowly gaining more of a chill to it. This also seems to have perplexed the captain. If asked he will relate to the party that the weather has been so mild for this area over the past five years, and now the air seems to revert to its normal state.

Near nightfall, the captain anchors the ship near the northern bank of the river. He sends a couple of his men onto shore to see if they can hunt some game for the evening meal. It seems that they are gone for a short period of time when they return with a young boy who is terribly wounded.

The boy tells that he and his family were taken by a large horned creature and some armored men. The captain listens in and informs the party that it sounds like a press gang. These groups roam the land and try to force others into the ranks of the followers of Unklar. The horned creature, he says, may be what is called an Ungern. The people who are captured will be killed if they resist too heavily. The boy at that point becomes nearly hysterical and begs for help for his family.

If the party should decide not to help the boy's family, just resume the journey on the following morning. If they decide to help, they can follow the trail back to a roadside shrine where the press gang attacked about one hour previously.

It takes a little over an hour for the party to reach the area where the boy was found. The ground is saturated with small pools of water standing everywhere. It is very easy to backtrack the direction the boy had come. Continuing west, the sounds of laughter come from ahead. The ground starts to rise, and there is very little standing water here.

At the top of the rise stands a large glade with a shrine and a garden. The rain does not seem to have fallen within the glade. It is quite dry and seems refreshing. Within the garden are three travelers, two males and a female. All three are seated upon the ground with their hands bound by rope, and their ankles bearing leg irons. Standing nearby is a human dressed in scale armor holding a crossbow with a broad sword and dagger on his belt. Another human, armed and armored in like fashion, has reached into his pack and is now eating some dry rations. Your attention is drawn, however, to a creature that has just finished hacking down the pole

that holds the symbol of the goddess Ore-Tsar with a bardiche. The creature stands about six feet tall with dark red skin. Its hands are clawed, and its feet are cloven hooves. The head is wolf-like, with a long, tooth-filled snout. Growing out of its back and over its brow are long, black horns.

You know that this undoubtedly is one of the Ungern, and that this band is a press gang.

CK's Note: If the fight proves too easy for the characters, place two more Ungern within the shrine. They attack immediately.

UNGERN, 1-3 (These lawful evil creatures' vital statistics are HD 2d8, AC 16 and HP 13, 12, and 12. Their primary attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. They each carry a +1 chain coat, bardiche, dagger and 4-40gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

HUMANS, 2 (These neutral, 1st level fighters' vital statistics are HD 5, AC 15, and HP 5 each. Their primary attributes are strength, constitution, and dexterity. Their significant attributes are strength, 12. They carry spears (1d6), longswords (1d8), and light crossbows (1d4). They each have a mail shirt and a small iron shield, small helm, spear, longsword, dagger, light crossbow with 12 bolts, and 5gp.)

Once the press gang is defeated or chased away, and the prisoners released, they fall upon their saviors with many thanks. The woman, however, becomes strangely removed and after a moment calms and look upon the players with a warm light; she says the following:

"It is apparent that the good of the land has not been entirely snuffed out. If you would have this land healed to its former state, this is what you must do. Journey into what was once the stronghold of the evil Izarian. Here you must search for and recover the remains of the priestess Miradona. If you are successful in your endeavor, then make a sacrifice to Ore-Tsar and you will receive further inspiration.

"Today you have aided the cause of Ore-Tsar. Drink from the urn within the shrine and you will feel refreshed and be healed."

The shrine is little more than a dirt hillock into which a door has been carved. Stone pillars and a stone lintel front the shrine, though these have been damaged and defaced. Inside there sits a small altar upon which sits an urn. Here is where people make sacrifices to Ore-Tsar.

Allow each player to drink from the urn; any who drink from it heal 8 hit points as if touched with a *cure light wounds* spell. Only one drink will work on each player. If anyone takes more than one drink, the effect will be the same as drinking water.

Should any of the players repair the pole that bore the symbol of Ore-Tsar, award them 50 experience points.

Once back upon the ship, the family is reunited and are happy seeing that the youngest son is still alive. They agree to join

on and help as crew until the ship returns to port. This night is definitely the clearest seen by any in this area in the last five years. There is a rumor that the captain feels this to be the guidance of Ore-Tsar, which seems to the crew very strange, for the captain is not known as a religious man.

The ship sets off early the next morning. It is a partly cloudy day and is the coolest day yet. There is a sharp bite in the air, and a fresh breeze blowing. The water itself even looks a little clearer. The general mood of the crew seems to be of high spirits.

THE STRONGHOLD OF IZARIAN

The ship moves up river until just after noon, when the smaller Black river is reached. This waterway spills into the Sorگون, creating a shallow lake. A track is spotted on the north bank leading off into the Feador Plains. The order is given to drop anchor, and a longboat is lowered into the water, made ready to transport the characters to the shore. Beritod wishes the party well and tells them he will remain anchored here for five days, but after that he will assume them dead and return to the sea.

It is a two-day journey up the road to the Stronghold, however, the plains are considered dangerous and the chances of an encounter great. For each day the characters spend in the open, camping, recuperating for battle, or even if the CK desires an encounter, roll 6d12. A roll of 1 leads to an encounter.

Wandering Encounter Chart Area 1

1. 1-2 Ungern
2. 1-4 Wolves
3. 4-8 Orcs
4. 1-3 Ogres
5. 2-5 Hlobane Orcs
6. 2-4 Boar
7. 4 Shocker Lizards
8. 2 Vargouille
9. 1 Troll
10. 1 Sea Hag
11. 1 Manticore
12. 1 Gray Ooze

Once upon the road, the temperature is still rather cool, but a dense fog lies over the dry plains. The road itself winds through the grasslands.

THE STRONGHOLD

The road opens onto a large landing with three walkways leading to it. The whole compound stands out in a wide flat section of the Black River, built on a series of mounds connected by stone causeways. Portions of the Stronghold are walled. The river itself creates an effective moat around the entire complex.

There are four structures built outside of the compound's walls, two on small islands and two in the water. The Stronghold itself is walled and built behind these, with three gated entrances. The walls are 25 feet in height. The gates are all double iron

doors with metal portcullis lowered before them. The water which surrounds the structure is 10 feet deep.

The southern walkway is 20 feet wide, and goes for 70 until it comes to a drawbridge that bars the way to the doors. The northern walkway is 10 feet wide, and goes for 80 feet before opening onto what was once a landing that connected it to the structure. It has long since rotted away, leaving a narrow framework of the landing. On the left side of the landing, where once a small drawbridge rested, there is a 10-foot space between the landing and another walkway that leads to one of the four structures outside of the Stronghold. The center walkway is 10-foot wide, and runs for 30 feet before coming to an open drawbridge (see map for details).

THE OUTBUILDINGS

Area 1: Here is a small island that houses a 20-foot tall structure with walls on the sides but open on the front and the back. There are walkways that lead off to the right and left, and to the center of the structure. The structure once served as a guard house, but there is little here now but for ruined furnishings. Mold creeps up the sides of the walls, gathering in huge black patches in the corners of the room. Everything is slick and damp.

Area 1a: The center pathway continues for 50 feet, but is missing a 10-foot section, about 20 feet out. The landing at the end is 30-foot square. In the middle is a statue of an Ungern holding a large crescent moon above its head. The 20-foot pathway that once led to the main structure is no longer there. If the players come onto the landing, the Ungern animates and attack the party.

UNGERN, 1 (These lawful evil creatures' vital statistics are HD 2d8, AC 16, and HP16. Their primary attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 or gore for 1-6 +2 points of damage. They each carry a +1 chain coat, bardiche, dagger and 4-40gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

Area 2: The walkway on the left leads to the second structure, a gatehouse seemingly in ruin. The building is a single-story structure. The doorway is open, and is apparent that the door was long ago ripped from its hinges. Inside is one large open room. The floor is badly rotted, exposing the water below. There are several shuttered windows within. On the far wall, there is another open doorway which leads to a drawbridge that blocks easy passage to the compound beyond.

Area 3: The walkway on the right leads to the second island. The structure is a single story, and appears to be well kept. There is one door which faces the away from the Stronghold, with a window in each of the other three walls. The door is locked (CL 3). The smell inside is horrid, indicating that this place has recently been used. The remains of dead fish, frogs, and many other animals cover the floor.

The only items in the room are a large, scarred, and stained table standing on a rough, filthy piece of carpet. A successful search (CL 2) shows that there is a strange but slight bulge beneath the rug. When inspected, underneath a section of cut carpet is a trap door that leads to **Level 1, Area 1** of the Dungeon (see below).

STABLES

Area 4a: Here stands a small tool room within the stables. There a few rotten ropes, rusted hammers, and axe heads within.

Area 4b: This area brings you to the stables; old straw lines the stone floor. There are 10 stalls lining the wall next to the tool room. In the back corner, across from the stalls, there is a small forge, a large anvil, and an empty water trough.

SHADOW (This chaotic evil creature's vital statistics are HD 3d12, AC 13, and HP 15. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with an incorporeal touch for 1d4 points of damage. They can cause strength drain. They have darkvision (60 feet), are able to blend with their environment but have sunlight vulnerability.)

GAURDHOUSE

Area 5a: Guard Sleeping Quarters – Here are the shattered remains of a wardrobe, a broken chair and a dozen rotting rope-lined beds. There is a door to the outside, and another to an interior room.

Area 5b: Interior Passageway - Connects **Areas 5a and 5c**. Just inside the exterior door are two tables, eight rotting chairs and a fireplace. A successful search check (CL 5) reveals a trap door set in the floor next to **Area 6** (see **Level 1, Area 6**).

Area 5c: Bugbear's Room - Dirty furs and bones line the floor.

BUGBEARS x 3 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital statistics are HD 3d8, AC 17, and HP 17, 15, 13. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon and do the appropriate weapon damage. They have darkvision.)

Their treasure consists of two potions of cure serious wounds, potion of spider climb, +1 small steel shield, and 78gp.

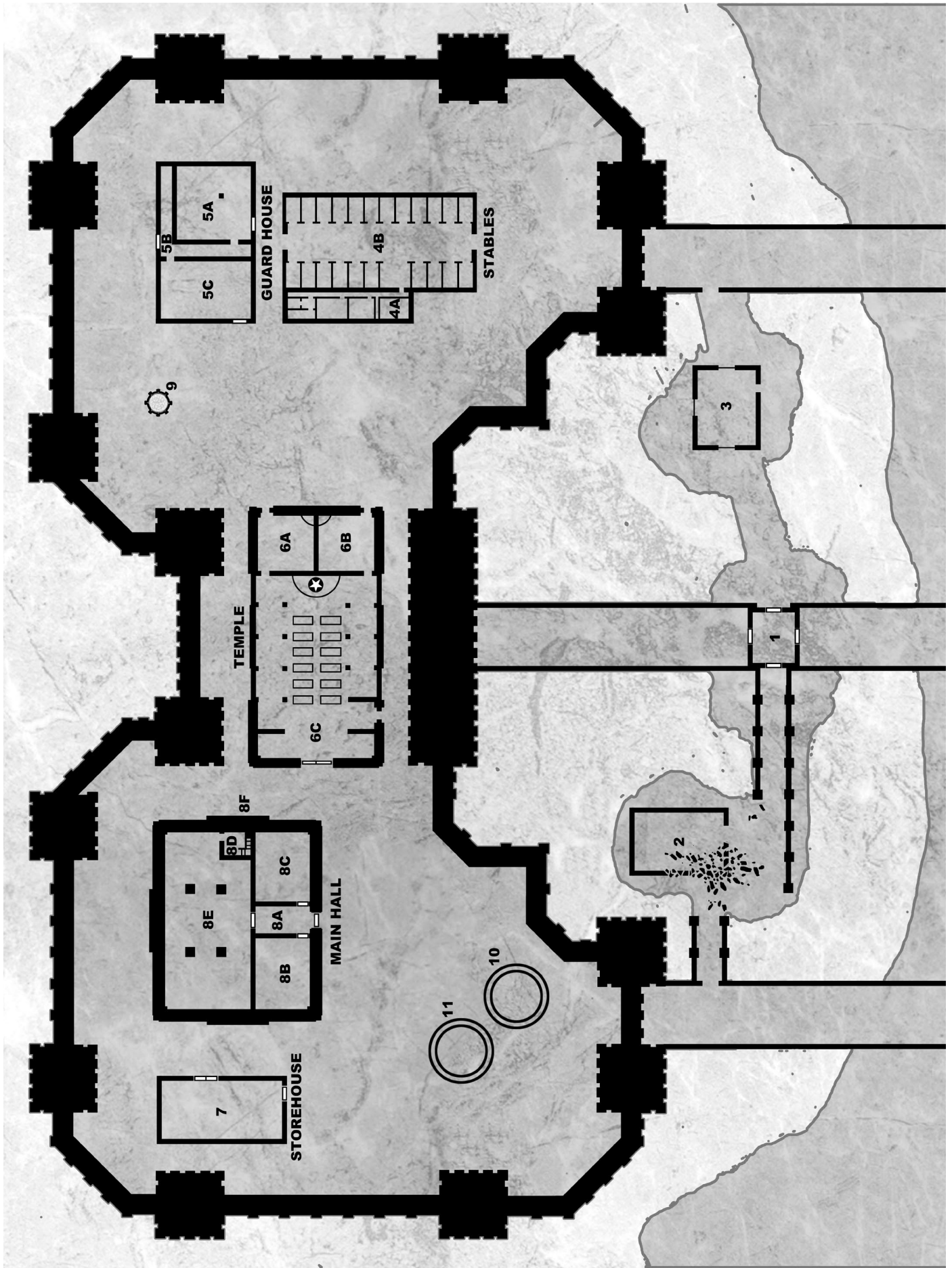
TEMPLE

Area 6a: Temple Vestment Chamber - Hooks upon the walls hold several old sets of robes emblazoned with the crescent moon of Unklar. There is a tarnished candle holder on each end of the room. A successful search (CL 5) reveals a secret door that leads to **Level 1, Area 13a** of the Dungeon (see below).

Area 6b: Temple Vestment Chamber - Hooks upon the walls hold several old sets of robes emblazoned with the crescent moon of Unklar. There is a tarnished candle holder on each end of the room.

Area 6c: Temple of Unklar - This is a large open room with benches lining the walls. At the back of the chamber is a two-foot high dais with stone altar on top. There is a tapestry on the left wall of Unklar sitting on his throne in Aufstrag. On the right wall is a tapestry of Unklar reshaping the world, and behind the altar Unklar holds the Krummelvole (Unklar's crown of power) high. A darkmantle has settled in the shadows over the altar.

DARKMANTLE (2-5): (These neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 1d10, AC 17, and HP 5. Their primary attributes are



physical. They attack with a bite for 2d4 points of damage or a constriction attack for 1d4 points of damage. They are able to see in darkness, and have an improved grab attack that leads to constriction. They have 90 feet blindsight.)

Area 7: Storehouse - This building is evidently the former main storehouse of the compound. There are many old crates and barrels that were long ago emptied and broken that now lay scattered across the floor. The remains of burlap bags and spent torches are here.

MAIN HALL

Area 8a: This is the entrance corridor to Izarian's main hall.

Area 8b: A plain waiting chamber with benches lining the walls.

Area 8c: A plain waiting chamber with benches lining the walls.

Area 8d: This is a small room with stairs leading down (see Level 1, Area 18).

Area 8e: Izarian's Main Hall - From the double doors that enter this room, a broken wooden and iron throne stands on a stone dais directly across the hall. Dozens of broken chairs are scattered about, and an eight-foot golden chandelier has broken away from its holding in the ceiling and now lies in the middle of the floor. No other wall hangings or decorations are seen. The door to the right of the entrance is held with the spell *arcane lock* (*dispel magic* CL 4) or it can be broken down on a successful strength check (CL 2). The small closet on the left side of the entrance opens to an area with an iron ladder going up (see Area 8f).

Two lesser chimaeras have taken up residence in all the ruin and devastation. They are nesting behind the throne. As soon as the party enters the beasts begin to slink from behind the throne, one on either side.

CHIMAERA, LESSER (1-2): (These neutral evil creatures' vital statistics are HD 3d8, AC 14, and HP varies. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with a bite for 1d6 points of damage, 2 claws for 1d4 points of damage, and a tail for 1d3 points of damage. The tail has a poison stinger that causes loss of 1-2 points of dexterity in the round after being stung and 1d4 points of strength in the next round. A successful constitution save negates the poison).

The chimaeras have amassed a small treasure that they have heaped behind the throne; it consists of rogue's tools +1, +1 dagger of venom, chime of opening, and 150gp in assorted coin.

Area 8f: Izarian's Residence - A set of steps leads from the Main Hall up to the only 2nd story room. There is nothing in the room but black ash covering the floor, walls, and ceiling. The four windows are all broken out, and part of the ceiling is missing.

WELL

Area 9: This is a well; it is still serviceable. The water is surprisingly fresh.

GRAIN SILOS

Area 10 and 11: Here are silos, half full of rotted grain. There is nothing of value or interest here.

DUNGEON - LEVEL 1

Area 1: Stairs lead down into what appears to be an empty room. There is a secret door at the back of the room, behind the stairs (CL 6).

Area 2: A narrow corridor runs 140 feet to Area 3. It is five feet wide and damp within.

Area 3a: The passageway opens into a cross corridor 10 feet wide. This corridor makes a rough square. There are two doors on the back wall. Neither of these are locked. An opening in the back corner leads to another passageway.

Area 3b: Just inside and to the right there is a wall. This opens into a room with several broken chairs and barrels. Further inspection will reveal that some of the barrels are not very old. There is a secret door in the wall opposite the entrance (search CL 3).

Area 4a: This is a large, well lit room. The smell of cooking meat is almost overpowering. A table with a platter of roasted meat of some type and tankards of drink is placed in the center of the room. Along the right wall are four barrels, and further back in an inset in the wall is a pile of fire wood, standing three feet high. There is a doorway on the left wall, and an opening to another chamber straight back. Sitting around the table are Hlobane Orcs, which stand immediately when they see the players.

On the right wall on the other side of the barrels is a secret door (search CL 3).

ORCS, HLOBANE, 4 (These lawful evil creatures' vital statistics are HD 2d10, AC 16, and HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with weapon with a +1 to hit or damage. They prefer cleaving weapons, such as axes, bardiches, and halberds. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. The Orc leader has a gold armband worth 125gp. Otherwise each Hlobane carries 2-12 gp and 5-20sp.)

Area 4b: This apparently is the creature's cooking/sleeping chamber. There is a fireplace on the wall opposite the entrance, and a small pile of wood piled to its right. On the edge of the fireplace sets an iron kettle of warm stew. Various furs line the sides of the room. In here, also, is a *battle axe* +2, and a *chainshirt* +2.

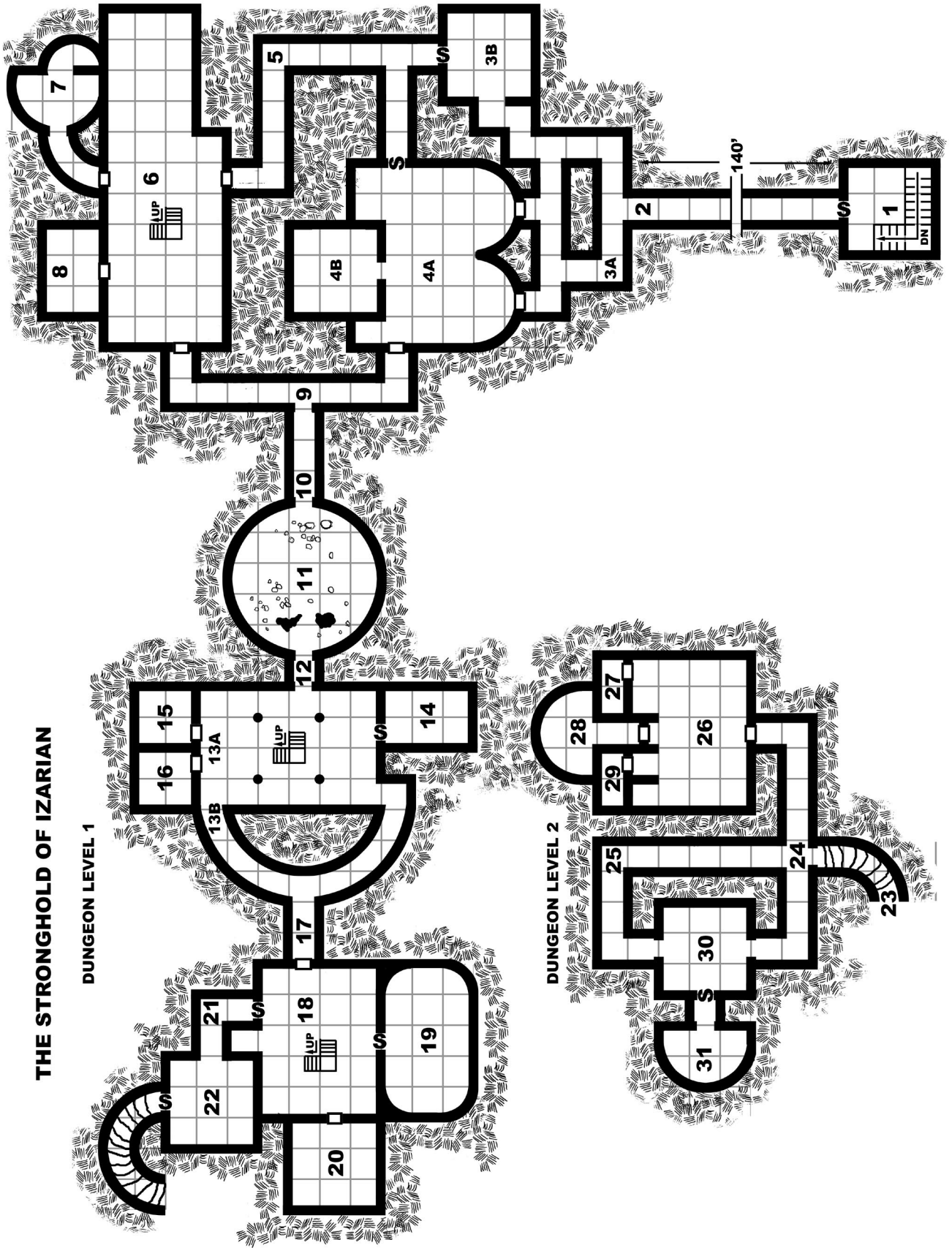
Area 5: A passageway 10 feet wide ends at a secret door that leads into Area 3b, and at the other end a door that leads to Area 6 which is locked (open locks CL 5, break down the door CL 3, hardness 5, HP 20). As the players are turning left down the passage, there is a double blade trap that may be activated.

Double Blade Trap: At CL 2, it strikes with a +8; find and remove traps (CL 4) to clear.

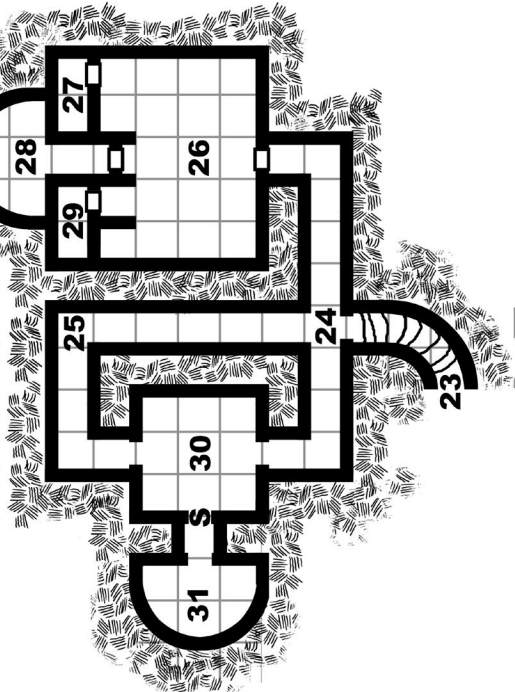
26 CASTLES & CRUSADES

THE STRONGHOLD OF IZARIAN

DUNGEON LEVEL 1



DUNGEON LEVEL 2



The passageway branches also lead to the secret door in **Area 4a**. A rust monster has taken up residence here. It clings to the ceiling, its long antennae stretched down, feeling and listening for prey.

RUST MONSTER (*This neutral creature's vital statistics are HD 5d8, AC 18, and HP 19. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a touch attack that destroys metal equipment. The rust monster eats the metal, leaving the flesh unharmed.*)

Area 6: Supply Room - This long room holds the supplies for the dungeon. There are barrels of ale, oil, grain, dried fruits and meats, bundles of torches, and boxes of loose furs and cloaks. Stacks of spears litter the floor with three large barrels holding bolts, and racks on the walls hold battle axes, short swords, and heavy crossbows. There are four doors in this room which lead to **Areas 5, 7, 8 and 9**. Only the door to **Area 5** is locked (open locks CL 5, break down the door CL 3, hardness 5, HP 20).

Area 7: This small carpeted room is a chapel to the god Unklar. There is an altar in the inset at the back of the room.

Area 8: Inside this room there appears to be a large well. The well actually happens to be a mimic.

MIMIC (*This neutral creature's vital statistics are HD 7d8, AC 15, and HP 35. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a slam attack for 3d4 points of damage. It has darkvision (60 feet), the ability to crush an opponent and mimic shape. Refer to the Monsters & Treasure book for details.*)

Area 9: A 10-foot passageway connects **Areas 4a and 6**. Branching off from this passage is another that ends with a closed portcullis blocking the way. There is a crank on the wall (from area **Area 9** on the left side and from area **Area 10** on the right) which will raise the portcullis.

Area 10: This is a short passageway connecting **Areas 9 and 10**.

Area 11: Here is a chamber, rounded at the corners. The floor is a little rough in this room, and there are two pits in the floor. These are to the right and the left of the main walkway through. There is a large cruel face carved in the wall on the opposite end of the chamber, and the passage passes right through the mouth.

Spiked Pit Trap (40 feet deep): Anyone who falls into the pit must make a successful dexterity check (CL 3) or take 2d6 points of damage. They save for half. A find and remove traps (CL 4) will allow the party to pass safely.

Area 12: Short passageway connecting **Areas 11 and 13a** is found here.

Area 13a: This is a large room below the temple. In the center are stairways that come down from a trap door in the ceiling (see **The Compound Area 6a**). Next to the foot of the stairs, on either side, are columns. There are two doors on the wall to the right, and at the rear of the chamber there are two openings on either side of the chamber. There is a secret door which leads to **Area 14** (search CL 3).

Area 13b: Here is a circle corridor that connects on either end of **Area 13a**. The entrances are five feet wide but expand out to a 10-foot wide corridor. At the very back of the corridor, there is an entrance that has been bricked up (one foot thick, strength check CL 3 to break down). This leads to **Level 1 Area 17**.

Area 14 – Priests' Secret Chamber: There are four wall sconces in this room and carpeting covers the floor. On the wall to the left of the entrance are wall pegs holding silver and gold holy symbols of Unklar (five each). Facing the entrance against the back wall is a large iron bound trunk which is locked (CL 4). Within the trunk is a +1 *shock mace*. This is an evil weapon, which bears the crescent moon of Unklar upon it. If one who is of good alignment picks up the weapon, he will suffer 1d8 points of damage (no warning or save) per round the weapon is held. No damage will be suffered by one of neutral or evil alignment, and they will be able to use the weapon with all of its bonuses.

Area 15: Sleep Chamber - Inside are the broken remains of several beds, a couple of tables, and some wardrobes.

Area 16: Sleep Chamber - Inside are the broken remains of several beds, a couple of tables, and some wardrobes.

Area 17: This is a 10-foot wide passageway connecting **Area 13b** and **Area 18**. The door at the end leading to **Area 18** is locked (CL 3).

Area 18: This large room has a stairway in the middle of the floor which goes up to a trap door (see **Area 8d**). There are two secret doors in this chamber, one (wisdom check, CL 3) which goes to **Area 19**, and one (CL 2) which goes to **Area 21**. There are two doors here as well. One goes to **Area 20** which has the spell *arcane lock* upon it (*dispel magic* CL 4). The other goes to **Area 17**. There is a trap in front of this door.

Spiked Pit Trap (40 feet deep): Anyone who falls into the pit must make a successful dexterity check (CL 3) or take 2d6 points of damage. They save for half. A find and remove traps (CL 4) will allow the party to pass safely.

Area 19 – Secret Holding Chamber: There are many different sizes of cages within this room. Here lie the decayed remains of an infant red dragon, an elf, a salamander, a halfling, a dwarf, several male and female human infants, and on a stone table, the mostly dissected form of a succubus.

Area 20 – Izarian's Private Chamber: Here Izarian made his last stand against the forces of Ore-Tsar. There is nothing in the room but black ash covering the floor, walls, and ceiling. Anyone entering the room must make a constitution save (CL 5), or fall under the effects of a *suggestion* spell, and attempt to flee the stronghold for 1d10 rounds.

Area 21: As the players turn left down the passage, there is a double blade trap that may be activated.

Double Blade Trap: At CL 2, it strikes with a +8; find and remove traps (CL 4) to clear.

Area 22: This open room has tapestries on three walls, and the entrance on the fourth wall. Actually, on the wall to the right of the entrance lies a secret door (CL 4), and a floor trap is in the middle of the room. If the floor trap is activated, the player will fall into the floor, and then be *teleported*, as the spell, to the river where the trek to the Stronghold was begun.

Teleporting Floor Trap: Anyone who looks in the pool must make a successful dexterity save to avoid the effects of the pool (CL 5). If they fail, they are teleported.

Area 23: A slanting, curving passage leads from level one to level two.

Dungeon - Level 2

Area 24: A passage leads to areas multiple directions but toward **Area 26** there is a trap.

Double Blade Trap: At CL 2, it strikes with a +8; find and remove traps (CL 4) to clear.

Area 25: This passage continues on and connects with the back side of **Area 30**. There is a long pool that runs 60 feet down the corridor with one-foot wide ledges on either side that are very slick. If any player touches the water, they are *teleported*, as the spell, to the river where the trek to the Stronghold was begun. As the players are turning left down the passage to area **Area 30**, there is a double blade trap that may be activated.

Teleporting Pool Trap: Anyone who looks in the pool must make successful dexterity save to avoid the effects of the pool (CL 5). If they fail, they are teleported.

Double Blade Trap: At CL 2, it strikes with a +8; find and remove traps (CL 4) to clear.

Area 26 – Izarian’s Laboratory: The room is in shambles. Some type of battle happened here long ago. Broken equipment lies all about with burn marks on the wall and the like. There is nothing of value here.

Area 27: This is a small room with an iron candle stand against either side wall, and a large iron-bound trunk against the back wall.

The trunk is not locked, and within it is 100pp, 1000gp and 3 emeralds worth 100gp each.

Area 28: Here is a small room with an alcove that has a stone shrine to the god Unklar. Resting on the shrine is a wooden box with a rune inscribed on it.

The box is small, deep red, and made of a fine gained wood. The hinges and latch are gold, decorative and exquisitely delicate. A series of runes are engraved on the lid. It is light, obviously made of cherry.

If the box is opened:

The box itself is lined in dark red velvet. In the center of the box is a small raised hump with a matching rune engraved upon it. All about the hump lies a fine sand.

Any Rune Mark in the party is likely to know the name of the rune he is looking at. Muttering the words “*roan at Alenderde gorth*” activates the magic of the rune dust.

Upon uttering the words, the sand begins to gently swirl. It circles the small hump in gentle motions, rising with each circumnavigation. At last the whole of it hovers in the air above the box. Slowly it unfurls into the shape of a piece of parchment. Before you lies the Runes of Creation.

The box is a magical box and the sand within it contains the 11 Runes of Creation (see **The Adventurers Backpack** for more details). Opening the box disturbs the sand. As the sand rises, the runes take shape in the floating sand. Touching the the rune draws it to the fore and allows the Rune Mark or scholar to read the runes.

- | | |
|----|---------------------|
| 1 | Rune of Water |
| 2 | Rune of Shapes |
| 3 | Rune of Horns |
| 4 | Rune of Duplication |
| 5 | Rune of Tongues |
| 6 | Rune of Form: Water |
| 7 | Rune of Nutrients |
| 8 | Rune of Slivers |
| 9 | Rune of Health |
| 10 | Rune of Hope |
| 11 | Rune of Awakening |

These are the 11 Runes of Creation from the Four Pillars. Izarian was clearly nowhere near gaining access to the outer planes that the Winter Runes afford a Rune Mark.

Area 29: A small room lined with shelves. The shelves are lined with jars, some broken, with dried and decayed spell components. None are of any use. The only objects of value here are three scrolls in bone scroll cases, and three *potions of cure serious wounds*. There is one scroll and potion each in a separate leather pouch, with a word in the orcish tongue scrawled on it, meaning “scout.”

Scroll 1: 1st level - *Change Self, Mage Armor, Summon Monster I.*

Scroll 2: 2nd level - *Fog Cloud, Hideous Laughter, Monster Summoning II.*

Scroll 3: 3rd level - *Displacement, Monster Summoning III, Wind Wall.*

Area 30: There is nothing in this room. There is a secret door in this room, search (CL 3), that leads to **Area 31**.

There are, however, several centipedes that have take up residence in this hall. They have wormed their way through the ceiling to the hallway where they dwell. After four rounds of being in the room, the centipedes attack, dropping from the ceiling to the floor or onto the characters.

CENTIPEDES, GIANT (These neutral creatures’ vital statistics are HD 1d6, AC 14, and HP 3, 4, 5. Their prime attributes are physical. They attack with a bite that inflicts 1d4 points of

damage plus a poison that requires a constitution save or become incapacitated for 1d4 turns.)

Area 31: Within this chamber lies the whole, undecomposed body of Miradona. The room is carpeted and she lies on a large bed in the center of the room. The room is lit by a globe in the ceiling (*continual flame*). She is clothed in a simple white robe, with a golden chain attached to her holy symbol, the Wheel of Ore-Tsar.

As the characters enter the room, the globe in the ceiling dims. A soft white light appears over the bed and an apparition speaks to the party.

I have been sent by the god Ore-Tsar. Take the body of Miradona to Haven which lies at the foot of the Dwarven Kingdom of Roheisen Hohle. Here, you are to place the body in the courtyard where I, Philip the Guileless, first spoke to the people of Ore-Tsar. You must get the body there to break the curse on this land!

The vision then disappears.

PATRODL

Once aboard the Red Make, Beritod is told of the next destination and the ship is quickly underway. The clouds are growing much heavier and darker, and it is beginning to snow.

During the journey the air becomes much colder, returning to its normal state. There is a strong wind blowing and the ship makes good time on its return journey to Patrodl. The journey is peaceful for the next few days, unless the CK wishes to stir up the encounters.

The ship comes safely into the bay and anchors at Patrodl. There a group of 12 clerics meet the party, and with them they have a coach with four horses. Sitting just next to the coach is an ornately carved casket. The leader of the group, Gerard, tells the party to place Miradona within the casket.

One cleric takes up a standard bearing the symbol of Ore-Tsar and leads the coach into Haven.

The coach is led to the center of the city, where there is a large courtyard, and in the middle is the statue of Philip the Guileless, a hero of Ore-Tsar. The casket is removed from the coach, and Gerard climbs the steps and mounts the base of the statue. A general blessing is given in the name of Ore-Tsar, and then the accounts of the life of Miradona are spoken aloud. The people of Patrodl are given a few short minutes to view the body of the deceased cleric, and then the casket is carried into the church at the back of the courtyard.

REWARDS

Gerard hails the party and invites them into the church. Once inside he leads them to his study, and bids them to be seated.

We of Ore-Tsar are most grateful for what you have accomplished. What you have done, we realize has been no small feat. Indeed it has been a great undertaking, for you have not only returned Miradona from the clutches

of the horned god's minions, but in doing so you have broken the curse that has filled the land of Holmgald and the surrounding lands for some time. So, enjoy some of the wine here and you will receive your rewards.

With that Gerard exits the room. Two clerics enter a few minutes later, bearing a wooden chest. Within the chest are 20 platinum pieces for each member of the party, as well as a writ for each which is good for lodging anywhere there is a church of Ore-Tsar.

The players are all healed of any wounds they have. They are also given a place to stay within the inn, The Golden Harvest, for one week. This includes all the food and drink they need or want.

LEAVING PATRODL

It is hoped that through "Izarian's Paramour" the players gain enough knowledge of the runes to pick up and continue the quest for them. Knowing their power and the possibilities they offer the enterprising characters, they may even want to become Rune Marks themselves. This noble task necessarily sets the adventurers on a long and difficult quest.

After completion of "Izarian's Paramour" the CK has several choices on how to proceed with the quest for the runes. The adventures pick up with Barren Stone. This adventure is intentionally not placed so that the CK can place it where they wish. If following the adventure path however, the clerics have a task for the party.

Gerard calls the party to another meeting and explains the following.

A local man, something of an antiquarian, Briesach, has gone missing. His servant called our attention to it, remarking that he began babbling about the return of the horned god just before he went missing. He mentioned something about a runic language, magical scripts and the like. He said he was looking for something called the Winter Rune.

We would like this man tracked down and returned to Patrodl if possible, so that we might question him.

They have little to give the characters other than that he went by horse, left two days ago, and went north to the Holmgrad Mountains. The horse was rusty red with a deep black mane. His saddle was once owned by a man named Midlich, and his name is stenciled on the underside of it. His man-servant, Orn, lives in a room above the Twisted Sister, a tavern on Maynard street across from Briesach's tower.

30 CASTLES & CRUSADES

6 HEIGAR'S WAY

Here begins the second set of adventures that brings the characters into the high paths of the northern mountains in pursuit of Briesach the Historiographer. It picks up after Izarain's Paramour or it serves as a simple stand alone. The adventure is broken up into a number of encounters that challenge the characters and occasionally give hints as to the rune lore they seek.

HISTORY UNFOLDING

Briesach the Historiographer spent most of his days pouring over dust covered toms in the hollow halls of ancient libraries. He spent hours bent over iron-banded grimoires, immersed in the contents of their yellowed pages, ever trying to bend their secret knowledge to his understanding. Oft times he is seen through the window of his home, in the small tower on Maynard Street, bent over his desk with stacks of books, sheaves of paper, scrolls and their cases piled up around him, writing or reading by the light of a single candle.

No one knew what ancient knowledge he sought after, nor what drove his lust. They did not question Briesach when he left for many weeks, returning only when he had amassed another collection of books and scrolls. They only knew that Briesach was an historian. He seemed a simple man, for he wore plain clothes and was always clean, his visage unassuming. Breeches, a shirt, and coat in the winter, and always soft-soled boots lined with rabbit fur were his usual fare. He laughed a great deal, particularly when at the Lucky Dog tavern, where he ate and drank almost every night.

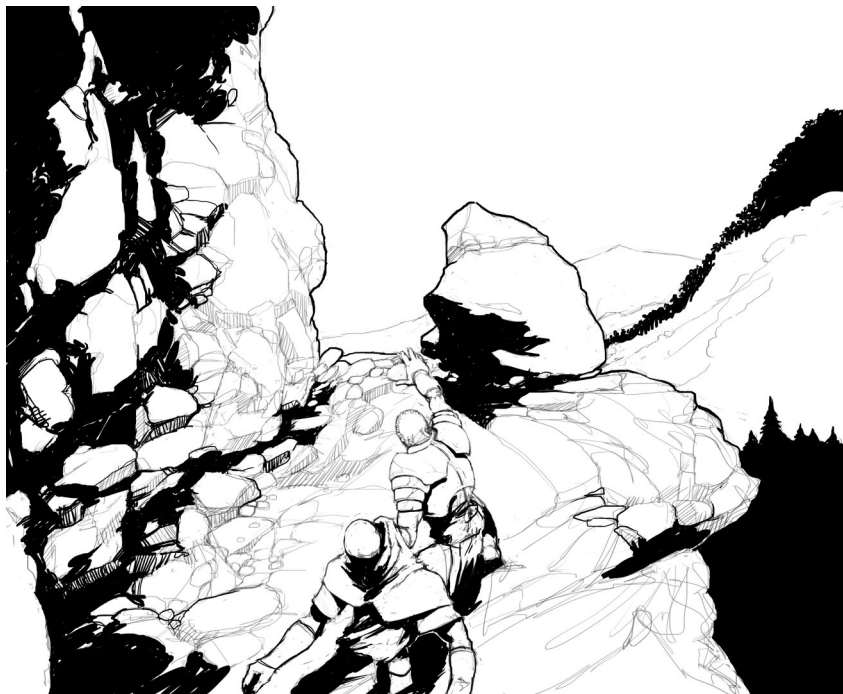
In truth, people knew very little about him. Briesach, you see, was an altogether evil man, a despicable creature without conscience, who could act without remorse. Briesach belonged to a cult of evil, the Crna Ruk, and he paid homage to the Horned God, banished so many years before. It was always his quest to bring back that dread lord and his rule of law and evil.

"Master! Master! What is it? What shout shatters the stillness?"

"Damn you Orn! Hush foolish worm, you interrupt my moment of triumph!" The aged historian wore a look of glee upon his wrinkled face and his beard danced in the shadows of the fire. "You fool, you little fool, can you not see? I have it! I have the staff... this staff, see? Here I have it!"

"What? Master, it is late, and we are but one day returned from our explorations! Hush, or your shouts will bring the watch."

"Damn the watch! Do you not see?" The old man's voice cracked, his white knuckled fingers clutching the staff. "Here, in my hand, is the staff of the Winter Rune! It must be. With the Winter Rune...with the Winter Rune." His voice quieted, "Or rather, bring him forward." Chuckling, Briesach clutched the staff to his chest and began rocking back and forth singing an old tune, a haunting melody.



*"The winter's wind never breaks,
on summer's shore no stop it takes,
The Shroud of Darkness, cold and stark*

The world the Horned God's Winters Dark."

At the utterance of that foul name a shudder came over Orn, a great terror spreading through him so that he fled the hall. He felt, nay knew, that Briesach the historian had slipped into madness. None could speak that name with such glee. Yet, the ghosts of the name hounded him, pursuing him down the streets, laughing at his terror, feeding on his weakness, and he saw his Master's shadow pursuing him. The name of the Horned God rang in his ears and the shadows hounded him all the long night until dawn found him by the river, aggrieved and stricken with madness.

When the watch gathered Orn up and learned of who he was, they returned him to Maynard Street and the tower there, but they found Briesach's house empty. The front door stood open and a horse missing from the stable, but a haunting melody hung in the early morning's air, ringing with the words all those who stood around could hear. The watch shuddered and made the sign of Ore-Tsar in the air, but Orn muttered it aloud so that all could hear, "the Horned God's winter, the Horned God's winter, the Horned God's winter."

QUESTIONS FOR ORN

Orn has worked for Briesach for over 10 years, however he does not know him well. The historian kept quiet about all matters personal, though he had precious few friends and no relatives of which to speak. He knows that the historian is quick to temper but very intelligent. He seems obsessed by the work of dwarves and their runic abilities.

Orn lives in a small room above the Twisted Sister. He is relatively poor, with old clothes and little of any distinction about him. His

hair is long, unkempt, greasy with streaks of gray in it. He wears simple clothes and carries a long dirk at his side. His dark eyes show more cunning than intelligence. He is neutral.

If the party seeks him out and questions him, they can find him in the Twisted Sister, drinking. If they offer him a few coin, 5-10gp, he happily spills the tale. He talks to them about his research and the last conversation he had with the historian, and the copper gold staff. At that point he grows silent and mutters curses of demons and hauntings and madness.

“He’s gone now. Headed north to Unklar’s Iron, along the trail known as Heigar’s Way. He’s going to see if the staff fits the pillar, if it is the one. I know this to be true.” A terror creeps over him and he says little else.

THE TOWER

The small house and tower consist of a one-room building with a 30-foot tower attached to it. The main room has a dining table, fire place, some cupboards and the like. A door in the back leads to the tower. On the bottom floor there are trunks of old clothes, extra food, pots, pans, and odds and ends. The stairs lead up to a study and to where Briesach slept.

An investigation of the tower reveals that Briesach was indeed a historian. His study is littered with books, papers, scrolls, their cases, and other debris. A large table dominates the room and upon it are a score of quills, many used or broken, ink bottles, papers, and maps.



The material is largely concerned with history, much of it about the past centuries, though some of it ancient dwarven scroll about the mountains, their holds, and other material.

If the characters spend time studying the material, they can learn a great deal about the history of the region as outlined in the setting material and they can acquire some maps of the Gottland and Moravan Plains.

One wadded-up sheet of paper has the following scrawled upon it:

“The staff is five feet long, one inch in diameter and made entirely of Oracalcium metal. It reflects the glowing, golden copper color of that metal. The head of the staff is capped by three prongs which serve as a focal point for the runic magic.”

HEIGAR’S WAY

The trails lead north to the feet of the Long Spur and the beginning of Heigar’s Way, the old dwarven track that leads up and into those hills.

His trail is easy to follow as many know where it begins.

The flat lands give way to gently rolling hills. For many hours you lumber your packs and gear through country, broken but gentle. Your muscles stretch, settling into the brisk walk up and over hills. All the while the purple-hazed mountains loom in the distance, their snow-capped peaks stretching into the heavens, a ramp to the gods above. After many hours thus, the trail closes off. The track gives way to a narrower path, one carved into the rock. You pull yourselves up, adjusting packs to fit the new gait, and move on up into the mountains. You come at last to a sign, carved in a great stone. In the Dwarf tongue of old, it reads: “Here begins Heigar’s Way. Upon rock and beneath Stone. Turn back, lest you be made of the mountain’s bone.” Whether a warning or challenge, you turn and look behind you. The path falls away into a steep bolder-riddled slope. Jagged rocks and gullies dot the landscape as it stretches down, down to the hills below and the plains and sea beyond. Little had you realized how far you had come.

This trail begins on the southern slopes of the Long Spur of the Holmgrad Mountains and traverses the 75+ miles into the highlands between the Gottland and Moravan Plains; the trail itself winds through the mountains. In ancient times this route served the Dwarves as a main trade route to those folks who lived to the north. Heigar the Dwarf and his folk carved the track out with pick and axe, over and through the mountains.

Spaced regularly, every 8-10 miles along the track are small shelters, cut from the very stone. These served travelers in ancient days even as they do today. Of course, time has eroded many of these sheltering caves into little more than nubs in the rock, or erased them altogether. Those that remain in good shape serve to protect the traveler from both the weather and what dangerous creatures stalk the mountain tops. If the characters make that distance in a day, they should be able to reach one.

7 BARREN STONE

This adventure finds the characters traveling on a section of trail that snakes along the top of a large ridge line with little or no shelter. It continues the adventure begun in Heigar's Way or serves as a stand-alone adventure if desired.

A storm of divine origin rolls over the high mountains, driving the characters to seek shelter. The only shelter they find is a large cromlech, built off the main road. The cromlech is the work of stone giants, who built the structure many years ago. The storm creates magical creatures that fall from the sky. These beasts begin sniffing out living things, the characters, and hunting them.

The encounter is designed as a running battle between the party and the ignith beasts. The creatures attack singly and in pairs, attempting to pull down and kill party members. The CK should set the number of beasts that attack by the relative strength of the party and their own designs. The running fight can take place over several hours of game time with a dog hitting them every few minutes, followed by an occasional pack of 2-4 dogs. The cromlech is of course the only area of safety for the party, offering some shelter and some defense and an avenue of escape if they locate it.

GODSTORM

The country here is wide, the mountains looming in the north, the sea a distant memory. The country is cool, but dry, the rocky slopes and hills covered with rock slides and the like. As the morning gives way, a storm brews in the north; black clouds roll over the countryside. Lightning sparks in their depths.

The characters watch the storm approach; it is moving very rapidly. Any with outdoor experience can make a wisdom save (CL 8, CL 4 for druids and rangers); if successful they realize that the storm is not natural.

In fact, the storm is the direct result of a battle between two gods, Amenexl, Lord of the Dark Fey, and Angrim the Black. The latter is a god of Dwarves who possess a Viking longboat able to fly in the skies. Amenexl is an evil creature bent on possessing the runes of old. He wages war on Angrim's ship, raining magics upon it while Angrim the Black hurls *javelins of lightning* at him. The result is a tremendous light display throughout the clouds, with chain lightning arcing from the deep clouds, above and below.

Each time Amenexl's magic strikes Angrim's attempts to block the blow with his shield. When he does so, a large rumbling sound like thunder follows, and a shower of sparks tumble earthward. The sparks are laden. Most burn out before they strike the ground, but some few, the most powerful, hit the earth with a heavy impact. The shock of the earth-strike wakens them to life. Called ignith dogs by the dwarves, these creatures assume the form of a six-legged reptilian beast.

The ignith dogs range out, looking for prey to kill and devour. They stay on the hunt until they are killed.

The tumultuous clouds range the whole length of the northern horizon. Seething to the south, seemingly driven by the energy of the lightning storm that ranges at its center. From there, huge arcs of lightning branch out, stretching their sheering white fingers into the darkening sky. Rumbles roll across the broad valley, a thunderous clash of sound, that brings to mind the madness of battle. In the midst of this appears a blinding light, a detonation that sends a torrent of sparks through the air, tumbling downward. In the shadow of their light it seems a boat, long and dark, cuts through the clouds.

Any dwarf in the party knows the boat is a sign of Angrim the Black. Anyone else should be allowed a charisma check for bards (CL 4) or intelligence check (CL 5) for anyone else to have knowledge of the Dwarf's boat. It is far less likely that anyone will know the source of the ignith dogs, intelligence (CL 8).

REIGN OF FIRE

The storm moves rapidly over the valley, covering the horizon from east to west. A wall of darkness creeps along the valley as the storm blots out the clouds. By mid-day the wall creeps over the ridge and road upon which the characters are following. South of them the sun shines like a light upon the land; to the north it is dark and stormy. Above them the battle of light rages on as the gods wrestle for control of whatever the fight is over.

Any cleric in the party has a chance to understand fully that what they are witnessing is a battle between two gods. With a successful check they may even know which gods wage battle above them.

About the time the cloud passes over the party and darkness covers them, everyone begins to hear a faint howling from the north. A quick look reveals little in the gloom, but occasionally a light is seen here and there, moving rapidly across the ground. There is more howling.

No matter what the characters do, the dogs will gain their scent and as soon as one does it howls to its companions who all come running.

The first one that spies the characters does so from a small hill top about 200 feet away. It howls a long, excited howl that sounds more like popping electricity than a dog howl. As soon as the howl ends the beast bends its nose to the ground and charges the characters. It is now that they spy it.

The beast runs with an exaggerated lopping motion. At first it appears to be a work, dark, running low to the ground. When the beast looks up, its pure white eyes belie its origin. Some magical beast, you quickly realize that its long, knob-capped tail and six legs make its gait angular and off balance. Rows of sharp teeth line the creature's mouth and it opens its maw in anticipation of the attack to come.

The ignith dog (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**) leaps through the air upon the party, attacking the target nearest to it.

IGNITH DOG, 1-100 (*These chaotic evil creatures' vital statistics are HD 1d6, 14 AC, and HP varies. The creatures' primary attributes are physical. They attack with bite dealing 1 point of damage. On a successful bite the ignith dog is able to discharge a searing bolt of electrical current for 1d4 more points of damage; victims save versus constitution for no effect. They are also able to tail slap for 1d4 points of damage. The ignith dog possesses an SR of 2. They do not have any treasure.*)

The party should dispatch these dogs pretty quickly, but there are more howls coming from the shadows. Anyone who takes the time to look sees the figures of these beasts or the lights of their eyes moving across the broken, rocky ground. They stop from time to time and howl.

Here the running battle begins. The characters are not in a defensible area. The ridge is broad and flat and the ground for miles around is broken, filled with gravel covered slopes and deep gulches. The dogs are moving rapidly over open country; the party has to hole up in a circle or head for shelter.

Place the cromlech where it best fits the tone of the game. If the running fight is going to be a long one, it should be some distance off, forcing the characters to cover the ground and encounter numerous packs of dogs. On the other hand, if the fight should be engaged quickly and serve only as a small episode, place the cromlech closer.

Note: Running battles are very fun for characters as they contain an element of uncertainty and fear in the lack of protection. The damage the party takes should be relatively small, slowly bleeding them out, but the number of dogs slain should be high, giving the party a sense of power. When their reactions play out the party should begin to grow fearful, slowly realizing that though the monsters die easily, their own strength is playing out. It makes for a desperate party and a fun game.

Whatever the approach, the characters should spy one rock formation in the long, broad valley, the Cromlech.

THE STONE GIANTS

Long ago the stone giants came to this valley. They lived the rocky hills and cliffs, building homes. A city of sorts sprawled across the valley floor, carved from the rock itself. They constructed high walls around their homes and deep tunnels underneath. Thus, they dwelt in relative peace as stone giants are wont to do.

In those days they trafficked much with their bearded cousins, the dwarves, and their wares spread to the east and west. The dwarves armed the giants with iron weapons and armor, but in time the long wars that the dwarves fought wasted their numbers and left their kingdoms shadows of their former selves, and the trade dried up. The giants continued to live in their valley, but in reduced condition.

Then the trolls discovered them. Ever at war with each other, the trolls gathered a great host of their people, fleshing out their numbers with orcs and other such foul creatures. They fell upon the giants, bringing war to the valley. In the opening

assault many giants fell, mostly the young and elderly, and some women caught unawares, but the giants mustered and closed their gates, holding the army at bay. For three years the trolls lay siege to the city until at last they broke down the walls and plundered all within. Long and hard the fight raged, but in the end the giants fell, their city thrown down and turned to dust.

Only one edifice remained, a ring of stones built like a house, with a great stone set on top, the cromlech. It was the heart of the town, a temple of sorts, if such creatures pay homage to the gods. If the trolls could not break, though they tried, hurling hammers of iron, bolts of power, and flesh and bone against it. The stone suffered no damage, nor did it move. The stones were deep, driven by the giants to the bowels of the world so they took root into the back of the great dragon Inzae, and thus avoided the misfortunes of the war.

In their rage all the valley was turned to gravel and dust, reduced to nothing. Only the cromlech survived, as it does to the modern era.

THE CROMLECH

The cromlech sits on top of a small promontory upon the ridge, set just off to the north. It consists of five huge stones, each about eight feet wide and twelve feet tall. On top of them all another stone lies, covering the whole thing in a roof. The place is about 50 feet in diameter and easily houses the party. The stones of the wall are set closely together so that there is only one doorway, but it is a good eight feet wide. All of the rocks are smooth except for the largest of the wall rocks, the one on the northern wall. This one has hosts of vertical lines cut into it. If there is a stone mason or dwarf here they can, on a successful check, determine that the lines are natural (CL 4).

The interior of the cromlech offers some shelter, though the unevenly placed rocks allow some of the dogs to climb the rock itself and slip into the room. The doorway, too, is open.

Getting on top of the stone is not difficult for an experienced climber, though very difficult to everyone else (CL 9).

It is up to the party to choose what to do next. The dogs attack until the party is all slain or the dogs themselves are all dead.

ESCAPE

The stone upon the northern wall of the cromlech is the largest of the wall stones. It is huge, roughly 10 feet wide and 12 feet tall. The vertical lines disguise a door built into the rock by the stone giants. A successful search check (CL 5) reveals the door and the small lever that opens it.

Etched into the stone are several runes, as well as the letters H and W. A successful charisma check for a Rune Mark reveals the lettering to be dwarven and probably indicates that Heigar's Way goes beneath the ground.

The door opens to a small landing and a ramp leading down into utter darkness. The stairs are broad and deep and made for a stride larger than a man or dwarf's. They lead down about 100



feet to a huge tunnel carved into the rock. The tunnel heads in a western direction.

If the characters take the ramp, they quickly find the tunnel. The whole area is quiet and free of disturbance. The tunnel is about 15 feet high and 10 feet wide. They follow it for over a mile until it ends in a large natural cavern that stretches on through the darkness.

Here where the tunnel ends and the cavern begins, they find a skeleton. It is a stone giant child. The bones are oversized, but the whole creature was about six feet tall. The ribs of the creature are broken and shattered.

There is nothing on the bones, but clutched in the creature's hands is a crown made of stone, wrought in flowing patterns with diamonds mounted into its crest. It is the *crown of the stone giants*, a powerful item, long lost to that kindred.

If they follow the tunnels and caves, they eventually, after two days of travel, arrive at another set of stairs. These rise up, and following them places the party at a similar door that opens in a wide cliff, overlooking a narrow valley.

You exit on a broad shelf of rock that tops a long, gentle, but rocky slope which overlooks a deep, broad canyon. The shelf sits at the foot of a broad mountain that towers over you, clawing its way into the heavens upon shoulders of rock. The sky is clear and blue, the air crisp as mountain air is wont to be. Not far from you, 400-500 feet down, you spy a horse in a small vale, sheltered by two arms of the mountain. The beast is rusty-red with a black mane and a saddle. There is no rider in sight. It is grazing upon a tuft of grass at the foot of a 12-foot high dark obelisk.

This must be the horse Briesach stole to flee into the mountains. Proof is found on the saddle where the name Midlich is stenciled.

OF GODS & IRON

The Obelisk is Unklar's Iron, that place where Nulak-Kiz-Din first opened the Wall of Worlds and stepped through to the Void to find Unklar (see Unklar's Iron the **Codex of Aihrde Expansion: Gottland**). Briesach came here by a narrow trail from the south; he discovered the Winter Rune went missing and whilst cursing his luck was taken by the two frost giants who dwell in the mountains to the north. His equipment and gear they carted off, though the horse avoided this fate.

If the characters choose to follow, the tracks are easy enough to find. A simple track check (CL 5) reveals the struggle and capture and the path leading to the north.

8 GOLDEN THREADS

The encounter takes place along the hills or slopes of any mountains. Use this with the ongoing adventure, or insert at another time or place. Porting to another locale is very easy. It involves the characters discovering a small waterfall, behind which is a cavern filled with the debris of the ancient world. The room is littered with debris, but in and amongst it are several magical items. A small magical chest brings the characters to an extra-dimensional space where they encounter a magic cloth, the likes of which they've never seen before.

If coming from Barren Stones, the frost giant trail leads onto a narrow mountain path and veers west.

The trail tops a small ridge, dipping down into a broad valley. The valley itself continues for many miles. In the south it is flanked by a line of broken hills, cut with gulches and gullies, crowned by large boulders and other broken stone. To the north the valley climbs in a series of ridges for several hundred feet, contained by a line of pine trees. Several of these ridges, each higher than the next, climb many thousands of feet into the rock crags of the mountain above; they rope in the valley, coiling around the far western end.

The trail clings to the northern ridge line, just beneath the line of trees. It follows an even contour, being largely leveled by the dwarves who carved it so many thousands of years ago. Markers stand along the way, every few miles; these too are remnants of times long past.

The sun is setting when the characters, having crossed half the long valley to come to a small tumbling creek. A stone bridge crosses it, but it is much abused by time and weather. The creek itself, babbling and tumbling over a host of rocks carved from the ground, promises cool and very fresh drinking water.

Anyone who bends down next to the water to fill their flasks or take a drink can't help but notice a thin trail of gold moving with the current of the water. The gold acts much like in other liquid, pulled and pushed by moving water. It is clearly visible, marking out the various twists and turns of the currents, pooling here and there for a moment before it is pulled downstream, or coiling around itself as it rushes on into the oblivion of the sea. It cannot be grasped; any attempt to touch it pushes the liquid away from the hand much like milk in water.

The gold originates up in the mountain. If the characters choose to follow it, they can easily do so by following the course of the stream. It winds up several steep courses, climbing the first ridge line where it has cut a channel for itself. Beyond the first ridge lies several hundred feet of flat grassy area. The stream snakes across this to a pool which sits beneath a tall cliff, fed by a waterfall several hundred feet tall. The golden thread of liquid winds up the stream into the pool, vanishing beneath the dark eddy of the water.

The water is very cold and the area very loud due to the amount of water falling in the distance. The characters should hear the waterfall as they top the first ridge.

The water is home to an undine, a water foul. In times long past these creatures were born of the residue of slime rolling from the All Father's back, washed away by the rains. They are filled with evil intent and desires. This particular creature lies dormant at the bottom of the pool, noticeable only to the keenest of eye. A successful wisdom check (CL 12) reveals a slight bluish tint to the water at the bottom of the pool. This is its natural color.

Anyone who moves near or touches the pool, stream, or waterfall alerts the undine to its visitors. He does not attack but rather rises slowly to the surface to investigate and listen. The creature understands most spoken languages. If the water foul takes any hint that they might discover the cave behind the waterfall and/or enter it, he immediately climbs up the waterfall, shapeshifting himself into a darkened shadow of a human/statue.

While climbing up the water, those around the pool have a chance of seeing the strange bluish tint moving in the water; successful wisdom save CL 10. Even if they see it, though, they must have particular knowledge of the creature to know what it is.

The undine waits there, hoping to attract the attention of one of the party members. If someone comes close, he attacks, attempting to grab his victim; if successful he falls backward into the deep pool to drown his prey.

WATER FOUL, UDINE (*This neutral evil creature's vital statistics are HD 4d8, AC 14, and HP 25. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam for 1d6 points of damage. They use their camouflage and change shape ability to hide until they can strike, attempting to achieve an improved grab attack, and pulling their victims under water where they drown them.*)

The water foul's treasure: at the bottom of the pool are the remnants of the creature's catch. Several sets of bones lie there, but also scattered coin worth 200gp, and a small iron cask of 32 gems, all worth 15gp. There is a magical ring as well. It has an inscription etched into its inner ring, a name: Crymyr. Crymyr is a famous craftsman and druid, known in the lands of Haltland and Holmgald for his magic wares. It is worth 400gp.

Crymyr's Shape (ring): The wearer of this ring can shape stone or wood as per the 3rd level spell on command. A non-druid character is limited to a 10 cubic foot area and requires 3 rounds to shape 1 cubic foot of wood or 10 rounds to shape 1 cubic foot of stone. In the hands of a druid character this ring functions identically to the 3rd level druid spell, except the druid can shape 2 cubic feet of stone or wood per round with an area of effect of 20 cubic feet + 2 cubic feet per level.

Assuming the characters investigate the waterfall, they quickly discern a wide chamber beneath and beyond it. It is dark and damp, as only a flickering light from the sky above penetrates the falling water.

Beneath the tumbling water you see a broad, deep cavern. It is lit by a shaft of light spilling through the broken roof; weathering has recently caused a minor cave at the back of the larger one, and a steady stream of water pours into the room. The years and

36 CASTLES & CRUSADES

water have etched deep crevices and jagged edges throughout, but despite this a broad, open (if rough) floor greets you. The room once housed more than time however, for a large table stands in the back with water falling directly onto it from above, and a single chair lying on the floor next to it. Several casks stand to one side; next to them is a trunk, its lid fallen in. An iron bed, its bedding long gone and much of its shape rusted, sits not far from the table. Above it all three chains hang from the roof of the cave, holding old lanterns.

No monsters dwell here. The water foul has long kept the cave safe from invasion. Much of the property here is rotten and even a little stress through use causes it to collapse. The table is an exception, made of hearty wood, seasoned and coated with thick resins; it holds up to use. Scattered pewter dishes lie about the table.

The cave was once home to Diab, a hermit in service to the Og-Aust. Fleeing his homeland in the far south, he sought to find the gods by climbing to the roof of the world. He made it to this hidden cavern and dwelt out the remainder of his life, until the water foul moved into the pool guarding his home. It slew him and there his bones lie at the bottom of the pool.

Searching the room reveals little of value. The trunk is large, brought here by dwarves who traded what knowledge the hermit had. It has old rotten clothes in it, a long dirk, a club with several symbols written on it, and a cable backed bow. This bow, fashioned from drift wood, has been reinforced with golden threads taken from the stream below. The threads are magical, giving the bow its unbreakable nature and adding a +1 to any to hit bonus. There are also seven arrows in the trunk. An old suit of leather armor, much wasted and unusable, lies in the bottom of the trunk. Some fishing material rests here as well.

On the far side of the room next to the bed is a barrel with several tools in it, a hammer, an axe, and several iron spikes.

The item of most value, however, is a small iron cask. It was sitting on the table but has been knocked into the stream of water; the characters can easily follow the trail of gold to the cask. It is made of black iron, six inches long by four inches wide by four inches tall, and has a flat top. There is no key or lock on the trunk, but the water lapping around it is pulling upon a single thread of gold that hangs from within; this is the source of the golden thread of liquid that spills down the course of the waterway. It ends the moment the box is lifted and the thread removed from the water.

The box is not locked but has these letterings etched onto its surface: *"Health is found in the Sleeping."* It is a double meaning; sleep heals wounds of course, but health is also found if the maiden that rests in the box is left to her slumbers.

The lid opens with a golden light; it caresses your face in warmth. You are immediately comforted and feel as if the day's toils have given way, if only a little. Within the box is the tiny figure of woman laying on a dais. The dais is round and covered in crumpled golden sheets, the source of the warmth. A woman of surpassing beauty

lies atop the sheets in gentle slumber. Uncovered and wholly nude, her legs she has drawn up, knees to her breasts; her body bends a little forward, giving her form a circular shape with one arm draped across her legs, her other folded over her eyes and head, and her fingers vanish in the thick curls of her red hair. Her skin is smooth and her long limbs lay in restful repose. A single golden thread hangs from the box.

The box is magical and the woman inside a fire spirit of tremendous power. She dwells in the inter-dimensional space created for her eons in the past. She always sleeps, ensorcelled by the golden sheets upon which she lies. She dwells in her own dream world in contented happiness.

It is dangerous to disturb her, or attempt to wake her; any such attempt causing her to stir in her slumber will cause the sheets turn from gold to red and the glow to become scorching hot. Anyone looking in or attempting to touch her suffers 1d12 points of damage; a successful dexterity save reduces this damage by half.

Entering the dimensional space through a *teleport* or similar spell is equally dangerous, for the whole dimension is no more than the bed upon which she lies and the sheets offer their potent charms to any who touch them. Anyone who enters the dimensional space must make an intelligence saving throw or suffer the affects of a dreaming (CL 18) spell, lulled into a comatose state and unable to act in any way. They remain in this state so long as they are in the dimensional space.

If left to her slumber, any who gaze upon her are healed of the world's tribulations; exhaustion fades, hunger and thirst are relieved, and wounds healed. For every turn one gazes upon the open box they are healed 1 HP. Exhaustion fades at double the normal rate, and hunger and thirst are not felt nor do they affect the character. It is important to note, however, that these latter two effects are not permanent. While looking at the box, characters can do nothing. Disturbing them breaks the spell and no further aid is granted.

The thread can be pulled gently and removed from the dimension, or returned to the box. The thread is strong, requiring +3 or better magic to cut or dissolve it. Once cut, it is very powerful, as thin as any thread, but of such magic that it is almost unbreakable, serving to tie up things such as the bow above. Pulling the thread, however, runs the risk of waking up the fire spirit; any pull of six inches or more results in her moving, and she wakes up on a roll of 1 on a d20.

She wakes to what end the CK should determine.

ELEMENTAL, FIRE (These neutral creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 17 and HP 39. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with slam for 1d4 damage and burn 1d2 damage. They have darkvision 60 feet, immunity to fire and regenerate 2 hit points per round. Their flame is hot enough to light combustible materials.)

9 JUNLUTH'S HOUSE

The encounter takes place along the Dwarven Road that winds through the spur of the Holmgrad Mountains. This encounter should allow the characters to rest and refit their gear and also allow them to learn the early teachings, if such is necessary, of the Rune Lore. The trail of the frost giants leads beneath the house.

Junluth is a very old Dwarf; he is the last of his line, a people who settled in these mountains long ago, long before the Winter Dark. He has kin living in Roheisen Hole to the far east and some others scattered in the northern hills, but only he remains of those who carved the road through the mountains. He is a kindly dwarf, one who travels into the north often, but rarely into the south. He and the frost giants have an understanding.

Junluth is a master stone mason and has spent his many years in the study of rune lore, both magical and other. He prides himself in his knowledge and is more than happy to impart it to any willing enough to listen.

THE HILLS HAVE EYES

Travel in the mountains is slow; at best the characters can make six miles each day. Long neglect and some particularly vicious weather patterns have battered these central walkways so that, though noticeable, they are hard to navigate. Loose stones, gravel runs, and ice patches all make the trek difficult. High upon the roof of the world, as the dwarves say, gives one exposure to the sun. After many days of travel following the frost giants on a narrow trail through the mountains, the party should be a little worn down.

The trail snakes around a wide butte, spilling out onto a gigantic flat rocky plateau, several thousand feet wide. On the far side the trail enters a small canyon. The canyon is roofed above, not by the rocky cliffs, but by a house. You see the undeniable signs of a porch, a doorway, and several windows, all made into a wall designed to span the cleft.

If it is night time or near it, light spills from one of the windows. Smoke rises from a chimney on the house's top.

Junluth's house is built upon a bridge over the canyon. It is about 60 feet wide, made of carefully carved stone that makes it appear as if there is but one block of stone there. His porch extends the length of his house. Access to the house is gained by metal pins carefully designed to fit into pre-cut holes in the surface of the cliff. These are cleverly hidden in the shadows of the cleft beneath and above his house.

Sitting upon his porch, Junluth spies the characters as they come around the butte. He fetches his telescope and watches them from inside the house as they pass over the rock, trying to ascertain their nature.

When they come within shouting distance of the house he comes out on the porch. He wears a suit of +4 chain mail under his shirt, well hidden from prying eyes. He hails them and asks, in a very friendly tone, where they are headed.

38 CASTLES & CRUSADES

While they talk, he uses a *ring of detect alignment* to determine whether they are evil or good. If evil he ignores them and prepares to flee his house through the roof. If good he strikes up a conversation and offers them a safe place to sleep and a good meal if they desire. He asks only for news of the south and east and anywhere else they care to talk about.

To gain access to the house, Junluth must first climb down. He does so using the iron pins, placing each in a hole and lowering to the next. He is very skilled at it and moves very fast. He brings extra pins for the others to use. For any unable to scale the cliff, he drops down a rope ladder.

Junluth is a rune mark of some distinction. His fathers before him were All Fathers of their clan and had mastered the runes. Though his knowledge is not as great as theirs, he has a good command of the discipline. If the characters are good and willing to talk, he expounds upon the skills of the rune lords and offers to explain whatever items they have picked up along the way. He explains that this country and the lands to the west are filled with the magic of the runes, for here the dwarves had a great traffic of goods in "olden times." Any questions about the frost giants yield that they passed several days previous, under the house and into the canyon, no doubt to their home in the north. He is also aware of Unklar's Iron and explains that it is where a powerful wizard crossed into the Void long ago.

He is very open and teaches what he can.

If the season is late, he offers to keep the party for the winter and teach the characters interested in rune lore the mastery of a few of the runes. Any Rune Mark in the party can attempt to master a new rune of their choice. He also imparts what skills he has for surviving in the mountains, snow, etc.

Castle Keepers may want to advance time, allowing characters to gain valuable information both about rune lore and wilderness survival, as well as dwarven culture and a greater history of the world they are walking through.

In any case the dwarf keeps the party fed and watered and offers a safe harbor, asking nothing in return except, if ever they come to his house after his passing, to make certain that he is buried in stone in the high mountains above his home, somewhere he says "that I can see the whole of the world, from the sea to the south to the skies that dome us all. Of mountains, rock, and stone, I've seen it all."

JUNLUTH (*This 4th level, chaotic good, dwarf Rune Mark has 23 HP and an AC 21. His primary attributes are wisdom and dexterity. His significant attributes are dexterity 14 and wisdom 16. He has a suit of +4 chain mail, +1 shield and a +3 short sword. He carries a battle axe of wounding as well. His battle axe serves as his relic, and has four runes on it: glyph, mind trail, nuclei, and bands.*)

His treasure is well hidden far out on an ice field to the north. He will not reveal it under any circumstance.

When the party departs, Junluth fills their satchels with food, water, and other supplies such as bandages. He gives them each one of the *nord stones* that heal those who use them.

10 OVER CHASMS DEEP

The encounter takes place along an old dwarven track that winds through the Long Spur. Adjust the hit points or number of monsters as needed. Porting to another locale is very easy, the Castle Keeper only needs a mountain terrain with a chasm.

If coming from *Jumluth's House*, the frost giant trail leads over the chasm.

Over Chasms Deep involves the characters crossing a wide, long, stone bridge that spans a chasm of unknown depth. The chasm is home to ancient powers who demand a toll in coin and blood. When anyone steps foot upon the bridge itself the creatures are alerted to their passage and begin rapidly climbing the walls of the chasm until they hit the edge of the bridge, spilling over onto its cobbles. They demand a toll from any crossing over; this always involves coins, but this time, it involves the characters feeding them one of their own.

When the dwarves of old carved this mountain road, they chose to push the trail through the valley and build a bridge across the chasm there. It promised, and was indeed, easier work than continuing to carve through the stone of the cliffs. The bridge they built from stone quarried along the foot of the northern cliff. It has withstood the harsh environment and the test of time, testament to the craftsmanship of the dwarves.

During the construction, however, they discovered that the chasm was home to some foul minded creatures, the kuthite; creatures with the torsos of men but the bodies of snakes. The creatures offered the dwarves free passage if a dwarven champion could best their own. The dwarves took up the challenge, and on winning it, continued work. A few days passed and another kuthite offered a challenge. This time the dwarf was killed and the creature demanded the dwarves destroy their bridge. The dwarves slew the beast and a battle broke out between the dwarves and others that lived in the chasm. The battle proved costly and the dwarves offered to pay the creatures in order to gain passage. The creatures took the deal and retreated into the darkness, leaving the dwarves to finish their bridge.

The deal, however, was not honored and after a time the beasts returned to the span, haunting those who traveled over it. It became a test to a traveler's courage, whether he would cross the bridge, or shoulder packs to journey through the high mountains.

Thus, the bridge earned its name The Firthnach Span, "The Bridge of Courage".

It has been many years since any have used the bridge and the creatures are hungry for battle. When the characters come to it, they immediately begin their rapid climb to the top.

FIRTHNACH

The mountain trail caps a sharp edged ridge, plunging then several hundred feet down to a broad plain. The plain itself is nestled in a wide open-ended bowl-shaped valley of rocky cliffs. The valley is dissected by a deep chasm spanned by a very old-looking stone bridge. The cliffs loom over the plain, promising little chance of passage without a risky climb through the mountains.



The trail drops steeply before the party. As they walk and climb down, rocks slide out from under them and small dirt-slides tumble down the cliff face. Each character must make a successful dexterity check (CL 2) or tumble 10 odd feet down the cliff. No damage is taken, but they are dirtied and their equipment is jostled around. If any fall, they must roll a second check as they continue the descent. The check must be repeated until they stop falling or after five checks have been made. Each fall after the first causes 1-2 points of damage. If they fall five times consult the Castle Keepers Guide for equipment damage, or barring that, just roll for an item breaking, such as a torn water flask, ripped pants, a broken pommel, etc.

Once at the bottom the party should be assured of the risky nature of any climb through the valley area.

The plain of the valley is roughly three miles wide from trail head to trail head. The valley length from the mountain cliffs to mountain cliffs is about one mile.

There is nothing living in the valley, nor any signs of occupation. Two stone edifices stand on the trail, one on either side of the bridge; each edifice is about mid-way between the cliff and the bridge.

Any experienced mountain traveler, which much of the party must be by now, may detect the signs of work on the northern cliff. At its feet on the eastern side, the dwarves carved much of the stone for the bridge itself. There, cut into the rock-face are signs of their work. A successful search, either wisdom or intelligence check, (CL 5) reveals the cut surface. Nestled inside

is a secret door opening to a stairway that leads down into the chasm. The dwarves carved this during the battle for the bridge.

When the party is about 500 feet from the edifice, they detect writing chiseled into the stone. The writing is in Dwarven Runes. To any who can read the dwarf tongue, it says the following "Firthnach."

This is a dwarven word with several meanings. When used in mining it means either *unbroken stone* or *courage*.

THE CHASM

The chasm itself is roughly 1000 feet deep. Its sides are cliffs that could be navigated by a skilled climber, but would prove very troublesome to the unskilled. The chasm is only about a mile long, as long as the plain above. Giant mushrooms, fungus, molds, and moss grow in the cool deep; beginning about 300 feet from the bottom, these strange plants serve the kuthite as food and shelter. It is also here where they store their loot and treasures.

ACROSS THE SPAN

As soon as someone's foot touches the cobbles of the bridge, the kuthite below are alerted. They waken from their long, drug-embalmed slumber and begin looking up. The greatest of them starts his climb immediately. It takes him only a few rounds to hit the bottom of the bridge. As the characters approach the apex of the bridge a huge serpentine body throws itself over the pass: even before it lands, the head and torso of a man appear.

Beneath you, in the deep dark chasm, the cool air brings a clattering noise; at first it seems to be rocks sliding but quickly you realize something is sliding over the rocks. It rises from the deep, very quickly.

Unless the party is extremely quick, running at least at 40 feet per round, the kuthite rises to the apex before they reach it. The creature is huge, snaking around the bridge, rising above the whole much like a cobra would. In its hand is a bow, with an arrow nocked but not drawn.



Others hang back, but anyone who even casually glances off the bridge sees them, clinging to the rocky surface and watching. They too carry bows.

The one on the bridge says the following, or something very near it: "You may not pass, oh worthy strangers. This bridge is mine, taken from the dwarves of old, and to cross it you must pay the bridge's toll."

If asked what that toll might be, the kuthite responds, "pride." The party must choose a champion and best the kuthite, by killing it or dying in the attempt. If the champion fails, the party may not cross and must return the way they came. If he or she wins, the party has free passage and may take whatever possessions from his body they desire.

The party can attempt to talk their way through the encounter. The kuthite are hungry for sport and battle but if the party is able to flatter them, or pay them enough (probably close to 5000gp worth of items or coin) the kuthite might consider it. Any persuasion attempt should be made against a CL of 9, accounting for the creature's hit dice, but also for its unusual desire for battle.

NOTE: The CK should judge carefully. Kuthite have seven hit dice and a fairly strong AC. If the characters are still lower level, be sure to roll a lower number of HP to the kuthite.

If the party takes the challenge, the battle commences with an outcome determined by the dice. If the party chooses to attack as a group, more kuthite join into the fray. The CK should weigh the encounter accordingly.

Whenever the main kuthite is killed, the others flee to the chasm below.

KUTHITE (*This neutral evil creature's vital statistics are HD 7d8, AC 18, and HP is variable. His primary attributes are mental. He attacks with a long bow or constriction. He always gains a +2 when shooting the bow, and gains a +2 on damage. After a successful constriction attack in the following round, he automatically deals 1d8 points of damage. He has an SR 2. The kuthite always carry +1 long bows and a quiver of magical +1 arrows. The kuthite on the bridge carries a +1 bow, twelve +1*



arrows, one potion of cure serious wounds, a magical bracelet that instills a +1 to AC, and seven rings, each worth 50gp.)

REFUSING THE CHALLENGE

If the characters refuse the challenge, the kuthite taunt them, attempting to goad them into battle. If they continue to refuse, they remain in and around the bridge until the characters make the laborious climb out of the valley, at which point they all slide off the bridge and down the cliff face.

CHASM DEEPS

As noted, the dwarves carved a secret passage into the cliff face on the eastern side of the chasm. It is well hidden, hard for any non-dwarves to detect (CL 8); however, if a dwarf investigates, he possesses a better chance to detect the unusual stone patterns (CL 4). The secret entrance is a simple lever-based sliding door.

It opens to a very narrow and very steep staircase that winds down into the darkness. The characters must enter one at a time through the slim and roughly-cut stairway. The stairs circle in on themselves, making falling very difficult; a stumbling character is likely to catch himself and suffer no more than a few scrapes and bruises.

The stairs lead down over a thousand feet, to the bottom of the chasm, where they end in an easily-discerned door. A lever opens this door as well.

The door opens into the pitch black of the chasm's bottom. The smell of the fungi is heavy in the air, and indeed it grows all over, clinging to the sides of the chasm, creeping along the floor and even piling together into multicolored mounds of mushroom caps. A shallow stream runs through the bottom of the chasm.

Here the kuthite claim their home. If the characters make it this far undetected by the kuthite, they are at a distinct advantage for they catch the creatures in states of repose.

The kuthite utilize the mushrooms by both eating and smoking them, harnessing the powerful hallucinogenics to help pass the time. The kuthite in this part of the fissure are almost always in such a state, curled up on top of their mushroom homes, smoking, eating, and dreaming of worlds beyond worlds. If one is attacked, the others will rouse themselves only to flee, if they even hear it, as the drugs coursing through their systems give them a distinct disadvantage in hand-to-hand battle. They suffer a -3 from all initiative rolls and attacks. The kuthite climb the steep cliffs, taking only their bows and arrows. From on high, they shoot at the characters.

Anyone moving through the fungi forest is able to hide and conceal (+6) very well from shots taken from above.

Unlike normal kuthite who disdain treasure, these have amassed some and scattered it throughout the valley. The characters, if they remain for any length of time searching, should be allowed to stumble across 1-4 of these treasure troves; roll on Treasure Type 6. In the midst of all this, allow the characters to find a scroll with several 2nd and 3rd level spells on it (CK's choice).

11 THE LONG STAIR

The encounter takes place upon the eastern slopes of Mount Skaelin. Following the adventure path from Over Chasm Deep the characters encounter a long winding stair that climbs up the steep cliffs of a mountain. Adjust the hit points or number of monsters as needed. Porting to another locale is very easy, the Castle Keeper only needs a mountain terrain with a chasm.

The frost giants clearly went up the mountain.

The dwarves were ever fond of creating paths that others might find difficult to use, the Long Stairs being a perfect example. The path winds for many turns through broken hill country until it comes to the feet of a great mountain, named by the dwarves Mount Huletag, though few if any call it that now. Steep cliffs mark the end of the trail and beginning of the mountain. The cliffs are piled one atop the other for several thousand feet until they give way to a long, broad ledge just beneath the mountain's peak.

The steep stairs offer a challenge to the characters, in that climbing them alone is an arduous and dangerous task. To make the journey worse the heights are held by a small gust of wind elementals who promise to hound the party as they climb the cliffs.

Note: The CK should adjust the hit dice of the elementals to fit their own campaign and adventure. To bump them up or down in HD, consult *Monsters & Treasure*.

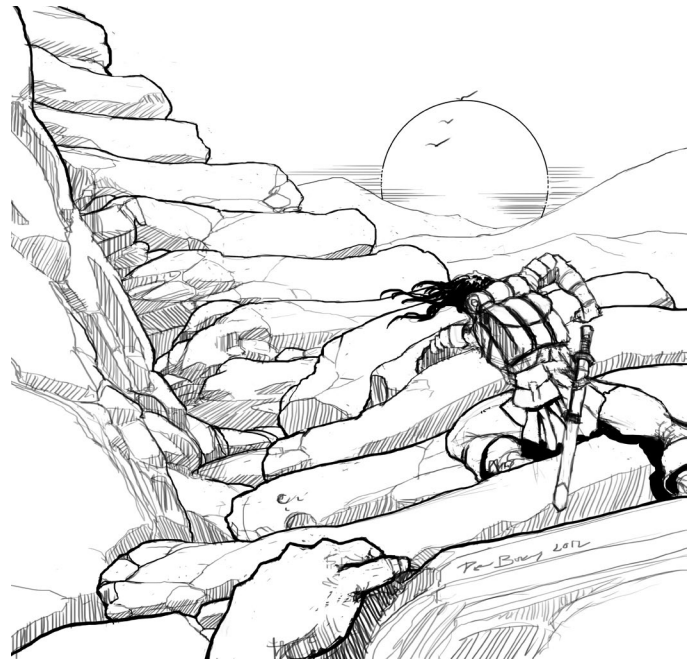
A great heap of rock looms in the distance. The trail winds down into dry, broken country, snaking along rock strewn ridge lines. Small gusts of wind pick up the sand and gravel, carrying it in whirlwinds of extreme violence, only to dump them unceremoniously in some distant spot. Beyond the broken country, the trail seems to end at the feet of that massive stone heap. There, long sheets of rock stand one on top of the other, stacked like a giant's stairs into the distance above.

The trek across the valley floor is long and hot, taking several hours. The winds here act in a peculiar manner, blowing in no certain pattern. Anyone who watches carefully has a chance of detecting this. With a successful wisdom check (CL 4) they notice that something is odd about the winds. Why they are moving is beyond understanding of most people. It might be a simple trick of the hills and high cliffs.

It will take a skilled ranger or mountaineer to detect what exactly is going on. On a successful wisdom check (CL 7) the skilled observer notices that there is no discernible pattern to the wind gusts, that they move about without any influence from the ridges and cliffs.

In truth, the strange patterns are the air elementals that inhabit the high cliffs above. They consider the whole valley their playground and frequently sweep down to and through them, wrestling with each other, gathering up sand and dirt to throw at one another, pushing small rocks and boulders and the like.

They have completely overcome the normal wind patterns that might come down from the mountain passes and cliffs.



The chaos they have caused keeps the winds of the valley constantly moving so that they never settle down, creating effects that the characters may or may not detect as they cross the valley.

STINGING SAND

As the characters cross the broken trail country, one of the elementals crossing nearby scoops up a huge amount of sand and dirt, and broadening himself out into a tall, narrow and deep gust of wind, he rushes the characters.

To them the air elemental looks like nothing more than a wall of sand coming to them. It is not so thick that they cannot see through it, but is dense enough to make a dark haze. Even the slowest of characters notices that the gust is only about 20 feet wide, weakening on the edges.

As it approaches, it gains speed and makes more noise until the ground virtually shakes from the thunder of its passage.

Just before it crashes into the characters, it flies upward, avoiding direct contact, dropping the rocks and sand as it moves on. The characters take no damage but are pummeled by the flying debris, suffering numerous stinging bruises and sand in their gear and eyes, mouths, and noses. Behind them the flurry of sand tumbles about.

AIR ELEMENTAL (These neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 4, AC 17, and HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a wind gust/slam attack for 2d4 points of damage. They can regenerate and are able to use a whirlwind attack.)

The elemental does not remain to battle the characters. There is a chance they can detect the creature, however slim. Upon a successful intelligence check (CL 8) a party member detects an abnormal density to the wind, as if it shimmered in the heat. If they have encountered air elementals before, they gain a +1 to their detection. Regardless, the elemental, unless somehow

42 CASTLES & CRUSADES

stricken of 30% of its hit points, rises into the air and returns to the cliffs over the stair.

The rest of the journey across the broken country is without encounter. The small whirlwinds and dust devils fall off so that by the time the characters arrive at the steps, the whole valley is quiet.

THE LONG STAIR

As the characters approach the rocky cliffs, they discern a single pattern in the stone; a line cut in near perfect diagonals across the cliff face rises from the valley floor, switching back and forth as it climbs to the top of the mountain. This is the Long Stair.

The trail ends at the base of a towering cliff which rises to dizzying heights above you, climbing into the blue sky. Lines snake back and forth up the rock-side, climbing first to the top of one cliff, then along its ledge until to the next before resuming its climb. You realize then that these are stairs, cut into the flat surface of the rock, climbing to the top of the mountain.

If the characters take no note of their surroundings, they have little chance of spotting the debris around the foot of the cliff. Much of it is partially covered in gravel and sand, but here and there, protruding from the dusty skin of the valley floor, is a bone, a sword pommel, a spear butt, a helm, etc. These are the remains of others who have tried the Long Stair and died in the attempt.

If they take no note, their chance of detecting something is slim, wisdom check (CL 10). If they take a few minutes to search around the foot of the cliff they quickly see some of the debris (CL 2). Many of these victims have fallen not due to the difficult stairs, but in battle with the elementals.

A search of the area reveals mostly old, rotten equipment, but on a successful dexterity roll (CL 4) the characters discover something of use. Roll on the following chart:

Roll	Item
1	50 Feet of Silk Rope
2	Magic Item (roll randomly)
3	Rune Stone
4	Cable-Backed Bow
5	Seal Skin Tarp
6	Ski Poles
7	Whale Bone Axe
8	Snow Shoes
9	Inuktituk (snow glasses)
10	Crampons (12)

THE STAIRS

The stairs are two feet wide and only about eight inches deep; well worn in the center, the smooth rock is slippery, making travel up them difficult as each step requires extra force to make purchase certain. One side is walled by the cliff face, the other

has only a 4-6 inch lip protecting the traveler from a tumble to the ground below. Along the wall, from top to bottom, an iron cable is anchored. Crafted by dwarves. It shows little sign of age or weakness and serves those less sure-footed as a rail to cling to when the winds pick up.

Walking up or down them is possible if the traveler moves at a slow and steady pace. Characters do have a chance of slipping, however, and the CK should take periodic dexterity checks in order to keep the characters on their toes and nervous. If the characters are moving slowly there is a CL 0, if moving anything slightly faster than cautious, add 1 to the CL, so that by the time they are rushing it should be CL 8. Adjust accordingly. If characters are holding onto the cable there is no chance of them falling from the cliff, though they may still slip and bust a knee or even a face.

There is nowhere to rest on the stairs unless the characters just sit on them. This can be dangerous, as one could roll off. The ledges are slightly better, offering a place to stretch out.

The journey up is exhausting, putting the characters through strenuous exercise. The lower back, thighs, and calves of even the hardiest are aching by the time they reach the top of the second ledge. After that, for every 100 feet traveled they must make a successful constitution check or suffer temporary loss of 1 point of constitution. If they run out of constitution before they reach the top, they must rest for at least 10 minutes per constitution point.

If the characters rest in route at least 10-15 minutes, they do not suffer the affects of exhaustion.

The first 500 feet carry the characters to a narrow ledge, at the foot of the next cliff. There are three switchbacks on this trek.

The second ledge is reached after another 700 feet. There are four switchbacks here.

The third ledge is reached after another 400 feet. There are no switchbacks here, and this section of the steps puts them on the far end of the ledge where there is a cave, roughly 40 feet deep and 12 feet wide at the mouth. It has a small pool of water in the back collected from drips in the cave ceiling.

The fourth and final portion of the Long Stairs is 800 feet after the last ledge and has five switchbacks.

THE ELEMENTS

The air elementals are of course watching the party climb. They allow them to get almost to the second ledge, about 1000 feet above the valley floor. Here they choose to begin their "play",

FIRST ENCOUNTER

The first of the elementals, a younger, weak one, begins to crawl and snake its way across the rock face. It moves by flowing across the surface of the rock, filling its nooks, cracks, and crevices, much like water flowing across the ground. It moves behind the party, flowing over the lip of the stair and up it. The

elemental is playful, moving beneath their walking feet, around the legs, and on up the stairs. Anyone with bare skin exposed feels a sudden drop in temperature around their feet or hands. It passes as quickly as it comes.

There is a chance they can detect the creature, slightly better than before. Upon a successful intelligence check (CL 6) a party member detects an abnormal density to the wind, as if it shimmered in the heat. If they have encountered air elementals before they gain a +1 to their detection. If they detected the creatures in the valley, they gain another +2 to their checks.

Once it passes through the whole party it flows over the lip and back down the side of the cliff. Clinging there, it looks for anyone wearing loose clothing. Picking its target, it rushes quickly rising like a gust of wind, blowing clothing, hair, and other light and loose materials up. Anyone not holding onto the cable and having been struck must make a successful dexterity check (CL 2) or tumble back down the steps, colliding with whoever follows. That person must make a successful dexterity check as well (CL 4), or so on down the line. Anyone who rolls less than 4 tumbles over the side. If this happens, he must make another successful dexterity check to see if he falls to his death or grabs hold of the edge of the stair.

AIR ELEMENTAL (These neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 2, AC 17, and HP 8. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a wind gust/slam attack for 2d4 points of damage. They can regenerate and are able to use a whirlwind attack.)

The characters now have a better chance to detect the creature, gaining a +2 on all future checks.

The creature flees if physically attacked.

SECOND ENCOUNTER

Seeing the fun its brother had, another elemental breaks free and slides across the mountain. There is little chance of the characters spying the creature, but on a successful wisdom check (CL 8) they spy the strange movement of darker air. This creature gathers itself together upon the steps, creating a wall of wind before the characters. It is quiet, gusting up and over itself, coiling back down like a wave into itself.

When the first character arrives, he is struck by an updraft of violent air, silent but powerful; sticking a hand or face into it causes the skin to be battered and knocked about, like entering a wind tunnel. The creature makes no overt attack but to get through it the character must make a successful strength check (CL 6). Doing so allows him to push through. If they fail, they stagger back from the creature and cannot try again for 4 melee rounds.

During that time, they have a better chance of seeing the creature; see above but add +2 to their rolls.

AIR ELEMENTAL (These neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 5, AC 17, and HP 22. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a wind gust/slam attack for 2d4 points of damage. They can regenerate and are able to use a whirlwind attack.)

After the third character breaks through, the elemental collapses into itself, flowing rapidly down the stairs. Anyone with exposed skin notices a sudden drop in temperature.

The creature flees if physically attacked.

THIRD ENCOUNTER

The play attracts more of the elementals; now all across the cliff's walls they begin to crawl, flowing in waves over the rocky escarpment.

The air dies down to a deadly still. It captures your attention, but even as your mind focuses on the lack of noise, there seems to be a push of dry air rolling over you. As it breaks like a wave against you, a sound picks up, slow at first but growing in volume. Wind. There is wind blowing and it's coming at you from both your left and your right. The sound picks up to a howl as you see gusts of wind-borne dust and sand rolling across the surface of the cliff, coming toward you.

There are a dozen air elementals with low hit dice rolling toward the characters. They attack by pummeling the characters with gusts of wind, rising up and smashing them. If the characters cling to the cable they cannot be dislodged for the air elementals cannot grab them. However, clinging to the cable means they can only use one hand to defend themselves.

If a character releases his grip on the cable and is attacked, every round of combat that he is hit by the elemental he must make a successful dexterity save in order to keep footing. The CL is equal to the elemental's hit dice. If the character falls, allow a second dexterity check (CL 5) so long as he drops whatever he is holding. If successful he clings to the side, if not he plummets from the cliff.

AIR ELEMENTAL, 12 (These neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 2, AC 17, and HP 8. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a wind gust/slam attack for 2d4 points of damage. They can regenerate and are able to use a whirlwind attack.)

AIR ELEMENTAL, 3 (These neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 6, AC 19, and HP 8. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a wind gust/slam attack for 2d8 points of damage. They can regenerate and are able to use a whirlwind attack.)

The elementals fight until a character is killed or one quarter of their number are destroyed. Castle Keepers may wish to keep the battle going, but caution is advised as the fall is a long one and character deaths will be hard to replace in this storyline.

JAREL'S COL

The stair gives way to a narrow ledge that ends in a curved ramp that goes up and around the top of the final cliff. Beyond is a broad, open col, a narrow space between the top of this rocky mountain and the next. The col is clear, though patches of snow cling to the rocks and in the crevices. In the center of the col is



a mere, a crystal-clear lake called the Mere of Alenerde by the dwarves.

Built in the rocky precipices above the mere is a stone house. Built for travelers, it is presently empty of any living creatures. A close investigation reveals little sign of recent activity, but peering inside the single-room structure shows stone benches against the walls and a long stone table in the center. A large fireplace on the back wall, cleverly constructed into the cliff, sits empty and cold. There is fresh water in a basin by the door, fed by an underground pipe constructed by the dwarves. The water is warm but drinkable.

Sitting in front of the fire place is a figure, his ragged clothing hanging off him in tatters, the bones of his body protruding from beneath, a Rune Mark who has long since died. The characters find the following on his person: a relic in the form of a staff with eight runes engraved upon it, a book with the same eight spells in it, four *rune stones*, a shirt of +1 leather armor, and a masterwork longsword. Everything else he may have owned has long since rotted away.

THE MERE OF ALENERDE

The Mere is sacred to dwarves. It is a place where their Fathers traveled to see into the mind of Al-Erde, the All Father. Standing upon the bank they watched the stars traverse the evening's sky and sought to travel the roads of the All Father. It is a Ring of Brass, a magical portal that brings one into the halls that crisscross the the multiverse.

This water is perfectly still, the only motion in the water caused by something thrown within. It is warm to the touch, fed by slumbering heat deep in the mountain. The Mere is clear and casts a near perfect reflection of the sky and the two peaks. The Mere reflects images as a mirror; however, it is more than a simple looking glass.

Looking into the water at night for longer than one melee round reveals a wide vista of stars, framed by the snowy peaks of the mountains. The beauty draws the viewer in and all other stimuli fade.

Looking down into the water is as looking up at the stars, framed only by the mountain's peaks. The wind dies and you are taken by the utter stillness of the place. The stars seem above you and the ground beneath and the whole shifts, spinning around so that you face the north. On the edge of your vision is the Great Empty, the forever and beyond.

These gates to the outer planes are closed, a Rune Mark with a *rune of opening*, or a mage with a similar spell can open the Ring of Brass. If one does so, the tunnel opens into a large hallway with buttressing columns; it is 20 feet wide and 40 feet high. Everywhere are runes carved into the stone. The tunnel winds into the darkness.

The Rings of Brass are gateways to the planes. For more on the Rings of Brass see the **Codex of Aihrde** or allow the gate to open in whatever plane you desire.

The trail leads to the northern flanks of the Halmsroof Pass and the abode of the frost giants. Coming out on the other side of the peaks of Mount Skaelin, the party spies a jumbled slope of rock that leads back down and the broad pass below. Here, however, the party can see the giant snow-covered peaks of Mount Eoyotten and the valley of the Pass beneath them. Far in the distance, nestled on the flanks of the southern mountain, stands an old tower. The ruins of its walls lie about the slopes, but the tower itself remains intact; carrying a shroud of snow, the black stone looks like some king of old.

The trail goes down the slope. The giants, however, are waiting for the party.

12 HALMSROOF PASS

This encounter area follows the Long Stair and takes the characters into the high mountains overlooking the long Greenbriar Valley. This encounter is longer and more involved with a clear set up for the characters to be captured by giants. This may need to be modified for individual campaigns. It can be played as a stand alone, if not the giant's trail continues into the mountains.

At that point where the mountains rise to their greatest, and travel becomes so difficult as to be near impossible, the Horned God's most powerful minions, the Mogrl, rived the escarpment connecting the peaks of Mount Eoyotten and Mount Skaelin, thus making travel possible across the forbidding, snow-packed peaks. Many an army passed over this pass from the Moravan to the Gottland and beyond. Later, a fearsome Mogrl, known far and wide as Ingnot, set himself upon that cleft, constructed a mighty tower and thick gate, and from there, terrorized the upper reaches of Aihilde.

With the passing of Unklar, the Mogrl scattered and hid themselves in deep holes and far away places. Lest they be found out and confronted by the Council of Light, Ingnot abandoned his tower and moved to places unknown. With his passage, the armies who were massed about Halmsroof dispersed and scattered into the mountains and hills, having been left without leadership. Here, they were hunted and killed in droves by vengeful northmen who had suffered for years under the heavy hand of Ingnot's despotism. The northern way was abandoned except to occasional traffic as the north shores of the Inner Sea had become safer and easier to travel by boat. Not long ago two massive frost giants, Umyard and Skleome, made their way to Halmsford, found it nearly abandoned and made it their home.

Umyard and Skleome are brothers and their ages unmeasured. Neither can remember when they came into the world as those memories have disappeared beneath too many snows and icy peaks. They have wandered the northern wastes for centuries, sometimes resting for decades in abandoned keeps, castles, and caves, and at other times traveling to the far flung reaches of the Holmgrad Mountains.

On one such trip several decades past, Umyard and Skleome happened upon a small town, Yinsfeord, which they intended to pillage. They waited for nightfall and planned to plunder the town as the last lights of the village blinked out. However, early in the evening, the inhabitants of Yinsfeord gathered in a local temple and began a celebration. As Umyard and Skleome waited, they heard a singularly beautiful voice rise up into the night sky and enchant the blackness about them, causing the stars to dance, or so it seemed. Umyard and Skleome were hearing the remnants of the "first song" that had coalesced in a daughter of Yinsfeord.

Valyana, the first of three daughters born to Neemord and Hana, was gifted as no other in Aihilde. Her voice had a luminescent quality, like a diaphanous gown it hung like a gentle shroud upon those who heard her voice. With it she could enchant and calm the minds of even some of the most vile creatures in Aihilde, but the minds of Umyard and Skleome are ancient

and accustomed to both the beauty and ugliness of the world. Though enchanted by the sound of her voice, they did not fall under its spell.



They did, however, find that the voice reminded them of days long passed, before the coming of Unklar, when the mountains were emptier and the winds and snows, swirled and spun around the mountain peaks, making a music all their own. In a moment the two giants decided to claim this voice and make it their own.

They stole into Yinsfeord like a violent storm and laid low all those who stood in their way. Umyard faced and challenged the brave warriors of Yinsfeord while Skleome broke into the central hall and snatched Valyana from the arms of her screaming mother. Having captured their prize and knowing the men of Yinsfeord would eventually overwhelm them in such further battle, they broke and ran into the clefts, valleys, and crags that make up the Holmgrad Mountains.

The village was much grieved at Valyana's theft and many set out on the trail, but none returned. There came a time that Valyana's younger sister, Freyja, set out after her and soon thereafter the youngest of the sisters left home in search of her siblings (see below).

In the meanwhile, the giants traveled several long years with Valyana in tow before happening upon Halmsroof. Valyana, sickly and with dying voice, needed rest or escape from her captivity. Sensing this, the giants settled in this snowy pass and made life as pleasurable as possible for Valyana. In fact, they treated her with such care, tenderness, and attention that those who might have witnessed them would have assumed she was a Princess from the years before the bending of the world, and the giants her servants.

After arriving in Halmsroof, Valyana immediately improved, though a deep sadness was upon her as she realized it was her voice that brought ruin to Yinsfeord and her family. Yet, Valyana sang for Umyard and Skleome whenever they requested it, which was often. Her voice, however, had changed. Its youth was gone to be replaced with a more mature song, one of sadness, loss, hopelessness, and a suffering which comes from all things that live long years in loneliness and misery. This maturity did not diminish her music, but rather, increased its power. For Umyard and Skleome, though, it no longer provided memories of the freedom of their youth, but rather, the dire times of Unklar's rule, so they took her to the depths of Halmsroof and placed her securely in a dreadful chamber guarded by Ingnot's last remaining servants in Halmsroof – the minotaurs.

When the giants arrived in Halmsroof, they found the pass' fortress in complete disrepair and most of it fallen into complete ruin. There were two exceptions to this. The central keep, having been built for the Mogrl, remained fairly intact. The giants took up residence here. A maze of sorts wound beneath the remnants of the gatehouse, constructed in times before the coming of the Mogrl and only discovered after construction of the fortress began. The ancient maze housed a great knowledge, the builders' intent to make access difficult or impossible. It contains, written into its walls, missives and allusions to the use of Language of Creation. It was here where the giants made Valyana's prison.

Within the maze were several minotaurs, great vicious beasts of immortal make. They needed no food for sustenance, no water to quench a thirst, nor air to fill their lungs. These minotaurs were of a special breed, magically enchanted to withstand the hammer of time and forever guard the labyrinth in which they were placed. When travelers passed Skleome and Umyard's way, the giants would capture them and throw them into the labyrinth, enjoying the slaughter that ensued. Valyana, sensing others were in the labyrinth, would sing a joyous song, hoping her rescue had come and unwittingly leading any who were thrown into the labyrinth closer to their doom.

The giants have made the pass a dangerous place to travel, so few do so any more. As such, Umyard and Skleome have taken to wandering away from the keep to find captives for their entertainment. These, they bring back to Halmsroof and cast them into the labyrinth. Though they continue in this practice, it has come to bore them of late and they tend to forget about those in the labyrinth, leaving them and the minotaurs to whatever fate awaits them.

In despair, Valyana began the slow path to an early death. Umyard went in search of a way to prevent this, for though with less regularity, the brothers still enjoyed listening to the songs Valyana. Umyard found an ogre shaman of immense power and requested his aid in saving Valyana. The shaman, being of uncanny intelligence and power, knew of only one such spell that could save her. The shaman cast a binding knot between Valyana and the snowy peaks surrounding Halmsroof. Thus, Valyana's soul and being became tied to the ice and snow that capped the top of the world. As long as she stayed in close proximity to it and the snows never melted away, she would neither wither nor die but remain immortal. At the same time, the snows of the peaks became tied to Valyana so that as long as she lived, the peaks would forever be caught in a virtual blizzard at the top of the world.

GIANT HOME

As the party travels along Heigar's Way, they are set upon by Umyard and Skleome. It is unlikely that the party has the power to fend off such an attack. Luckily, Umyard and Skleome do not intend to kill the party right away. They plan to take them back to Halmsroof, feed them, and drop them into the labyrinth.

The snow-packed escarpment stretches up into a brilliant blue sky. The light of the sun glistening off the snow is blinding. The only guideposts for Heigar's Way are tall columns of granite that thrust and poke out of the snow like the fingers of the dead, seeking egress from an untimely burial. Ahead, as the path narrows between two large blocky granite peaks, one massive guidepost comes into view.

Umyard and Skleome are sitting to either side of Heigar's Way at the point where the peaks level out on the escarpment. The guidepost is nearby. They have been sitting and waiting in this spot for two days. As such, they are covered in snow and fairly well-hidden. Their bluish/gray skin looks much like the ice-covered granite walls about them.

Spotting the pair is fairly difficult. They are accustomed to these ranges and know how to hide in the crags and crevices it offers. They are off to one side a little and downhill somewhat. The sun is working in their favor as most creatures must squint and look down to avoid going snow-blind from the glare of the snow. The party members must make a successful wisdom check (CL 15) to see the giants.

The party encounters one warning that trouble is afoot as they top the pass. The snow on the pass reflects many indentations, partially covered by fresh snow fall; all this means that something large passed this way in the last few days (CL 5 for a successful track check, CL 12 for generally noticing something is afoot). If the tracks are found it is clear to anyone that some activity has taken place recently. Umyard and Skleeome intend to wait until the party reaches the guidepost before waylaying them. At this point, they attack the party with massive clubs.

A thunderous rumble cracks the silence of the day and the snowy cliff sides seem to sunder and split. Out from crevices on both sides of the defile emerge gigantic men with freezing blue skin and long white beards, wearing slate gray armor and clutching massive knobby cudgels. With a heave they shake off the snow that covers them and roar a deafening cry to the winds and the sky while swinging their clubs in a ferocious manner.

Umyard and Skleeome do not stop to parley with the party under any circumstances. The giants are not intent on killing the party members and go to some lengths to avoid it. They do, however, intend to knock each of them out or force them to surrender their arms. If the battle seems to be going poorly for the giants, they will begin killing the party, though this is unlikely.

Once the party has either surrendered or been knocked out, the giants gather their arms and any items which the giants feel might pose a potential threat to them. They then tie the characters together and begin marching down the mountain and on to Halmsroof.

The trip to Halmsroof is not that far, only 50 miles. To the giants this is easily covered in one day's march. However, considering the party size and the potential bruising they have taken, the giants will allow for one night's rest. If camp is made, the giants keep the characters tied together and stay awake throughout the whole night rummaging through their equipment, tossing some and keeping any interesting portions. They tell stories of their youth and make jokes about all the people they have killed who have passed through these mountains.

If the party attempts to engage the giants in conversation, they find the giants immediately willing to be so entertained. Umyard in particular likes to hear stories of wars and conquests. Skleeome loves stories about the fall of Unklar and the routing of his various minions. Though the giants listen intently to interesting stories and even laugh at jokes, their disposition does not change. They do not, in fact, consider any other race worthy of consideration or even an afterthought. The value of the party's lives is, to the giants, about the same as that of a snowflake.

On the second day, the giants force the party to move the remaining distance to Halmsroof. If they must, Skleeome and Umyard will carry one or two of the characters. Towards the end of the day, the characters see:

Ahead, up a long defile and between two ragged and pointed granite peaks, is a narrow pass. The crumbling remains of a gigantic wall hangs between the two like a curtain exposed too long to a blustering storm. Little is left except snow-covered stone, broken masonry and shattered battlements. Only one thing remains fairly intact; a tall snow-capped spire to the south side of the pass stretches high, nearly as high as the surrounding peaks. Indomitable stones have been used to build this monolithic structure and its age and strength seem indefatigable.

HALMSROOF

Halmsroof consists of only two extant structures at this time, the rest having fallen into ruin. There is the Kral-nak-Fil, which is the tower in which the Mogrl rested, and the maze. The maze is located beneath where the old gatehouse rested. Its discovery was a boon when Halmsroof was first constructed, for it offered a prison and execution yard. Each is discussed separately below.

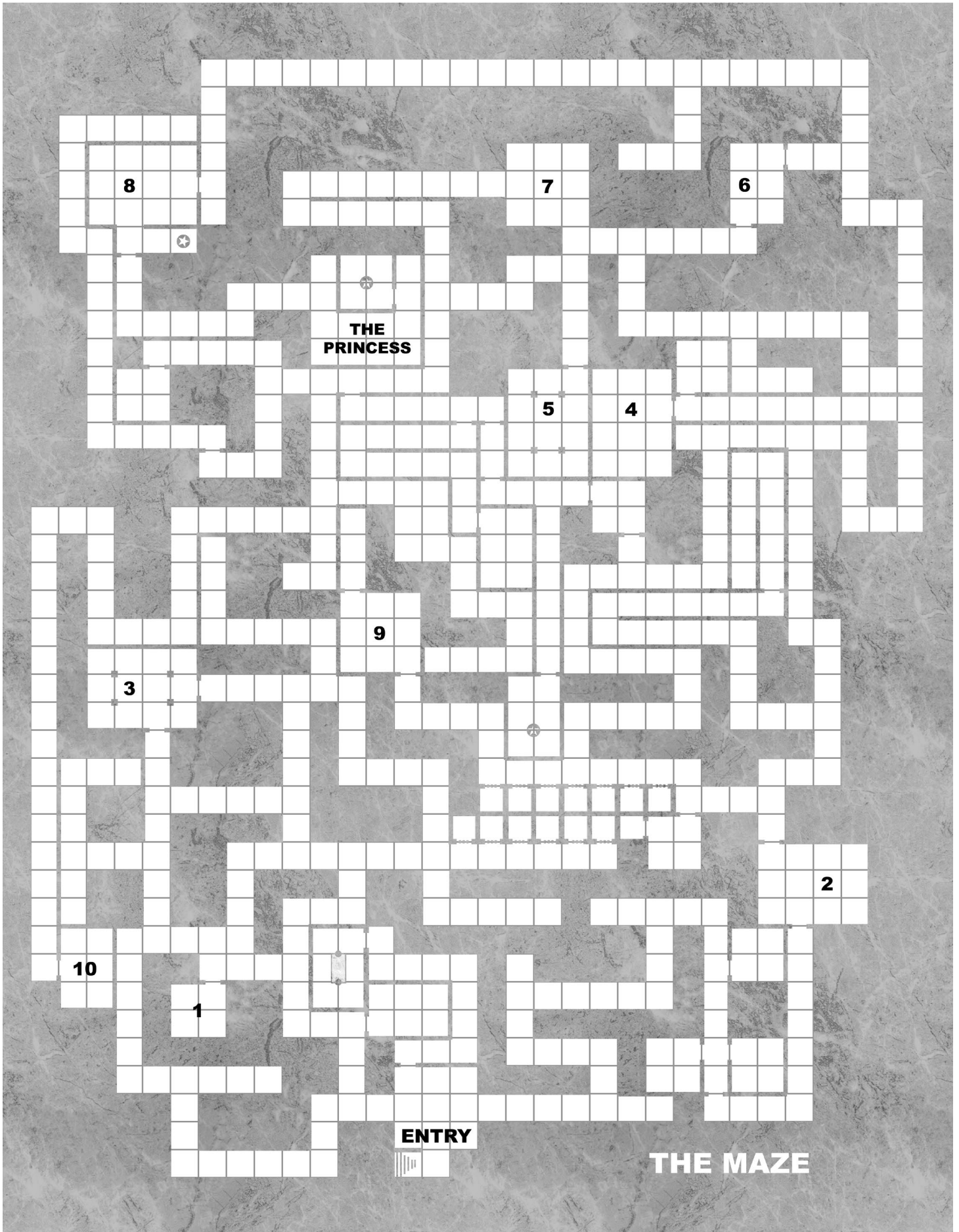
The giants take the party to the spire and throw them into a prison beneath the first floor of the entry chamber (see **Area 4**). The giants keep the party there before taking them to the maze. While in the dungeon, the giants are sure that the party has a lot of food and warm blankets. As for the giants, they spend most of their time in the entry chamber drinking mead, telling stories, and eating.

***GIANT, FROST x 2** (These chaotic evil creatures' vital statistics are HD 11d8, AC 20, and HP 53, 49. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a battle axe for 4d6 points of damage or two fists for 2d8 damage each. They are able to throw rocks for a further 2d10 points of damage. They are vulnerable to fire but immune to cold.)*

KRAL-NAK-FIL

This is the structure that once housed the Mogrl. It is a large tower measuring 150 feet wide at its base and about 80 feet wide at its top. The Mogrl, being spare beasts, had little need nor care for excessive accoutrements, so the Kral-nak-Fil consists of only three floors and a basement.

Area 1 Entry Chamber: The entry chamber is a large room with a flag-stoned floor. In the center of the room is a massive black stone urn. The urn contains an eternal flame. The urn itself measures some 20 feet across and weighs several tons; it cannot be moved. From within its center, a large bout of bluish flames constantly erupts and sputters, sometimes in massive gulfs and at other times in small but constant whispers. The coloration changes from blue to red to green. The urn actually opens up onto the plane of fire and the nexus is located in the center of the urn. Moving or otherwise damaging the urn may cause the rift to expand or contract. On a d10, 1-4 means an expansion and 5-10 means a contraction. If the rift expands it



8

7

6

THE
PRINCESS

5

4

9

3

2

10

1

ENTRY

THE MAZE

does so in a small amount, adding from one to ten feet of width. However, it does so immediately and any character caught in the expansion must make a dexterity save (CL 5) or suffer 2d10 points of damage; save for half. Each time it is so disturbed it can contract or expand.

Elsewhere in the room is a large table and two chairs. These are obviously makeshift. The giants have built them themselves, having collected the wood on one of their numerous trips down the mountain. There are heaps of fir and a large vat where the giants are, unsuccessfully, attempting to make mead.

There are stairs leading up and a large iron trapdoor to one end of the chamber.

Area 2 Stairs: Herein the Mogrl would sit and ponder and plan. Now the giants use this as their sleeping quarters. Heaped and piled about the room are piles of furs, cloth, tapestries, and other goods they have acquired over years of travel. They also keep most of their treasure in this room.

Treasure: Contained here are 4000sp, 725gp, a gold dragon comb with a red garnet eye (1050gp value), a brass mug with jade inlays (350gp value), a *potion of gaseous form* and a *ring of counterspells*. There is a small book as well, named Imach's Golden Libram. Within it are five spells of the Rune Mark, they are as follows: *rune of writing*, *rune of threads*, *rune of creation 1*, *rune of linking*, *rune of knowledge*. They also have a small pouch with a rune blazed on it. Within is a small glass vial containing a rolled-up piece of torn parchment. On the parchment is a small piece of the Rune Mark Prophecy.

*Beneath iron Shadows
Where Winter once blossomed
When the Rune Lords Fall
A vision of the other world
Of creation's very Forges
These are the god's paths.
These are the Umbra.
Five and Forty Runes To Master,
A Wall for Worlds to enter
Rune Lords to Conquer
The Empty to be filled to make the
Runes a Master.*

Area 3 Upper Floor: This room is almost completely bare. There are two large windows up here and the vista they offer is spectacular. The Mogrl Ingot used this room to watch the pass. Little came or went without his notice. He also used the room for communing with other of his kind and contacting his master. Because of that, this room still reeks with evil. The stench of Unklar is upon the place and even the giants enter only on rare occasions.

Any lawful good character entering this chamber immediately feels the effects of the evil of both the Mogrl and Unklar. A wisdom save (CL 12) is necessary to prevent the temporary loss of 1 point each of strength, constitution, and dexterity.

Area 4 The Dungeons: The Mogrl used this chamber as his personal interrogation center; as such it was perfectly suited for the purposes the giants needed: imprisonment. The chamber is broad and long. Along all the walls are a host of shackles. The floor has various large fire pits in it, as well as chains, hooks, and poles hanging from the ceiling, chairs with straps, and hundreds of instruments used for torture.

The giants throw the party into the dungeon and lock the trap door, visiting them only when they believe the party needs food. There are no exits from the chamber except through the trap door. The party must while away their time until the giants feel it is time to dump them in the maze. The giants throw them food once a day - a lot of food. The room stays relatively warm due to the eternal flame in the room above. The party are not allowed to keep any of their weapons, wands, staves, rings, or anything else the giants may perceive as potentially harmful.

Breaking the lock to the trapdoor is nearly impossible. The iron trapdoor itself weighs almost a ton and the crossbar and bolt mechanism that locks it is about 10 inches thick.

After a week or so the giants decide it is time to let the party out and drop them in the maze. They gather their items in a sack, then one goes down to tell them that they are free if they perform a task. They must free Valyana from the maze. They claim they are simply too small to enter it and fighting the monsters in the maze is too difficult for them.

This is, in part, the truth. The maze is fairly small and movement for them in such a space is difficult but not impossible. They found they could not kill the monsters in the maze (being immortal - see below) but did discover a room the monsters could not enter. This is the room they placed Valyana in. They place people in the maze to give Valyana a sense of false hope. As soon as another creature enters the maze, Valyana believes that she is being rescued and begins to sing a song of joy. These songs are much liked by the giants.

THE MAZE

The party is brought, in chains, to the entrance of the maze. The giants drop their goods down a shaft and then suggest they enter before the winds and storms of cold and death arrive. They would like for the characters to bring Valyana back to them. Now, the giants couldn't really care less what happens from this point forward. Once the party enters, they close the trap door and head back to their tower to await the songs of Valyana. They assume the party will die but, in their passing, provide the giants with some enjoyment. They do not suspect the party will manage to kill all the monsters in the maze.

For her part, Valyana knows the characters have arrived and begins to sing songs of bravery and freedom. This can embolden the adventurers because they too can hear the songs (they gain a bonus +2 to all attribute checks). Valyana waits for her rescuers (see **Valyana** below). As for the minotaurs and other creatures found in the maze, they also know the characters have arrived and begin to hunt and scour the maze for them.

50 CASTLES & CRUSADES

There are seven minotaurs (more or less if the CK deems them necessary to challenge the party) and one giant minotaur (max hit points) in the maze. The maze itself is a very complex series of tunnels and hallways with many small apertures in it. There is only one entry to the maze, the trapdoor at area **Area 1**.

The creatures that inhabit the maze are magically summoned and inherently imbued with certain magics. They need no oxygen, food, or water for sustenance. In this respect, they are immortal. The only thing that can kill them is physical damage, but this is only a temporary death. Each creature resurrects 10 days after it is 'killed.' The only manner in which to permanently kill them is to use a *death* spell and a *remove curse* on the body afterward.

The creatures trail the party and try to set traps for them. Since they are not organized, the encounters are completely random. Occasionally and by accident, several of them come together to attack those in the maze. The giant minotaur awaits the party near the chamber and sets many traps from the material of long-fallen heroes. In all, the battle in the maze should be a running one. The minotaurs enjoy toying with interlopers, setting traps for them, leading them astray, and such activity. They run if they feel they cannot win in a head-on attack and await a better opportunity to attack.

For each turn the party remains in the maze, roll a d10 for the encounter:

1	one minotaur
2-3	two minotaurs
4-7	one minotaur
8-10	no encounter

Each aperture **Area 1-10** contains piles of loot from previous people who have been killed here. Roll on the standard treasure table in **Monsters & Treasure**.

Briesach lies in **Area 4**. His body has been roughly handled and partially eaten. He is long dead. With him are his goods. The *Staff of the Winter Rune* lies next to his body. A long *dirk of venom* lies upon the floor. His cloaks and clothes, tattered and blood-stained, cling to his body. A pouch with 48gp hangs on the belt.



MINOTAURS (These chaotic evil creatures' vital statistics are HD 7d8, AC 14, and HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a head butt for 2d4 points of damage, a bite for 1d4 points of damage or by weapon gaining a +4 on all damage attacks. They have a powerful charge that allows for a single gore attack at +9 to hit and for 4d6+6 damage. They are immune to maze spells and are uncanny trackers.)

VALYANA - MORDIUS DRYAD

Entering the room of Valyana you find before you a beautiful woman. She is tall and shapely with long golden hair that reaches her waist. The hair hangs freely about her shoulders,, pulled back only off her forehead with a small gold circlet. Her face is soft and she welcomes you with tears of joy.

Valyana is a songstress of sorts. Her chamber is elaborate with piles of clothing and other goods that the giants occasionally bring to her. No magic except a single *staff of eternal light* is found here. If the party enters her chamber, offering to free the poor maiden, Valyana sings a song of such joy that it begins to crack the walls of the maze and even breaks the lock on the entry chamber. The cracks open up on the slopes below the castle tower and the characters are able to escape out and into the night air, free from the maze.

Should they get out, the giants do not notice for some time as they have been lulled into a near-sleeping reverie at Valyana's last song. This, however, does not make them defenseless. Should an unwary character attack them, they rouse to fight.

After Valyana's song ceases (after the party talks her into leaving the room she is in) the giants go to check on the maze and notice the entry has been cracked opened. They immediately begin to pursue the party. They hound them from the mountains but are reluctant to travel into the lowlands as the Trolls of Nacht haunt those lower slopes.

As for Valyana, she can only stay with the party for a few days. As soon as she gets about 20 miles from the mountain peaks, she grows weary and tired unto death due to the binding knot cast on her by the shaman. She of course does not know the nature of this spell, nor what is happening to her. She slowly dissipates, turning into snowy flakes to be blown back up the mountain where she will remain for eternity.

NOTE: Valyana's sisters come into play in the adventures of Gottland as they are searching for their older sister. All three women are in fact Mordius Dryads (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**).

Heading south from the high reaches of the pass places the party at the northern end Green Valley that empties out onto the Feador Plains, almost where the party began their long trek, where the adventure *Of the Horned God's Winter* Begins.

13 INTO THE DUNHOLLOW

This encounter is set for higher level characters. It begins upon the northern banks of the Sorgan River. The approach to the river is over a small rise, crossing up the hill, the characters can smell the moisture in the air, but more importantly, they hear the sounds of battle, grinding metal and the clang of weapon on shield.

The trail gives way to a slightly larger clearing upon the banks of a slow-moving shallow river that crosses beneath the eaves of a broad forest. The sounds of battle carry over the tumbling water and wash over you. Across the water a half dozen well armored dwarves stand against twice their number of armored men. The grinding of metal on metal, metal on bone mingles with the shouts of the wounded. A loud crack and a Dwarven axe splits the mail of his human opponent. The blade sticks hard in bone and sinew creating a bloody wreck and ruin in the man's chest. They hack at one another with no small skill, fighting and dying beneath the trees. Even as your minds race to action the battle ends in a blinding flash and the shouted curses of the dying Dwarves are all that remain. A tall, older woman walks from beneath the trees; at her side stalks a strange beast of chaos. She is well dressed in blackened red robes, her hands tucked deep in her long sleeves.

The wizard, Norah of Fiume, is a rune mark of the Paths of Umbra guild and the remaining soldiers are mercenaries from Ossford. The four beasts at her side are Charon Fiends. She has spent many years traveling throughout the Gottland searching for the riddles of the runes. She knows of Unklar's Iron and has recently learned that the Winter Rune went south with The Maiden of Winter's Blight. She also knows that the adventurer Dante stole the Rune of Empty from the Graugusse (reference **Dante's Pass**). She lives in Ossford part of the year, but does most of her research and keeps much of her wealth in the far-off town of Fiume.

If the party treats with her, she offers to make camp with them and exchange news of the lands about. She relates how the dwarves attacked her party for her pets offended them.

Always curious and strongly believing in fate, she looks at all encounters as a possible source of information. If the party lets on that they are seeking anything to do with Rune Magic she gently presses them for more information, attempting to determine if they have information that she can use, or power she needs to take. She also sizes up their strengths and weaknesses. Norah of Fiume is very clever, quick witted and will at no time let on that she is seeking Rune Magic of any kind.

If asked about her association with the Umbra Guild, hers is a quest for information that she needs to complete her text that she is writing, "A *Lexography of the History of the Northern Realms of the Lands of Ursal, A Biographical Geography.*"

She parts with the company in the morning, but sends one of her fiends to follow them. They cross to the north bank, heading to the high country from which the characters just traveled.

If the party attacks, she defends herself. First, she sends the Charon Fiends and soldiers to meet the party in the ankle-deep

river, keeping the single largest Fiend at her side. The soldiers fight the party until half their number are dead and fall back. If Norah feels she is being outclassed or cannot overcome the party she flees into the forest.

NORAH OF FIUME (This lawful evil 11th level female runemark's vital stats are HD 11, HP 40 AC 16. Her primary attributes are intelligence, wisdom and charisma. Her significant attributes are dexterity 14, constitution 12, intelligence 24 and charisma 14. Norah attacks with her spells, attempting to unsettle and confuse her opponents before striking them with the full force of damage causing magic. In close quarters she wields her staff of ice that causes an extra 1d12 points of cold damage upon any successful hit (a successful constitution save cuts this damage in half). She possesses body tattoos that act as magical totems, staff of ice with 50 charges, wand of cure serious wounds with 50 charges (5th caster level), +4 shawl of intelligence, +5 cloak of resistance, +4 bracers of armor, 200 PP's.

Spells Prepared (4/6/6/6/5/4/2): 0 - Level: Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Prestidigitation, Read Magic. 1st: Endure Elements x4, Shield, Magic Missile, 2nd: Calm Emotions, Endurance, Protection from Arrows, Resist Elements, Rune of Linking (Lesser), Silence, 3rd: Dispel Magic, Haste, Lightning Bolt, Rune of Thought Control, Vampiric Touch x2; 4th: Dimension Door, Freedom of Movement, Minor Globe of Invulnerability, Restoration, Rune of Guidance; 5th: Greater Command, Passwall, Spell Resistance, Teleport; 6th: Globe of Invulnerability, True Seeing.

Spellbook: 0 – all 1st – all 2nd – all 3rd – all 4th: Dimension Door, Dimensional Anchor, Freedom of Movement, Ice Storm, Lesser Planar Ally, Minor Globe of Invulnerability, Restoration, Rune of Conjunction II, Rune of Guidance, Scrying, Wall of Ice; 5th: Break Enchantment, Cone of Cold, , Greater Command, Teleport, , Rune of Dimensions, Rune of Expose, Rune of Plane Walk, Wall of Iron; 6th: Analyze Dweomer, Contingency, Disintegrate, Flesh to Stone, Forbiddance, Globe of Invulnerability, Greater Dispelling, True Seeing, Word of Recall.)

THE PRIEST (This 8th level lawful evil human cleric's vital stats are HD 8d8, HP 40, AC 22. His primary attributes are wisdom, constitution, and dexterity. His significant attributes are intelligence 14 and wisdom 20. He wields a mace in combat and wears magic armor. He possesses a +3 cloak of resistance, +1 plate mail of spell resistance (SR +8), wand of cure light wounds with 50 charges (1st caster level), wand of cure serious wounds with 23 charges (5th caster level), 50 pp.

Spells Prepared: 0: create water x2, detect magic x2, detect poison, purify food and drink; 1st: bless, death watch, entropic shield, obscuring mist, shield of faith, doom, protection from chaos*; 2nd: augury, death knell, hold person, remove paralysis, calm emotions*; 3rd: prayer, invisibility purge, searing light, speak with dead, dispel magic* 4th: divination, freedom of movement, tongues, imbue with spell ability.)

BERIC OF THE ORANGE PLATE, RANGER: (This 6th level chaotic good human ranger vital stats are HD 6d10, HP 39, AC 17. His primary stats are strength, dexterity, and constitution. His significant abilities are strength 14 and dexterity 16. He wears +2 leather armor and shield, and carries a +2 longsword, 2 potions of healing, longbow, 20 arrows, pack, and hunting

gear. He carries a fair amount of gold, usually around 90gp. He carries a small ring around his neck. It is made of an orange basalt rock, lined with white strands. It is a family heirloom, belonging to his mother and then to his daughter, both of whom are now deceased. It is worth 500gp.)

MERCENARIES (5-8 AS NEEDED): (These neutral to neutral evil human's vital stats are HD 5d10, AC 17, HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. Their significant attributes are strength 17, dexterity 14, constitution 14. They attack with a variety of weapons, pole axes, swords and the like. They have mixed ensembles of armor, pieces taken from here and there that are hobbled together much like what a gladiator would wear. Three of them have +1 chain shirts in their ensemble and all carry masterwork quality swords and axes. Any other weapons and equipment are normal. Each has 50gp.)

CHARON FIEND (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 5d10, HP Varies, AC 16. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d6+1 and 1 bite for 1d10+1 points of damage. They have darkvision and twilight vision. They are able to camouflage themselves, possess poison attacks as well as being able to rend their opponents.)

If Norah is captured, she yields no information unless forced to through magical means or torture; she remarks that the 14 dwarves and three slain halflings are rogues offended by her pets. She attempts to ingratiate herself to any Rune Mark in the party by calling upon a common cause. In this vane she does give away all she knows, which is, that the Winter Rune, stolen from the Iron Pillar passed into the Winter Wood. If she joins the party for whatever reason, she attempts to find out everything she can from the other Rune Mark about their travels and riddles and so forth.

DIETRICH

There is one survivor from the party of dwarves and Halflings, Dietrich. Wounded in the stomach, he crawled to the edge of the river and slid down the bank. He hides there now, packing his wound with mud and river grass; he listens to what unfolds above. If both parties leave, he crawls out and attempts to follow the characters, hoping to get some assistance. If the two parties gather for a camp he stays hidden until the following morning, hoping that they both leave. If Norah leaves, he comes out of his hiding place.

A halfling, battered and bleeding from a wound in the stomach, staggers into view. He carries his head high, but his face is pale and drawn for the loss of blood is tremendous, the red-black substance staining his torn white jerkin and shirt. Falling to one knee on the river's edge he calls to you for aid.

DIETRICH (This chaotic neutral 9th level Halfling's vital stats are HD 9, HP 48, AC 20. His primary attributes are dexterity and intelligence. His significant attributes are strength 13, dexterity 16, and intelligence 14. He has all the abilities of a 9th level rogue and halfling. He carries a +2 shortsword, +5 leather armor, light crossbow, 12 bolts, and quiver. He has a 40gp in his pouch.)

Dietrich is a halfling of the Bauml clan and hails from the Beormot Ridge area. He and two of his cousins were employed

by the dwarves in Ossford to guide them to the Sorgon River and the Pass at the Roof of the World beyond. They were desirous of crossing over the Holmgrads without going through the Kleberock. The dwarves intended to plunder the Graugusse. Once patched up, fed and with wine, Dietrich freely passes this information on to the party. Further, he offers his services to the party, free of charge, as a thanks to the aid they gave him. Dietrich knows many of the legends of the region and is well versed in travel in the southern lands, the Warden Plains, the Mammoth Ridge etc. He is possessed of intimate knowledge of the Maiden of Dunhollow (see below) though he knows very little about the wood itself other than it is haunted.

The ford upon which the battle was fought lies squarely at the doorstep of the Dunhollow wood and leads south and west toward the mountains beyond.

DUNHOLLOW

Travel through the Dunhollow Wood is slow as the trail is difficult to follow. The trees, spaced nicely, are old with wide, entangling canopies, many of which droop almost to the ground. The trail winds in and out of these trees, often being lost in the clearings beneath the trees. The trek through the woods takes four days from the banks of the Sorgon River to the eve of the forest in the south.

If Dietrich is with the party, he explains that the forest is haunted and cautions the party to be quiet, to move with care and to build only small fires sheltered in the crooks of trees as noise, fire, or even drinking the water may draw the many haunts that wander the wood.

Indeed, the wood is haunted. The tortured souls of the victims of Castle Nacht wander hapless through the wood, often gathering in great hosts of a hundred or more. They move as vapors through the mists of the early morning, which always gathers (see **Codex of Aihrde Expansion: Gottland Ne**) or as shades in the dark of night. In quiet voices that echo the pain of their dying they call out to one another or to themselves, leading the party to believe that the mist itself is alive. These clouds represent scores of beleaguered souls.

Roll normal encounters for travel through the forest. It should take the party about 4 days travel, assuming nothing goes wrong to arrive at the foot of the Shadow Mountains and the Andrus Road.

Place the following encounter where convenient on the trek through the forest.

The forest is particularly dark, the boles of the trees a deep gray and the canopy overshadowing it all. In the distance a wind picks up. It moans as it twists and turns through the forest, until at last you realize there is no wind at which point you spy a deep cloud of fog moving slowly through the trees. It seems to glow in the darkness and moves as if with a life of its own, slowly enveloping trees and small hillocks. The moans pick up and fade, they roll over you like the tide and you

discern voices, pain wracked voices carrying a terrible agony. The sense of their longing overwhelms you and no matter your stature a fear of their suffering rises in you. Images of a squat, black fortress, a stain of dark and evil on the slopes of hills broken through a thousand years of turmoil rises in you.

The fog of dead rolls over and through the party, spreading its reek of fear. The party must make the appropriate saves per the level of the ghost encounter. For purposes of the “Horned God’s Winter,” the CK must set the level of the ghost encounter (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde** for more detail).

- 1 5-10 are equal to a 5 HD ghost
- 2 11-20 are equal to a 10HD ghost
- 3 21-30 are equal to a 15 HD ghost
- 4 31-40 are equal to a 20 HD ghost

The fog suddenly engulfs the party, slowly coiling around and through everyone. It’s cool and hard to see, faces loom before them, shrouded in white mist, contorting in twisting convulsions; one scream, a wail of agony and madness and the fog itself goes mad as other faces rise and shout, echoing the original call. Whirling around the party are the forms of dozens of figures, great and small. They beat upon their senses and call the to the realm of the dead.

GHOST, DUNHOLLOW, CLOUD (*These lawful evil creature’s vital stats are HD varies, AC 20, HP varies. Their primary attributes are mental. The creatures have a frightful moan that acts as the fear spell (wisdom save negates). They are incorporeal and use telekinesis. The creatures attack with their touch of death that, in addition to doing 1d12 damage to the victim, ages that victim a number of years (constitution save negates). Victims age as follows: humans and half-orcs 1d20 years, halflings and half-elves 1d4 decades, and dwarves and gnomes 1d6 decades. Elves are immune.*)

FREYJA, THE MAID OF DUNHOLLOW

Upon the slopes of Gardrim Mountain, within the Pools of Dunhollow there dwells a lady of surpassing beauty and sadness, Freyja. She is the sister of Valyana and Ainoja and dwells alone in a long house in the Dunhollow. She left her home in the village of Yeensfeord in the Holmgrad Mountains to the north after two very young giants fell upon the village. After much devastation, the giants stole her sister, Valyana, renowned for her voice and beauty, and vanished into the wild. The town grieved for the loss. The mourning never left the village so when the time seemed right Freyja took to her sister’s trail, to find the giants and bring her sister home.

It is the want of frost giants to come only during a winter’s storm, living in their halls and mansions when the wind does not blow. The trails of the giants had grown cold and Freyja wandered the high mountains for a great while, until at last she came to the southern lands and the Valley of the Sorgan River. After many trials she settled in the deeps of Dunhollow, refusing to return home without her sister but lost in the hope of ever finding her.

Unbeknownst to Freyja the curse that fell upon Valyana and bound her to the mountains of the Frost Giants ensnared Freyja as well, and life eternal became hers; tied now to the Dunhollow Wood and its ancient ground. She lives a timeless life, never aging, nor changing, nor is she aware of the changes in the world around her. She thinks only on her loss and that of her sister’s and what pain she may have felt in the end. Freyja has become a Mordius Dryad, one bound to the land upon which she lives, and whose moods bring the weather. For this reason, the ghosts and fogs of the Dunhollow echo her sorrow, and tarry in the forest longer than they ever should.

When the party first sees her, they find her drawing water from one of the pools.

It takes you a moment to discern the movement in the darkness. The trees here are huge affairs and no light of day or night spills through their canopy. The trees are largely white oaks with bark that shimmer in the light and long, heavy leaves. There is a slight figure across the clearing. Her gown is long and full sleeved; her long hair black and her skin pale. As she moves you notice a simple bucket pulled by a rope rising from the dark, still waters at her feet. Her alabaster skin reflects the light of the trees. Beyond her stands a long low house built in the fashion of the northmen.

Unless they have used some type of magical stealth Freyja is aware of their coming, as she speaks with the forest around her, trees, grass, brush. She is not alarmed, nor acts so.

Her home is fashioned from living trees whose boles she has tamed to grow laterally along the ground before rising again to the sky above. It is a simple affair about 60 feet long and 30 feet wide; the trees serve as the walls, and their canopies mingling above it as a roof that rises on up into forest around it. A small stream runs through the middle of it and a very small fire pit.

If the party approaches calmly, offering no violence or threat then Freyja is very open to them and friendly. She invites them to enter her home and rest there as long as they need. Here, they are given food and drink of surpassing taste. The food and drink taken together in the house prove restorative; by the first meal’s end, all wounds are healed. This affect is good only once as the food loses its unique quality once it is eaten.

If queried about her person Freyja says the following: “I have lived here since I gave up the search for my sister, Valyana whom the Giants bore from our home when we were younger. Long I searched; covering all the lands north of the river, but there was never any sign. I know that my younger sister, Ainoja, came in search of us too and she passed into the south carrying what she called a compass for the old ways. Some iron she had, the head of a staff. I await her here. But is has been a long while for she passed into the mountains . . . some seasons before.”

This is in truth all she can impart. The enterprising character will of course discern that the iron she is talking about is the Winter Rune itself taken from Unklar’s Iron. Upon a successful intelligence check (CL determined by Castle Keeper) the character may make

the connection. The information is not critical to the move south, but may help in giving the characters a better understanding of what they are up against in the Winter Wood.

If the party continues to be kind and offers in any way to help the Maiden find her sister (they may have already done this in the mountains north) then Freyja offers them a look at the Book of Years. It lies, she explains, in Mordius' Grove, just north of her home.

The party must strip themselves of all weapons as well as set aside any footwear they are wearing. Once attired she leads them up a short path to a grove of trees.

The trail ends in a small clearing, surrounded by twelve towering trees. These forest giants stand like sentinels of the old world and seem to brood on your passing. Beyond the grove you spy a deep, dark, blue pool of water. The cool water pulls you, calls you to plunge into the unexplored depths, to vanish into the darkling and unearth treasures beyond human compare. But before you are pulled into the Dunhollow Pool you see a simple stone pedestal upon which resides a book, leather bound and locked.

This is the Mordius Grove and the book is the *Book of Years*. It possesses the power of wisdom and those who approach it with humility can be so blessed. Freyja explains that a supplicant approaches the book and take up the quill. This summons the power of the goddess Mordius, a goddess of nature. She grants an answer to any direct question put to her. They must write the question in the book; the answer is written on the following page.

Any attempts to twist a question or gain more than one answer result in the spell being broken. The *Book of Years* can be read only once by a character. The question can be great or small as the characters deem; the CK should answer to the best that the situation and their own knowledge allow. The supplicant gains a permanent point of wisdom and a point of charisma. Those enterprising characters who don't want to ask a direct question, but simply kneel before the book gain a point of wisdom, but no specific knowledge. The point of wisdom is automatic, but the characters should not be told until all characters have used the book. If a character asks a question and returns to ask another, the pages will not except the ink from the quill and the page remains blank.

The party can stay as long as they like at the Maiden's house, but Dietrich warns them that if they eat more than three meals there, they run into the danger of becoming ensnared by the Maiden's world. Every meal after the third (counting one meal a day), the character must make a wisdom save (CL 8) or become ensnared. Those ensnared remain at the Maiden's house. In time they fade from the world, becoming benevolent spirits that wander the woods around her home. They may be rescued if a *remove curse* is cast upon them, or if Freyja is killed or her sister's rescued and brought to her home.

FREYJA, MORDIUS DRYAD (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 7d8, HP 41, AC 17. Her primary attributes are

*mental. She attacks first with spell use, but if pressed wields a long, thin, +4 spear of dancing that acts in all respects like a dancing sword for 1d8+4 points of damage. She has symbiosis with Dunhollow Wood, allowing her connections with greater areas than normal dryads and the ability to awaken plant life. She also has spell-like abilities that allow her to dimension door as a 7th level caster. For more information refer **Monsters & Treasure of Ahrde.**)*



Freyja is small, thin and petite. Her skin is pale, so much so that in the light of day her blue veins are easily seen. Her hair is pitch black and long, cascading down around her shoulders and arms, reaching even to her waist. She wears simple garments, a long gown, of dark blue and black. It shimmers in the light of the stars and captures the lights of the fogs of the Dunhollow when they pass.

Freyja has amassed a small fortune which is kept in the pool in the grove. A water elemental dwells there, keeping watch upon her fortune. If she calls upon it, the creature brings her the treasure. There are the following items: 120pp, 400gp, 7 50gp gems and one magical gem of healing that if worn upon the breast heals 1-4 points a day; she also has a suit of +5 elven chainmail and a +4 *tulwar of wounding*. These latter she uses in battle if need be.

OVERLAND

When the party decides to leave Freyja's abode and continue their trek into the south, they find themselves upon the feet of the Shadow Mountains, just beneath the Tugensele Plateua at the Baerlun Tunnel.

14 ANDRUS ROAD

This encounter involves travel through the long Tugensele Valley; here an old Dwarven Road, the Andrus Road, begins and follows the length of the valley. The Adventurers must pit their wits against monsters, weather, and terrain to negotiate the road and bring themselves safely out of the Warden Plains and on the road to the Winter Wood.

The land is one of extremes, where low-lying, jagged mountains drop off into steep valleys; dry, almost arid plateaus feed water into deep lush valleys. Precipitation varies as the mountain's rain barriers bring huge amounts of water to one region, but give another very little; vegetation grows thick where the rain falls or water run-off is great, but is sparse in other areas. Much of the land hosts a wide variety of evergreen trees, lob-lolly and yellow pines, cedar, and the like. The melt-off from the snow gathers in pools that turn to streams and tumble into mountain lakes and ponds; the large snow caps on the high mountains feed the whole system.

It is a land abundant with food if one knows what to look for, and possesses the time to hunt and gather. The Holmgrads house a number of giants, the frost giants being more common than all others. These wander the mountains in search of prey, often alone, but at times in the company of one or two companions; the Greenbriar is a favored spot to hunt. Hippogriffs hunt these high extremes as do other creatures, the manticore, yeti, wyvern, and bugbears.

Some men dwell here, but they are wild and far from the haunts of men. Several large tribes move through the forests, migrating from one area to the next, hunting and gathering food. They are tall people, light-skinned with blue or green eyes. They worship the Og Aust, the old gods, calling on the spirits of the land to safeguard them and guide them. They use stone tools, though many of them trade with the northmen of the south and east for metal tools and weapons.

THE ROAD

The Tugensele Plateau marks the southern boundaries of the Dunhollow Wood and the northern fence that is the Shadow Mountains. It is a broad, dry plateau, protected from the northern winds by the Shadow Mountains and that enjoys the warm, moist air of the Dunhollow country. The precipitation the area receives tends to linger as snow in the winter and autumn, but giving the soil enough nutrients that the Tugensele plays host to fields of bunch grass and flowering cous grass in the spring and summer. It is perfect grazing ground for large herds of yak, elk, red deer, turkey, and other animals, and as such attracts a large number of predators: wolves, bears, bugbears from the north, ogres, and the like.

Where the Tugensele ends, the Andrus road begins. On the far western edge of the plateau stands the towering fence of the Shadow Mountains. The mountains tower over the country, creating a seemingly impassible barrier. As one approaches, they see only snow-capped peaks, tall cliffs, fields of boulders, and glacial snow packed into deep canyons. However, the mountains are cut by a series of deep interconnected canyons



and ridges that the dwarves tamed long ago when they built the Andrus Road.

The plateau itself rises up against a cliff face some 1000 feet high. The dwarves cut a tunnel through the cliff to the valley's beyond and there the road begins.

The road itself is roughly 120 miles long. It consists of cobbles cut and shaped in squares and rectangles set in a checkerboard pattern. Where necessary, the road is elevated two to three feet above the ground, set upon gravel with natural run-offs built in. The dwarves shaped the land as they built, removing many natural obstacles, real and anticipated; for this reason, it has survived in relatively good shape for the long centuries. The wild men who occupy the valleys use it often, keeping it clear of brush, trees, and grasses.

Despite this, the road has suffered the scourge of time. In places it has been washed out, disintegrated, or just absorbed by the land. In several of the marshy valleys, bridges remain where the road has sunk into the mire.

Traveling the road is difficult as it follows the natural contours of the land, climbing up hills and cliffs as high as 5000 feet above sea level where snow often covers the road, then plunging into deep valleys that are barely 1000 feet above sea level where run-off from the elevations gathers in marshy pools and swamps. Upon the high slopes, pine, hemlock, and fir trees grow in abundance, mixed with any number of smaller elderberry and chokeberry brush. In the marshy valleys, several hardwoods thrive, mostly black cottonwood and big leaf maple trees.

Despite the road, movement in this terrain is difficult; the winding road snakes up long slopes and back down steep

inclines, slowing travelers appreciably. On a good day, travelers can cover eight miles, but on bad days reduce it to as few as four. If weather intervenes, the travel slows again.

WEATHER ON THE ANDRUS

Like the terrain, the weather is extreme. Sudden storms blow off the northern mountains, bringing huge amounts of snowfall to the southern valleys of the road, but the mountains that gave them birth block sections of the road from the worst part of the storm. The deep valleys shelter the sun's warmth, trapped in the humid air where no wind blows.

Roll weather daily. Consult the following chart.

Chance(d20)	Conditions	Visibility	Effect on Movement
1-10	None	Good	0%
11-15	Moderate	2-3 Miles	90%
16-18	Bad	0.5-2 Miles	50%
19-20	Severe	0.1-0.5 Miles	10%

FOOD

Food is abundant in the valleys of the Andrus road, and even on the slopes if one knows what they are looking for. There is plenty of wild game, deer, mountain sheep, turkeys, and other small fowl. Hunting animals for food is time-consuming; a ranger can easily spend a whole day to track enough food to feed himself and a few companions. Foraging may produce better results.

The cous grass, or flower, produces a huge tuberous root; harvesting four or five of these takes only a half-hour or so, and can feed a man for a day. They are dry and a little tasteless, but provide a solid meal. Elderberry and chokeberry bushes grow throughout the valleys and in the tree line above. Industrious players can harvest these as they travel.

EDIBLE PLANTS

Black Cottwood, the bark

Cous Flower, the roots

Cames Grass, the roots

Elderberries

Chokeberries

FORAGING

If the characters run out of food and are forced to forage, cut their movement in half. This assumes they possess some knowledge of the terrain and the flora that exists here. This reduced movement accounts for time gathering roots and berries, and hunting and trapping small game. Hunting this way is possible for one week, at which point the characters begin to feel the nagging effects of malnutrition and should be encouraged to spend a full day hunting and gathering to flesh out their diet. Failing to do so weakens the body. After the second week, 1 point of constitution per day is lost.

NOTE: It is unnecessary and counterproductive to create a complex system of charts with all incumbent variables as that is not conducive to fast-paced play.

ENCOUNTERS

Roll encounters on a d12. On a roll of 1 there is an encounter. Encounters are not common in the mountains, so roll the d12 four times during the day and twice at night. Consult the Gottland-Ne Encounter Charts.

THE BAERLUN

The Andrus road begins at the end of the plateau. Here a towering cliff, over 1000 feet high, stretching east and west as far as the eye can see, blocks the west-going traveler. The dwarves took the time to cut a tunnel through the mountain to break into the deep valley on the far side. This tunnel they called the Baerlun, after its architect.

The tunnel is just over a mile in length. It is paved, with walls and a roof. Arches line the tunnel, one every 100 feet. Every 1000 feet is a large open hall that can sit up to 500 comfortably. These way-houses served the traveling dwarves as rest areas and places to hide from storms. Each way-point normally has a source of water, run-off, captured in channels from the cliffs above. The third area's water passage is blocked by some debris and there is no water there.

The tunnel is dark, possessing no outside sources of light, though in friendlier times, lanterns on each of the arches lit the way. Some few of these remain, but most have long since vanished. Those that do remain are still in working order, though they contain no oil.

Before you the road washes up against a cliff over 1000 feet tall. It's steep, though its broken face offers plenty of ledges and crevices for purchase. It is obvious however that a climb is risky; to fall is to die, but the road itself rises up a ramp to an opening in the cliff. It does not look natural, and upon closer investigation, you realize it is constructed of stone and mortar. There are no gates or doors but what you see at the top of the ramp is undoubtedly a tunnel.

The Baerlun has become home to a colony of dire colbies. These strange creatures occupy the third way-stop, some 2000 feet into the tunnel. They occasionally hunt on the Tugensele Plateau but normally wait in the darkness of the Baerlun, clinging to the ceiling or behind arches, waiting for some creature to pass beneath.

NOTE: The CK should place as many dire colbies as necessary to make the encounter challenging.

DIRE COLBY (These chaotic evil creatures' vital statistics are HD 2d8, AC 18, and HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d6 points of damage each and a bite for 1d8 points of damage. They are only able to bite if they successfully strike with both claws.)

Scattered around the third way-point are hordes of bones mingled with all manner of debris. If a detailed search of the area is made, it reveals 300 gp in coin, a suit of +1 dwarven chainmail, six +1 hand wraps that grant their user a +1 to hit and damage when using their fists to pummel or strike someone, a *potion of cure light wounds*, a *ring of spell turning*, a scroll with three rune spells on it, a book with three wizard or illusionist spells in it, and a *feather token*.

The tunnel opens on the far side of the cliff face to a deep, long valley. A long broad lake stretches the length of the long valley, fed by countless streams and run-offs. Trees cluster along the banks of the lake and up the deep gulches and clefts that creep up the towering mountains. The ridge lines are barren of all but short, faded green grasses and patches of yellow flowers. A warm humid air greets you. The road winds down into the valley, following the course of several switchbacks until it breaks into valley proper, snaking off into the distance.

This is the beginning of the long Greenbriar Valley that leads through the western fence of the Holmgrad Mountains and ends at the Eahrak Steppes.

DEEP LAKE VALLEY

This valley is 18 miles long. The road follows a relatively gentle path, following the northern bank of the lake, where the vegetation thins out due to lower amounts of precipitation. Travel is very easy here, normal even. Barring incident, the characters should cover the distance in a day.

Game and water are both plentiful.

The valley is rich in game and predators. Roll encounters every three hours on a d12; on a 1, consult the encounter table above for possible encounters.

SADDLETOP

Deep Lake Valley ends at the foot of a large saddle back hill that stretches across the whole of the Greenbriar Valley. The hill is over 3000 feet tall, but the rise is gentle, climbing slowly up to apex over the course of four miles. The ground here is dry; all moisture runs off its course and down into the valley below.

Topside the hill breaks into a wide shelf roughly six miles across covered in loose stone and compacted dirt.

There is no water here, though wild grasses and the cous flowers grow, nestled into rocks, clefts, and the like. There are bones everywhere, animal and other.

This whole area is a primary hunting ground for a nest of fiedoths, called shovelmouths, that dwell on the southern face of the mountains to the north. They perpetually hunt the saddle top, swooping down on unsuspecting prey.

SHOVELMOUTH (*This creature's vital statistics are HD 7d8, AC 17, and HP varies. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with a single bite for 1d10 points of damage. It is able to*

ram its victims. It also can grab its prey with tentacles that serve as tails. Each tentacle does 1d6 points of damage.)

The shovelmouth attacks by ramming its prey, trying to knock it over (save versus dexterity). If successful, it hovers over the victim, encasing it in its tentacles and attempting to absorb the target through barbs along its tentacles.

The creature's treasure lies scattered all over the broad hill, wherever its victims fell and died. If the party makes a determined search for treasure, for every hour of searching off-road they have a chance of finding coins, gems, equipment, or magic. Roll a d12 to determine which.

Roll	Coin
1-4	1-100 gp in coins
5-7	1-10 gems (10-25 gp)
8-10	Master work equipment and gear, choose from equipment list in this book
11	Magic items, consult <i>Monsters & Treasure</i> or choose
12	Amnuel Rune Stone, or choose

BROKEN ROCK

The Saddletop plateau ends in a gentle slope down into Broken Rock. This area comprises the bulk of the center portion of the journey, consisting of 45 miles of rolling hills and valleys; the valley is roughly 11 miles wide. These road winds up and down the hills, snaking back and forth across the valley floor. There are marked elevation changes ranging up to 4000 feet above sea level. These hills are cut by steep drop-offs and narrows gulches. The road follows the hills, for the most part.

The going seems easy but is rather rough, and the party only makes about six to eight miles a day.

Along the road there are precious few resources, water, or food; there is no firewood. Off-road, down in the valleys, food and water are plentiful.

Encounters in this stretch of the journey are normal for the road. Consult above. A small herd of mountain ponies make their home here. Check for encounters as above in Deep Valley.

NIMAPOL

Living in this large stretch of country is a tribe of stone age humans. They number about 1600 people, broken into 8 bands. They range the entire length of the valley and into the high mountains above. They call themselves the Nimapol.

The Nimapol bands are led by any number of headmen, or chiefs; there are war chiefs, hunting chiefs, Mouths of the Gods, and so on. The warriors usually number 20% of a band's actual number and range in age from 14 to 40. They use bows, arrows, spears, war clubs, stone axes, and stone daggers. One in ten possesses a metal weapon. They are rich in food and an alcoholic drink called skun that is very potent though bitter to the taste. They know the geography of their country well.

The Nimapol have scouts that range the valley. They spy the party as it travels off the Saddletop. Every 12-hour period the party is in the valley, there is a 1 in 10 chance of being spotted by the Nimapol.

They do not attack but immediately send runners to the other other bands to warn them, and all move their people deeper into the wooded gulches. They send a war party out to meet the characters and determine whether they are a threat or not. They are not averse to trading, if they are given metal tools. They are not ignorant savages, but experienced hunter-gatherers. If relations are friendly enough, they invite the party back to their campsites.

They speak their own tribal language.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE NIMAPOL

Use the following to instigate an encounter if needed.

The road tops a small, round, snow-covered hill top. It switches back in front of you, headed down the far side of the hill. As you negotiate the crest you notice a several carrion birds circling a dark patch in the snow. Several of the birds have landed, fighting amongst themselves as they fight for a spot on the intended meal.

The dark spot is a Nimapol child called Carlut, which in the Vulgate would mean Out of Rocks. He left his band 12 days previous to find the Aug Oust, the Old Gods, so they might give him guidance. He has wandered in the wilderness alone since leaving his village. He is nearly starved to death, for he has fasted as well. He lies upon the ground, nearly dead.

If the party chooses to rescue the boy and feed him, they find that he recovers very quickly. In just over a day he is conscious and able to speak coherently. He only speaks his own language and sign language. It is up to the characters to overcome the language barrier.

Carlut views the encounter as one guided by the Old Gods and he seeks any sign of this amongst the party. This sign could be any animal symbol that is visible, such as a hawk on a tabard, a boar's head on a pommel, etc. He adopts this as the sign of that particular god, from which he gains his power over the world.

He offers to take the party to his band where his father can aid them in their journey.

The travel to the band takes two days. When they spot the party, the band marshals its warriors, led by the war chief Lut-te, and rushes the interlopers. They do not attack when they see the boy, but circle the party until the matter is resolved.

FIGHTING THE NIMAPOL

If forced into combat the Nimapol never fight to the death; their numbers are too few for that. They fight to wound and kill enemy but do not put themselves in life-or-death situations unless it is to save the band's women and children.

Any war chief is an 8-10th level ranger. Other band members are fighters and rangers from 1st to 8th level. They possess their own form of magic and if given proper time to gather their "power" as they call it, often add war paint and war relics to their battle array. These serve as magic items, granting users +1-4 on AC to hit and damage; this depends on the individual warrior.

Use the following as an example of a Nimapol high-level warrior.

LUT-TE (*This chaotic neutral human ranger's vital statistics are Level 10, AC 20, and HP 82. His primary attributes are wisdom, strength, and dexterity. His significant attributes are strength 18, dexterity 15, wisdom 14. He attacks with a spear and shield. In close quarters, he possesses a war club. The spear has a number of ritual totems on it that grant it a +5 to hit and damage. The shield protects him against normal missiles so long as it is not raining. The war club is painted green and marked so that its ritual power is +2 to hit and damage.*)

RUNE MARKS

The Nimapol shamans are called Mouths of the Gods. These are Rune Mark holy men. They range in level from 1st to 10th, with one tribal leader of 15th level.

If the characters befriend the Nimapol, they offer to teach them the way of the Rune Marks, the Mouths of the Gods.

This of course takes time and should be a perfect time to advance a season or two as the Rune Mark learns his new craft.

BITTERDROP CANYON

The Broken Rock Valley ends in a long shelf of rocky terrain, dipping then to lower elevations accessed by a narrow canyon that marks the divide between Broken Rock and the rest of the road. The canyon is marked by sharp, rugged cliffs. The road follows the south flank of the canyon, going down at a solid 45-degree angle. Travel is difficult, especially if anyone is laden with much gear. Every 500 feet there is a raised portion of the road, creating speed bumps.

The road snaps to the north at the canyon floor, into a thick forest of black cottonwoods. The ground here is very wet and covered in thick clumpy grasses. There are wild and dangerous animals.

The canyon is roughly 11 miles in length. However, the road here is completely gone; only a single bridge remains, about 2 miles into the woods. Travel here is slow and difficult as there are numerous bogs and pools. Hordes of mosquitoes hound the characters day and night. The bridge offers a safe haven to the party, where they can dry off and rest. Travel is very slow, maybe three miles a day.

Encounters here are not common. Roll four times a day on a d12. A 1 indicates one of the following:

Roll Monsters

- 1 Afanc (there is a small colony of eight of these here)
- 2 Giant Spider
- 3 Snake, Viper
- 4 Nimapol warrior
- 5 Musher (edible and aggressive fish)
- 6 Algoid
- 7 Quick Sand
- 8 Poisonous Plant

AFANC (*This chaotic neutral creature's vital statistics are HD 3d8, AC 16, and HP varies. Their attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d4 or two-claw attacks for 1d6 each points of damage. They hunt by mimicking sound and luring victims into the swamp, where they attempt to drag their prey under water.*)

SPIDERS, GIANT (*These neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 1d6, HP 4, 5, 5, 6, and AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a poison bite that does 1d4 points of damage and requires a constitution save or the victim takes an additional 2 points of damage for the next three turns.*)

SNAKE VIPERS (*These neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 1d4, HP 1 each, and AC 1. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite that does 1 HP of damage and requires a constitution saving throw or take an additional 1d4 damage.*)

MUSHER (*This neutral creature's vital statistics are HD 8d8, AC 13, and HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d4 points of damage. Their skin emits a toxin that is deadly. Anyone touching the fish must make a successful constitution save within 12-24 hours or fall into a coma for 2d20 hours. For each hour after 12 the victim suffer 1d4 hit points damage until he is revived or dies.*)

ALGOID (*This chaotic neutral creature's vital statistics are HD 5d8, AC 15, and HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two fists for 1d10 points of damage. It suffers only half damage from slashing or pointed weapons. They have spell immunity.*)

QUICK SAND: Any character who falls into quick sand must make a successful dexterity check if attempting to grasp something as he falls; the CL is dependent upon the CK and the terrain. Once in the quick sand victims cannot break free without help, unless they make a successful strength check (CL 7).

POISONOUS PLANT: Unless there is a ranger or someone with specific knowledge of the plants, the party inadvertently passes through a patch of poisonous-contact plants. Everyone must make a successful constitution save or suffer rashes and skin lesions. Those that fail suffer a -1 from all attacks for the next 1d4 days. A ranger may make an intelligence check to determine if he spots the plants.

The water is drinkable but foul. Anyone who drinks it must make a constitution save (CL 0) or risk contracting a giardia infection

that lasts up to three days. The attacks come with vomiting, diarrhea, and severe stomach cramps. A *cure disease* or similar spell removes the parasite. Within as many hours as the user has constitution points, the infection takes effect and the person becomes feverish and begins vomiting and experiencing violent bowel movements, at which point they are unable to travel.

There is little food here aside from the black cottonwood bark.

THE CLEFT

The canyon narrows precipitously at the far western end to little more than a dozen feet. Tall rocky escarpments tower on either side of the five-mile long cleft. The road crosses through here and the bottom of the Cleft is paved. Signs of an old dwarf way-station built into the wall, offering some cover, exist on the right side of the entrance to the Cleft.

A dwarf way-point remains at the half-way mark. It consists of an opening in the south cliff face about four feet tall. This opens to long corridor about 40 feet in length that ends at a bronze door set into the wall.

AREA 1 DOOR

The door is made of bronze. It is round and set to roll open, sliding into the wall to the left (when facing the door from the outside).

The door looks similar to a round shield, with a metal knob in the center of it. Reliefs of four bearded dwarf heads decorate its bronze surface, the beards all twining around the central knob.

Pressing the knob normally opens the door. Pressing it now, the knob goes into the door, but this is followed by a click sound. The door is jammed on dry runners as it has not been opened in many years. Pushing the door while pressing the knob breaks it free. A successful strength check (CL 4) is required to open it.

AREA 2 GREAT HALL

The door opens into a room 100 feet wide by 80 feet deep. It is filled with stone tables and stools. The tables are built into the floor, but the stools are free-standing.

The walls are decorated with reliefs of dwarves battling monsters and building the road.

There is little of interest in the room. The temperature is cool and the room altogether comfortable.

On the left-hand wall is an arched doorway about eight feet wide. This leads down a hall to another arched doorway.

KITCHEN

Beyond the open arch is the kitchen area. Stoves are built into the walls, while tables and work benches line the walls and fill the center of the room. Shelves on the wall sport ceramic jars, small tin boxes, and other containers. Cooking implements hang from chains in the ceiling. A large coal bin sits in the northwest corner, filled with five days' worth of coal.

The room has long remained undisturbed.

60 CASTLES & CRUSADES



A detailed search reveals little food. Whatever the dwarves kept here has long dissolved. There is a well head in the room with clear, clean water in it. This is covered by a small hatch. The kitchen supplies that remain, plates, pots, mugs, flatware, etc., are all in good and working order.

GATES TO THE BEYOND

Beneath the coal bin lies a trap door, cleverly hidden in the flagstones of the floor. Detecting it requires a successful search check (CL 8). It opens by placing pressure on the two raised portions of the flagstone at the same time. The door drops down several feet, swinging wide to the left. The opening reveals a deep pit, lined with cobbled stone walls. A ladder that plunges into the darkness. A heavy draft of wind blows up and through the tunnel; it carries the smell of burnt hair.

The ladder is bolted to the side of a cobble-stoned wall. This wall extends in the darkness 120 feet in both directions. The far side of the pit is 240 feet away. If characters cannot see that far in the darkness, the far wall remains invisible.

The stone work is carefully carved and set.

The pit is 500 feet deep. The ladder goes down 400 feet, ending 100 feet above the floor. Every 100 feet there is a small ledge to

allow one to rest. The rungs are spaced for a dwarf; any taller than five feet has a little trouble negotiating the ladder.

The pit is an entrance to a gateway. One of the fabled entrances to the Rings of Brass lies here. Built by the dwarves to travel the planes, the Rings of Brass are tunnels carved into the cosmos through use of the runes. The tunnels are usually well hidden and guarded. This one is no exception.

THE FACE OF FEAR

At 250 feet, anyone descending the ladder comes to a gap in the ladder where three rungs are missing. There are faces here, carved into the stone work of the wall. Each is a dwarf with contorted face, showing terror or fear. There are several hundred of these, as they stretch around the room. They have a powerful *magic mouth* spell cast upon them, so that they mutter words of fear in soft whispering tones; they give birth to the thought of falling from this great height into the unknown darkness below.

Anyone here who attempts to negotiate the rungs must save versus fear (CL 7) in order to continue moving along. Any who fail their save seek to return to the safety of the kitchen above. If stuck between continuing to descend or crawling over a companion to reach the safety above, they choose the latter.

This can be a dangerous task and should require a dexterity check as the CK sees fit.

END OF THE ROAD

Those who continue discover that the ladder ends about 100 feet above the floor. They can determine the distance if they can see that far in the dark or have dropped a torch or some such.

Much as above, the faces of dwarves line the walls, these descending down into the darkness, one dwarf relief for each brick as it descends. Immediately to the left of where the ladder ends is a stone with a dwarf face. Down from it one stone over is another, down from that one, one stone over is another. Each of these is a magical stair. If one steps into the space where the dwarf relief is looking they discover a stair. It leads down to the bottom.

A *detect magic* or similar spell reveals the magical stairs. Dwarves have a normal chance of detecting abnormal conditions underground when passing near them. Finding these stairs otherwise is very difficult, CL 10.

The stairs lead to the bottom of the pit.

GATES

At the bottom of the pit is a broad chamber, 240 feet across on all sides. The floor is cobbled. The room is empty but for the skeletal body of a man in armor with sword in hand.

The room is wide, nearly 250 feet across. It is empty but for the skeleton of a man. He sits against the ladder with his back to the wall. A suit of splint mail covers his body, leggings and all. A helm sits on the floor next to him, as if sat casually upon the ground. He holds a sword in his hands, pointed down, arms extended as if he were resting upon it. On his back is a quiver with three arrows in it.

The man's name is Ervyn of Peak. He was a warrior who ventured here centuries ago. He and his companions passed into the Rings of Brass but only he returned, hounded by demons. He fell back against the wall in hopes that his comrades would return. They never did.

He wears +2 *splint mail* and has a +1 *small helm*. The sword is a *luck blade* of longsword size. Carved into the blade in elven are the following words: "the day is yours." The quiver holds three magical arrows, each crafted of lodestone and bound with a *kepulch* rune from the rune lore magics. The arrow, if it successfully hits its target, acts as the rune stone does. Each is good for one use only.

The wall at which he forever stares conceals a door way to the Rings of Brass, hidden behind a magical screen of dwarven make. The dwarves cast a powerful illusion upon the wall to hide the door, a *screen* spell. The spell makes the wall appear normal. Seeing through the illusion is difficult (intelligence CL 15). However, if the characters should come to the conclusion that Ervyn was looking at something specific, they gain a +3 to their checks.

62 CASTLES & CRUSADES

THE DOOR

Seeing through the *screen* spell reveals a tall, bronze, double doorway. It is set with the reliefs of two stone giants, each reaching out to where the doors join. All the characters need do at this point is push upon the doors and it swings wide. Beyond is a long, low staircase that winds into the infinite darkness.

This gateway leads to a maze of tunnels that snake through the planes. If the adventure turns in this direction the CK must prepare for some major plane-travel adventures. See the Rings of Brass in this volume for more information.

There is nothing left of value in this dungeon.

Returning to the surface brings the characters back to the Cleft, and a day or so later back out into the world beyond.

THE LAND OF TALL MEN

The Cleft gives way to a large, steep rise of earth and rock. The road follows this for several miles, switching back several times, until the travelers reach an elevation of roughly 5000 feet. The Land of Tall Men extends for roughly 15 miles until it ends in the Plains of Doost.

At the top of the rise the remainder of the road unfolds before them.

The country opens before you, rolling out like a massive blanket of patchy white. Snow-covered hills range with dark brown valleys where run-off has carried the mountain waste. The sky is high overhead and the mountains to the north and south offer a formidable fence. The country seems barren of life, home to glistening sun-draped snow, through which jut fingers of cold gray rock. The land tumbles in this way as far as you can see.

This is a very difficult country and travel through here is slow. The road winds up and down the many hills and is covered in sheets of ice and snow, and is in some state of disrepair. Getting off the road is very easy; unless the characters should break the ice and snow to make certain they stay on track. However, picking it back up is not difficult as it is seen here and there in the distance as it cuts through an area not covered by snow.

Movement is roughly 1-6 miles a day. Roll on a d8 to determine distance traveled. If they have proper travel gear, such as snow shoes or skis, the travel increases to 4-12 miles per day.

There is very little to eat here, unless the characters hunt for wild game.

The Land of Tall Men is however home to the ferocious yeti. These creatures stalk the hills in early evening, hunting for prey. They are extremely vicious, attacking without mercy or concern any they encounter. They hunt in pairs or small packs of up to four, but when they go into battle, they emit ferocious howls, calling any others that may be in the area.

YETI (These chaotic neutral creatures' vital statistics are HD 5d8, AC 14, and HP varies. Their primary attributes are

physical. They attack with two fists for 1d10 damage each and a bite for 1d8. Being very territorial, they attack anything whether they desire to eat or not.)

Where the Land of Tall Men ends lies the Home of Bjorr. Where the pass divulges into the valleys below, he has taken up his watch. Generally friendly, he welcomes travelers, enjoying games of riddles and good tales. He is always interested in news.

He will be fascinated with any story told by a party member of their encounter with Umyard and Skleeome and the kidnapped Valyana.

BEER GIANTS

Bjorr resides near the base of a mountain in the Troll Downs. He lives alone in a lodge of fallen trees in a secluded grove. The lodge covers a cave, opening into the mountainside, and it is in this cave where Bjorr brews a beer of remarkable quality.

BJORR THE BEER GIANT (Giant) *(He is a chaotic neutral frost giant whose vital statistics are HP 40 and AC 20. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with two fists for 2d8 damage each or a gigantic morning star for 8d4 damage. His special abilities are Rock Throwing, Immunity to Cold (full), Twilight Vision, and Vulnerability to Fire). He wears a helmet and bear pelts. His beard is slightly reddish and, underneath his helm, he is as bald as a rock.)*

Bjorr lives a simple life: hunting, brewing, and drinking. He keeps to his own business, except when he needs to raid nearby trade routes for brewing supplies. Unlike most frost giants, Bjorr is not overtly evil. He is not particularly nice, but he won't slaughter intruders if they are respectful. He certainly will attack if provoked and he does not suffer idiots. Those that rub him the wrong way will soon find themselves at the business end of his morning star.

He greatly enjoys riddles. If in a particularly good mood (i.e., if particularly drunk), he may challenge visitors to a riddle contest. He rewards those that stump him with wineskins full of his beer.

His lodge is surrounded by several rain barrels, which he uses to collect water for brewing. The inside smells like a tavern and is spartan: a gigantic cot in corner, a fire pit in the center (lit only to cook), and a large chair and table in another corner. A shortsword +1 with a beautiful wolf-head pommel is stuck into the table (Bjorr likes the look of it and uses it as a toothpick). Empty and full barrels emblazoned with a lion's head mark (his self-appointed standard) line the walls. Drinking horns, steins, and mugs litter the room. Bear skins rugs cover the floor.

The mountain cave is full of brewing ingredients: sacks of barley, yeast, grains, hops, and barrels of water. It is chock-full of kettles, vats, and barrels, as well as wood for fuel.

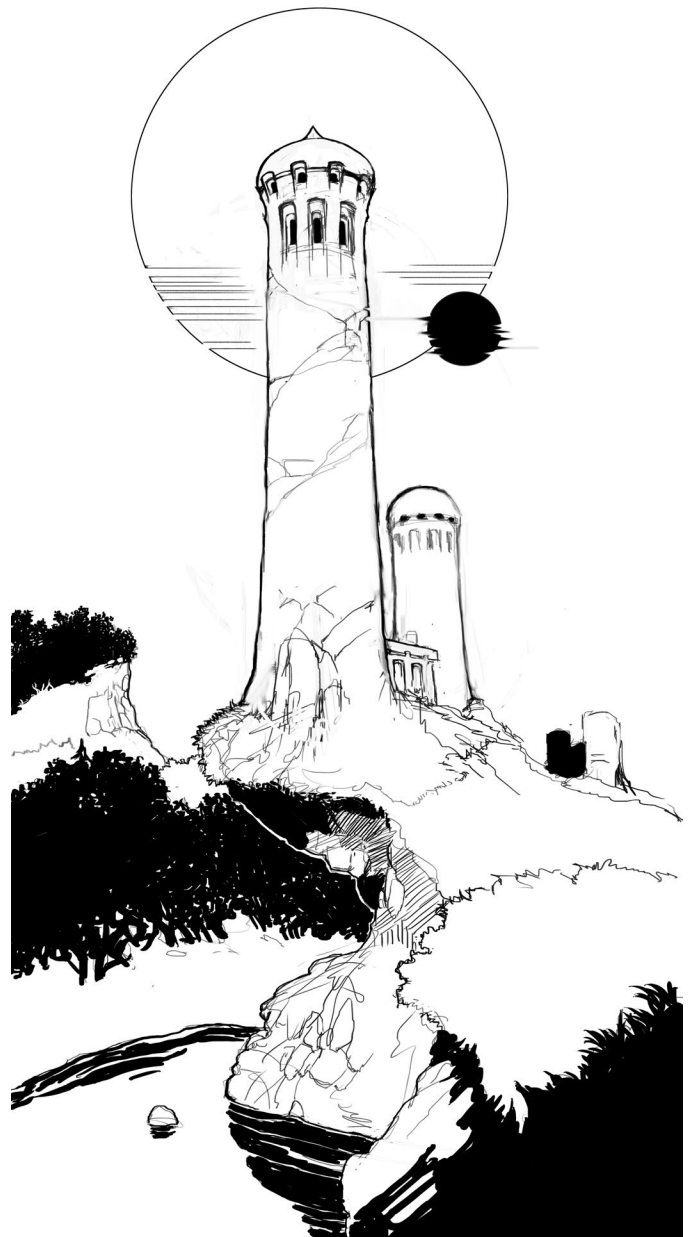
Bjorr's beer is of an exceptional quality and could be sold for 50 gp a barrel. There are eight full barrels in the lodge at any given time.

Bjorr keeps his treasure in a locked chest hidden in a hole covered by a stack of barrels in the northwest corner of his

lodge. Inside is a human-sized ivory drinking horn (500 gp), a sack of 300 gp, a silver statue of a lion's head (he liked it so much that he decided to use the image to mark his beer, 300 gp), and a gold-encrusted dwarf skull (1000 gp). Bjorr keeps the chest key with him at all times.

LEAVING THE ANDRUS ROAD

The Andrus Road winds down the long slopes of the mountains to the grassy plains below. The lands beyond the mountains are broken steppes of wild grass and stunted scrub oaks. There are many small ravines and rock shelves, gullies and the like. There are plenty of places to hide, both for the party and any monsters which may be in the area. Trolls and orcs are common, but there are other creatures as well. These are also the lands of the Bauml Halflings.



15 DOOST PLAINS



This encounter is set for higher-level characters. It involves travel over broad plains that stand between the Shadow Mountains and the Mammoth Ridge. The dwarven Andrus Road officially ends here and there is little trace of it aside from an occasional pylon in the grassy steppes beyond.

The Doost is very flat, covered in thick, rich grass in spring and summer; in fall it turns brown quickly and by winter, snow begins to blanket the region. It is harsh but not unlivable. Many creatures eke a living out of the steppes by shoveling snow aside and chewing at what nutrients remain.

The plains are home to vast herds of elk that roam the length and breadth of the region. Wolves hunt them, and a recent addition to the area are growing packs of kimer steppe devils, beasts that haunted the eastern lands but have spread to almost all locales.

The plains are wild and dangerous, more for wandering monsters coming from the mountains than anything else. The weather too is harsh, though when the sun is out, travel is pleasant and often uneventful.

SPOTTED

A clan of halflings have recently moved into the region, traveling from the south, up from the Crowley River region. Following the kimer, they have spent several years capturing and taming these creatures, turning them into mounts. These mounts they in turn sell to the clans to the south or even occasionally into the towns of Oss and Most.

The nature of their business requires that the halflings keep careful watch on the steppes, in constant look out for raiders

from the mountains, trolls from the south, and whatever crawls from the tundra seeking greener pastures. They always keep a careful eye on the Andrus Road for frost giants.

The scouts range from hill to hill, traveling in bands of three to four. They ride kimer steppe devils, stopping frequently to survey the land. There is always a group watching the road. When the party leaves the shelter of the mountains, traveling onto the plains, the scouts spot them and take cover as best they can. They watch for a great long while until they have determined how many are traveling and roughly how they are armed and armored. This takes several minutes.

Each character in the party who is paying the least bit of attention is allowed a spot check (CL 9).

Like an ocean, the grass shifts and moves, currents of swaying grass bending to the whim of the winds rolling off the mountains behind you. Long leagues of grass lie before you, nestled in the shadow of the mountains. To the south, atop a small hill, a motion catches your attention. All around the hill the grass moves to the wind's beat, but on top of the hill its currents break up, swirling around what at first glance appears to be an outcrop of rock.

READ ON IF HALFLINGS SPOTTED: On closer inspection you realized those rocks are figures, mounted figures. Small creatures mounted upon some wolf-like beasts appear to be watching you. They carry spears and wear leather armor and hide-bound shields. Even as you spy them, they turn and melt into the grasses beyond, vanishing behind the hill.

Regardless of being spotted, the halflings turn their mounts around, leave the hill and head due west, heading for their band which is encamped some five leagues away. They follow natural contours, keeping themselves well hidden from the party, and move at maximum speed to put as much distance between themselves and the party as they can.

If the characters travel to the hill where the halflings stood, they readily discover the tracks of the kimer steppe devils. Unless they have encountered these creatures before it is unlikely that they have knowledge of them.

The creatures are four-legged, but their feet have three long, clawed toes and one back claw, leaving four indentations in the ground. Their weight is a little unevenly distributed, revealing to anyone with tracking skills that the creatures are bearing mounted riders that are not carrying very much weight. They are relatively easy to track (CL 4).

THE FOR-DU

Regardless of what the characters do, the Halflings, members of the Bauml Clan, return home to warn their people. This takes a day and a half. As soon as they are alerted, the wagons are loaded up and sent south. They work very hard in disguising their tracks. Several rangers follow the caravan, clearing the trail; more take four wagons filled with stones and head north, making a more obvious path. The largest part of the band, about 50 in all, mount their kimer and range out after the characters to determine who they are and what business they are on.

Depending on the direction the characters travel, it should be a day or so before the war band finds them.

The halflings send several scouts ahead in order to spy the characters from a distance. Once they have found them, they wait until the following day, approaching in the early dawn. During this time enterprising characters can spot the halflings if they are looking. The CK must determine the challenge level, but the halflings possess a greater knowledge of the terrain and how to use it to hide themselves. CL 6 at minimum is advised.

Once they have determined their line of approach, the halflings range out in a broad half-moon shaped formation. Two lines form, 25 in each line, and the second some 40 feet behind the other. Each halfling is spaced about 15 feet apart. They approach to within a few hundred feet of the party, at which point one breaks free and trots forward.

The sun is not over the horizon when you catch sight of mounted figures approaching. Small men, probably halflings, adorned in leather, rings, and shirts of chain ride four-legged, striped beasts. The halflings carry shields and spears or short bows. All wear swords and axes on their belts. The mounts are the size of small horses, long-legged with lean, long necks. They range in color from gray to yellow, with dark stripes. They have no tail to be spoken of and their necks end in wicked curved beaks. Leather saddles possess all the trappings of normal riders. The whole outfit is well armed and obviously highly mobile.

The halflings are not aggressive and only attack the party if attacked themselves. The one that moves forward freely gives his name as Elru, son of Gelru. He asks the party from whence they come and to where they travel. He doesn't ask their business. If they seem mean, surly, or disagreeable, he breaks off the conversation and returns to the others. Unless overly threatened they shadow the party as it travels but do not interfere with them.

If the characters are friendly, the halfling returns to his chiefs who then ride forward. They treat with the characters, sizing them up to determine if they are safe or not. Their captain Barun, a 12th level knight, strikes up a friendly conversation about the plains, mountains, weather, or whatnot. He does so to gauge their response as he possesses a keen ability to see into people's motives. Barun is allowed a wisdom check (CL 5); if successful he determines their alignment.

If the characters are friendly, they are invited to feast together. Assuming the characters accept, the halflings range out and capture game, bringing it back to the character to feed them. The halflings have a wealth of information about the lands to the south, the Halmsroof Pass and the giants that occupy it, as well as the wilds beyond. They offer to aid the characters in any way they can, even so much as guiding them to the mouth of the pass.

If the characters travel with the halflings for several days the two groups can get to know each other. Only at this time do the halflings offer to take the characters to their laagers, the large wagons their clan uses as homes and for travel. Otherwise they guide them to the pass, give them several days of rations and steer them south.

THE HALFLINGS OF BEORMOT RIDGE

The long Andrus Road puts the party just north of the Beormot Ridge, the first and most defining terrain feature in central Gottland. Dietrich, if he is still with them, or the halflings from the Plains of Doost encounter, are determined to bring them to his people, the Laager of Erul Troll Bane of Clan Bauml. These Halflings are nomadic, traveling from the sea to the mountains, but generally staying in and around the ridge. There are three major bands of the clan which travel in caravans, or Laagers, of wagons. Erul is their Lord and he leads the largest group. It is to Erul that Dietrich is heading.

If Dietrich is not with the party they stumble on the following encounter or to his laager that they arrive at from the previous encounter.

There are about 700 in the clan, of which about 210 are able fighters, ranging from 1st to 15th level. They are led by Erul Troll Bane. Many of the women are part of this warrior arm. They travel in large wagons pulled by oxen and horses. The clan possesses about 500 kimer devils in herds that they use as mounts. They are quite wealthy, well-armed, and able to travel, even encumbered, up to 15 miles in a given day.

They circle the 18 wagons at night, many sleeping on the ground, in tents, or the wagons themselves. Very friendly and communicative, they help the characters, selling them supplies at fair prices.

The clan is nomadic so the CK should place the following encounter whenever it suits their needs, 1, 2 or 3 days from the Andrus road and the mountains.

Before you, spread out over two small hills, stand a large assortment of huge wagons. Some are double tiered, others small and covered with canvas only. They are linked in a loose circle, in the middle of which are scores of stout Halflings, drinking and eating. Some manner of feast is afoot. You see in the neighboring ravines several herds of oxen and horses. In all you guess there are five to six hundred Halflings here.

As the party approaches, a horn sounds. Immediately, scores of Halflings, men and women rush to arms, donning shields and helms and scooping up swords, crossbows and some few firearms (if your campaign allows these). Dietrich or Elru calls out in his own tongue. A stout, fat Halfling in a breast plate shouts back and the two talk for a minute. Tensions relax and the party is invited into the camp.

As a friend of either Dietrich or Elru the Halflings welcome the party with open arms, offering them food, drink, and shelter (beneath a canopy attached to one of the wagons). They are little interested in the party's troubles or needs, having a host of hardships of their own. But if one of the party offers to tell a tale they gather around and listen, shouting "hurahs" when appropriate, or "booing" at the bad guys. Laager Halflings live more for the moment than most folks and a good tale over warm mead is a welcome thing.

Eventually Erul calls the group to him. He is an old gray hair, who still commands a stout frame. He wears a magical chain shirt and has dark, blood stained leather breaches. He leans on a halberd when standing, and it is in his lap when sitting.

Erul queries the party about what they are doing in the Gottland and what they are looking for. He is 84 years old and knows the land very well. He lived in the country during the final years of the Winter Dark and is well acquainted with all its legends as well, he can speak of the Troll Downs, the Stone Giants and the Kleberock as easily as any other topic. Above all else he knows about the Winter Runes and the Paths of Umbra. Erul should serve the CK as a tool to supply the party with necessary information about the Void, The Rune Lords, etc.

He knows that good as well as evil may come of their use, and if he determines the party is good, he aids them. He resupplies them with food and drink, equipment and weapons. Too, he offers them a safe haven should they need somewhere to mend their wounds.

He knows that the Maiden of Winter's Blight took the Winter Rune and the staff that held it and took it to her castle in the Shadow Mountains where she rules her White Kingdom. He remarks the following or something similar: "There she pays homage to the Horned God and commands the forces of the Void, bringing winter to her small corner of the world. It has wreaked havoc in these lands. Her creatures stalk our trails and hunt down the goodly folk. While all the rest of the world has moved on beyond

and grows in the new world, our little corner, Gottland-Ne, the land without gods, is the last corner of the Horned God's winter."

He offers any RuneMark in the party one high level rune stone. He has several in his possession. Choose as needed.

The party is allowed to stay with the Halflings as long as they like. They are never asked to leave, nor hurried on their mission. When they do leave, they are given a fond farewell. If the encounter went well each party member is given a horn. When they are in need, they need but sound the horn and its note will carry with surety to the nearest friend bringing them the message of their need. See *horn of the halfling* in **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde** below. They can resupply with most basic equipment and weapons. No livestock, horses, etc. are available.

The journey to the border of the White Kingdom takes the characters down the length of the Plains of Doost or over Mammoth Ridge. In any case the journey should take a week or so, unless the party has secured mounts through some other means.

The Crowley River Country, the watershed around the Winter Wood is a wild country with nothing but ruins and wild beasts. Consult the Encounter Chart daily, or if a set encounter is desired read the following description.

The long day at last winds to a close. Your path leads you down into a deep wash, about 40 down and 100 feet wide. A clear pool of water lies at the bottom. All about the area are huge grey stones calling to mind the stone giants that are rumored to dwell in the mountains to the north. Moving along the wash you are stopped dead when you notice the shadows cast by one of the boulders move, it swirls like dark liquid, coiling around the base of the stone where it begins to take the shape of a large winged beast. Other similar shadows rise from the stones beyond.

These are belkers and they attack immediately. The Castle Keeper should adjust the numbers of belkers as needed to challenge the party.

BELKER (*This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 7d8, AC 22, HP 28. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with 2 wing (2d4), 2 claw (1d4) and a bite (1d6). The Belker can assume a smoke form as well as attack with smoke claws for a further 2d4 points of damage.*)

16 OF THE HORNED GODS WINTER

The lands of the Winter Kingdom encompass the Winter Wood, its immediate environs and the slopes and hills of the Shadow Mountains up to but not including Dante's Pass. Most of the Maiden of Winter's Blight's power lies in her own castle, Kalogreant, and the forest. These lands are locked in winter's embrace, the temperature never rising above 20 degrees F. Snow blankets the realm, turning to ice and slush on the borders during the spring and summer. Normal encounters should be rolled for the Winter Wood. If the Maiden herself is encountered she watches the party from a distance, recognizing that they are powerful however, she watches only, studying them. Then she returns to her castle.

Travel through the wood should take 4-5 days if entered from the east, or 1-2 days if entered from the north or south. The land is difficult to cross as the trails that do exist are largely for animals and the snow at times becomes very deep.

Roll normal encounters.

Ainoja the Maiden of Winter's Blight dwells in Kalogreant upon a long narrow finger of a ridge overlooking the Winter Wood. Visitors must travel up a long, winding road, roughly three miles in length, that coils back on itself three times. Those further up the road can easily see travelers coming up, and those in the tall white main tower of the castle can see much of the whole road. The path is open to the south, though steep and narrow. Trees are generously placed all about, but not so much as to block the view. Looking up one can see the white walls of the tower itself. The castle consists of a high curtain wall, 22 feet high and 15 feet wide at the base, and large gates, beyond are the keep and three towers, each taller than its neighbor. The walls and

towers are white, the double gates and shingled canonical roofs are blue. A single pennant flies from the high tower. It is blue with three stars emblazoned upon it.

After many days of travel and hardship they come to the long road that leads up to the towers of the castle.

The trail unwinds before you. With tired legs you at last come face to face the white towers of an amazingly beautiful castle. The tall white walls, stand out against the dark backdrop of the lonely peaks of the Shadow Mountains. All is quiet; the large blue gates to the keep are shut. Heavy, snow laden clouds, hang over all.

As the party begins to unlimber itself or begins to speak, Ainoja causes the snow to start falling. Huge flakes, slowly at first, but soon picking up speed so that visibility drops to a dozen feet or so. She then summons a wind from the south to hound the party. She does this using the *Winter Rune* magic item.

Upon a successful wisdom check (CL 7) any magic using class may notice that this is a magically summoned storm.

As they approach the castle, read or paraphrase the following:

The doors swing wide, unseen hands pulling them open, revealing a small courtyard that ends in steep steps. The winds whip snow about the yard and it seems as though a corridor is opened in the blinding white sheets of falling snow, at the end of which stands a woman of surpassing beauty astride a huge heavy war horse. Her long red hair is pulled back in a tight bun from whence it tumbles down her back. Her many colored cloaks envelop her,



though you note that her feet are bare. She sits astride a horse of alabaster skin, who's mane is woven gold. There is a deadly look in the woman's eyes and a power in the staff in her hand.

Ainoja commands four invisible stalkers, all of whom are further hidden in the snow, beneath the awnings. Any character able to detect invisible creatures through sight must make a spot check against the conditions and monsters (CL 20) in order notice the stalkers.

If the party attacks her Ainoja calls upon the stalkers to attack the party, closes the corridor of snow and launches herself forward, riding her steed upon the winds of snow. She strikes any who are near her as she tries to leave. She then uses the power of the Snow Horse (see below) to break free of the party. She retreats to the woods, calls a blizzard to fall upon the castle and attempts to bury all in snow. In the woods she summons the dread monsters of Unklar's making. Three score Ungern come to her, a dozen Trolls and one Rhemoraz. These she uses to hound any who survive the blizzard. She waits for the party to leave the castle before returning.

If the party treats with her, she invites them into the castle for a warm meal and drink. She offers them accommodations for a short while, but begs their forgiveness for not being able to house them for more than a few days, as food is in short supply.

The castle itself is almost wholly empty. The rooms have no furniture, the halls no tapestries. Only her room has a large four poster bed, wardrobe and a vanity with a mirror. She gives them free reign of the castle as there is truly nothing to steal or be had. The castle is old, and largely locked in ice. Few of the rooms are heated and those with fireplaces have not seen flame for many long years. Wonderfully constructed and largely in good shape the castle conjures images of a time gone by, as of a world locked in ice, much like the ancients of the Winter Dark.

In her feast hall is the greatest portion of her wealth, a *Gonfalon Standard*. These magical banners inspire men to follow whoever carries them, to push beyond their normal means and give the bearer true service. This standard bears the likeness of a great owl, with wings spread and facing the viewer. It is blue with the markings in silver and the main figure surrounded by wondrous designs.

If they mount the high tower they can see, on clear days all the Winter Wood and the Beormot ridge beyond. Too, Dante's pass and the twin mountains of Gardrim and Iseldrim are plain to see.

Ainoja is of course the sister to Valjana and Freyja. She is the youngest and left her home in search of her two sisters. She found the pillar of Unklar's Iron and took from it the magical Winter Rune which seemed to fit perfectly on the head of her walking staff. The rune, mounted thus, opened vistas for her, exposing her to the Void and the subtle manipulation of the powers that dwell there. In time it came to possess her every thought and twist her way of thinking. To her came visions of the orderly world of the Winter Dark and these appealed to her, more so as the quest for her sisters ended in failure. Eventually she wrote them off as dead and, in her bitterness, sought to

change the world to one where chaos did not hold sway, where she could hold happenstance at bay.

Thus, was born the Winter Wood and its mirror image of the Winter Dark. Though not evil, the forces she channeled were and the Winter Wood became an evil place and soon harbored many refugees of Unklar's folk. Ainoja housed them as harbingers of a world yet to come, of the world that had been before. In her timeless life their evil deeds accounted for little and thus, in time, all those around here were creatures dark of heart or filled with malice.

She does not know the power of the Void nor has she ever crossed the Wall of Worlds.

She does know that the party is a latent threat to her and her world of ice and snow. With that in mind she directs all their queries to Dante's Pass, hinting that there lies the source of the power they want. That in those high mountain trails is the gate to the Void; she even tells the story of Dante Wilson, how he fell and why. He was a rune mark of surpassing ability and fell with his relic and his Runes in the mountain pass (see above).

Unless the characters speak of her sisters, her intent is to send the party into the pass and once they are gone to bring a mountain of snow down upon them, calling upon the forces of the Winter Rune to bring about a blizzard and at the very least drive them into the wastes beyond.

If the characters talk with the Maiden for any length of time, they are likely to note her melancholy nature. She speaks of her sisters frequently and names them Valyana and Freyja. She knows that Valyana is imprisoned by Giants in the high mountains of the Holmgrads, but has no knowledge of where they are, nor does she know that Freyja lies in the Dunhollow Pools. These seem to be the source of her agony. If the party has met them or knows of their whereabouts and if the party offers up any of this information then Ainoja's attitude softens considerably. If the party offers to reunite the sisters, she promises to pay them well. They have but to deliver Valyana to Freyja's Home in the Dunhollow Pools to earn the reward. Once the quest is fulfilled and the party returns to Kaleogrant, Ainoja offers them the Gonfalon Standard as payment. Further she gives each 4 threads of law and the *winter rune*. After that she immediately mounts her steed, leaves the party the keys to the tower and heads north to find her sisters.

AINOJA, MORDIUS DRYAD (*This chaotic good creatures vital stats are HD 7d8, HP 41, AC 17. Her primary attributes are mental. She attacks first with spell use, but if pressed wields a curved tulwar +4 dagger of dancing that acts in all respects like a dancing sword for 1d8+4 points of damage. She has symbiosis with the Winter Wood, allowing her connections with greater areas than normal dryads and the ability to awaken plant life. She also has spell-like abilities that allow her to dimension door as a 7th level caster. For more information refer to New Monsters below.*)

She rides a magical horse, a snow steed (see below). The beast is almost always with her.

If the party fails to unravel the Maiden's true desires, she sets them on the path to Dante's Pass and to what she believes is certain doom. If they have aided her in reuniting with her sisters, she freely tells them of the treasure lost upon the pass and offers to guide them to its beginning. She also warns them of the treacherous conditions there as well as the air elemental who makes the pass his home.

MOUNTAINS HIGH TO BANDS OF STONE

A five-day trek up the broken rocky slopes of the mountains, following only goat trails and the like brings the party to the wide saddle backed ridge that is Dante's Pass. The pass is blanketed in snow, the first of many to come from the Maiden of Winter's Blight, assuming they have not befriended her. Obviously, if the party arrives here before they have met the Maiden no blizzard occurs. Roll for normal weather conditions. It is cold, always windy and the whipped-up snow decreases visibility considerably.

Roll encounters as per any normal adventure.

The wind has been steadily building as you climb further into the highlands, but now as you break the visage of the wall of rocks and the land unfolds before you it seems to pick up. It is bitter cold as the wind rises from the east and thunders between the two giant cloud-capped peaks of Gardrim and Iseldrim. Mighty pillars cut from the stone of the earth and set to hold up the very roof of the world. Between the mountainous pillars lies the twisted wreckage of time; where the wind and ice has wreaked havoc upon them for between them the ground is broken and split, deep fissures, narrow razor-sharp ridges tumble on into the north. Heavy clouds hang over all. It is a grim welcome for weary feet.

To traverse the whole pass can take up to twenty days, the broken country leads the party in and out of deep fissures, unstable snow packs, massive drifts, and the like. There is little cover, less wood and no water, but for the snow and ice. Few manage this trek, most die in the offing.

Travel here is difficult and slow. At best the party can manage a quarter of a mile an hour, that equates to about 2 miles a day for an 8-hour trek. The weather can cut that even more. If Ainoja brings her snows upon the party travel is cut to 1/8th, no firewood can be found and unless the party has some manner of magical means to stay alive, they are soon buried in the snow. Improper gear, a shortage of food or water, or any other similar shortcomings will cause frostbite or death. Temperatures drop to below zero. The snows come from the east, with the wind, driving the party into the wastelands of Nectanebo's Trough if they don't kill them.

Roll normal daily encounters. The weather should always be a problem and the terrain made challenging.

But their steps eventually bring them to a low path that traverses the flanks of Iseldrim. This path can hurry the journey greatly,

being unobstructed, by rock or debris and sheltered from the snow. Crossing this path brings the party into contact with the area where Dante Wilson fell so many years ago.

Oddly, in the corner of your eye you spot a dark figure about a hundred feet down a deep crevice. Whatever strange happenstance of the weather has uncovered the body, you can see that it is horribly broken, probably from a fall. The body is well preserved, a tall man, adorned in heavy travel gear. His packs are strewn about him.

If the party chooses to investigate the body, they soon discover that it is Dante Wilson himself, long dead, long frozen. He wears a small box around his neck and in his packs, along with is a small scroll case. He has +4 leather armor, boots of climbing, a +4 dagger of wounding, a +2 short composite bow, 10 +1 arrows and 20 regular arrows. Along with his camping gear is four weeks of rations and a small keg of wine. In the scroll case is a small sheet of paper, scribed on it reads the following:

From where Trolls rose

To trample stone

Upon the backs of giants

Lies a gate of brass

A band of stone.

This stanza alludes to Stone Band a sacred land to the stone giants in the south and east. A successful intelligence check or legend lore reveals this (CL 6). The box on Dante's chest has a greater rune in it (choose one rune the rune mark may not have).

If the party lingers around the area of Dante's death, they become subject to the object of his demise. Ainoja's constant rift in the planes has opened the gates for strange creatures to pass through. A huge air elemental has found his way from his own plane to the Prime. Upon sighting the party, the enraged beast falls upon them, pummeling them into oblivion.

ELEMENTAL, AIR (These neutral creature's vital stats are HD12d8, AC 19 and HP 96. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with slam for 2d8 damage and a whirlwind for 2d6 points of damage (unmodified save allowed). They possess all the properties of a air elemental as presented in *Monsters & Treasure*.)

The whirlwind is 5 feet wide at the base, up to 30 feet wide at the top, and up to 50 feet tall, depending on the elemental's size. The elemental controls the exact height, but it must be at least 10 feet.

Once the party negotiates the pass, whether going north into the Trough or back south into the Gottland they should know now that the final object of their quest lies in the Troll Downs at that ancient site, Stone Band. Whether the journey is long and brings them back through the Kleberock or short, straight down to the Downs, they should come at last to Stone Band.

The overland journey should take several week and Castle Keepers should roll normal encounters.

WHERE GIANTS LIE

The journey ends in the low-lying hills known as the Troll Downs upon the steps of an ancient edifice known as Stone Band.

Before you stand twelve grey oblong pillars of stone arranged in a wide semi-circular pattern, facing the dark mountains to the north. In the middle of the circle lies a huge boulder, laced with black-red, the color of spent life. Beside the boulder stands a huge tree, twisted and gnarled, its roots like dirty fingers driven into the ground. Upon the branches of the tree and all about the boulder and roots are tall flowers, Gottland Delphinium. Sitting upon the rock is a large, fat ungainly troll, upon his back a giant contraption of wood and bindings that resemble a wheel; stretched across the wheel, bound and bloodied is a stone giant yearling. The Troll Lord wears it like a crown.

This is a holy site for Trolls and Giants. Too it is a gateway to the planes, particularly the Void. The remnants of which can still be seen, with a successful intelligence check, by any rune mark, wizard, or cleric in the party (CL 7).

The Troll Lord stands and looks at the party. He attacks immediately.

The stone giant yearling is tied in the wheel, that is in turn mounted on the troll's back in such a way as to place the wheel high above the troll lord's head. The giant faces the way the troll lord does. Furthermore, there is a hook embedded into the giant's sternum, and to it a chain that is hooked into the lower lip of the Troll Lord. If the troll should open his mouth to its full extent it will pull the chain down and the hook will open the stone giant from chin to navel, killing it instantly.

TROLL, LORD (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 9d10, AC 18, HP 81. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with 2 fists for 1d6 points of damage, a bite for 2d8 points of damage, or with its giant cleaver for 1d10 points of damage. It can change stone, stomp to cause earthquakes (as per the spell, 18th level caster ability), rend flesh, has darkvision, scent, twilight vision and regenerates 3 hp per round. If it changes stone it can transmute rock to mud like the spell.)

The Troll Lord was on a hunting expedition when it found two giants at Stone Band. It killed the adult and took the child as a trophy. The troll has little treasure other than the bands of gold and silver it decorates its arms and legs with, these being worth collectively 2000gp.

The giant however, if rescued is invaluable. He speaks the Vulgate and has some knowledge of rune lore, he grants them each a rune, that he writes upon their body (where they choose). Any stone giant will recognize the rune and know them as friends.

Investigation of Stone Band reveals that it has a permanent Winter Rune cast upon it and always offers the daring a gate to the Wall of Worlds. Any first level Rune Mark can activate the gate, opening it for any to step through, all at their own risk. This gate is the remnant of the Lord of Sorrow's gate of old (see *Codex of Aihilde*) and this hill a holy place.

The tree and rock upon the hill are the fallen bodies of the Stone Giant King and a great warrior Troll of the old world. After a long and brutal contest, the troll slew the stone giant and left him where he fell. In time the giant's body melded with the earth. The troll marveled at his own feat of arms and stood fast by the body of his fallen foe. So long did he glower upon his foe that time passed him by, he aged and as with all his folk his feet became rooted to the world (see **Gottland Trees** in the introduction) and eventually he became like a tree, as is the fate of all the trolls of this world.



70 CASTLES & CRUSADES

This book is published under the Open Game License version 1.0a by permission of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. The Open Game Content appearing in this book is derived from the System Reference Document v 3.0, copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

DESIGNATION OF OPEN GAME CONTENT: The following is designated Open Game Content: all stat block information of characters, monsters, and traps that appears in the parenthetical following the character, monster, or trap, including the names of items and spells; and the general names of monsters, but not any unique named NPC, character, or monster, appearing in any table or preceding any stat block. Also, the following open game content related words, phrases, and abbreviations wherever they appear: Strength (Str), Dexterity (Dex), Constitution (Con), Intelligence (Int), Wisdom (Wis), Charisma (Cha), Class, Fighter, Ranger, Rogue, Assassin, Barbarian, Monk, Wizard, Illusionist, Cleric, Druid, Knight, Bard, Paladin, Race, Demi-human, Dwarf, Elf, Gnome, Half-Elf, Halfling, Half-Orc, Hit Dice (HD), Hit Points (HP), Alignment, Lawful Good (LG), Lawful Neutral (LN), Lawful Evil (LE), Neutral (N), Neutral Good (NG), Neutral Evil (NE), Chaotic Good (CG), Chaotic Neutral (CN), Chaotic Evil (CE), Level, "to hit", Damage, Experience Point, Saving Throw, Player Character (PC), Non-player Character (NPC), Turn Undead, Spell, Arcane, Divine, Magic, Spell Resistance, Item, Equipment, Armor, Weapon, Potion, Rod, Staff, Wand, Scroll, Ring, Wondrous Item, Artifact, Cursed, d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20, d%, round, and turn.

DESIGNATION OF PRODUCT IDENTITY: Product identity is not Open Game Content. The following is designated as product identity pursuant to OGL v1.0a(1)(e) and (7): (A) product and product line names, including Castles & Crusades, Castles & Crusades: Player's Handbook, Castles & Crusades: Monsters and Treasures, Castles & Crusades: Castle Keeper's Guide; (B) logos, identifying marks, and trade dress; (C) all artwork, logos, symbols, graphic designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual representations; (D) logos and trademarks, including Castles & Crusades, Castle Keeper, SIEGE engine, and Troll Lord Games, or any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as product identity by the owner of the product identity, and which specifically excludes the open game content.

All text, artwork, and maps appearing in this book is property of and copyright 2007 Troll Lord Games. All Rights Reserved. Castles & Crusades, C&C, Castle Keeper, Troll Lord Games, and the Castles & Crusades and Troll Lord Games logos, and products published by Troll Lord Games are Trademarks of Troll Lord Games. All Rights Reserved.

OPEN GAME LICENSE VERSION 1.0A

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10 Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12 Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13 Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14 Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15 COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

System Reference Document Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc; Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Castles & Crusades: Players Handbook, Copyright 2004, Troll Lord Games; Authors Davis Chenault and Mac Golden.

Castles & Crusades: Players Handbook, 7th printing, Copyright 2014, Troll Lord Games; Authors Davis Chenault and Mac Golden.

Castles & Crusades: Monsters & Treasure, 5th printing, Copyright 2009, Troll Lord Games; Authors Robert Doyel and Stephen Chenault.

Castles & Crusades Castle Keepers Guide, Copyright 2010, Troll Lord Games; Author Davis Chenault. & Stephen Chenault.

Castles & Crusades Castle Keepers Guide, 2nd Printing, Copyright 2015, Troll Lord Games; Author Davis Chenault. & Stephen Chenault.

Castles & Crusades Of The Horned Gods Winter Copyright 2020, Troll Lord Games; Author Davis Chenault.

CASTLES[®] & CRUSADES

WHEN WINTER LINGERS

Beyond the Inner Sea lie the high mountains of the Holmgard, the Roof of the World. Here the country is wild, and dangerous, sparsely settled by barbarians, dwarves, and the occasional mad wizard. It is a hard land of narrow paths, deep canyons, cliffs without purchase; a land of snow and ice that offers little comfort for those who risk her high walks. It is a land of giants, where giants once roosted, where dwarves built homes and dungeons. It is a land wholly forgotten but rich in lost treasures that echo a world long gone. It is one rich in adventure, filled with wealth beyond imagining and glory for those who do not fall.

Beyond the mountains lies the Gottland, the land without gods. This too is a land of imagined treasures, where giants, trolls, and gods with cloven feet have walked for countless years. Many venture here, but only a few realize the dream of wealth everlasting for it is a hard place of primordial violence, ancient magics, and one of the last vestiges of the Horned God's Winter.

Of the Horned God's Winter is a series of loosely connected adventures that take the characters from the sea town of Capistria, through the Holgrad Mountains and down into the Gottland. Along its path, the characters may, at the CK's discretion, encounter rune magic, either for their Rune Mark or for the character wishing to become one. The 15 adventures are designed to play alone or as part of a broader campaign arc. Each adventure is written such that the enterprising CK can add their own adventures to the mix.

Of the Horned God's Winter is designed for a party of 4-6 characters of 4th-7th level.
It includes overland adventures, sea adventures, dungeon, and castle.



TLG 8368
\$15.99

TROLL
LORD
GAMES

1818 N. TAYLOR, #143, LITTLE ROCK, AR 72207

WWW.TROLLLORD.COM

PRINTED AT CHENAULT & GRAY PRINT
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

