

CASTLES CRUSADES[®]

THRONE OF THE ERLKING



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CASTLES & CRUSADES

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THE THRONE OF THE ERLKING

“...the bloodcurdling screams of the soldiers filled the night-air, echoing on the tall, dark trees behind him. The tumult of the Suebian war-cries were mind numbing to Commander Caelius. In his nearly two decades serving the Roman Empire, he hadn't heard such wild and terrific calls from frenzied men before. There were women too in this mob. Their horrifying shrills were almost mixed with the men to form a dirge, but not enough, only to distract and deny him a focus. This was no normal war-party out of Germania. Where were the horns?”

His soldiers were being impaled and sliced by the tribesmen from all quarters in the shadowy forest with grim savagery. Only the orange and yellow sun's light had shone on the stony face of the strange temple that stood so tall in the darkened woodlands. The Thracian Cohort's banners and other accoutrements had fallen to the enemy, and Caelius was proud this moment to not bear the legionary eagle, for it would have been lost too and this would have been another Teutoburg disaster.

Commander Caelius' greed was not dissuaded however. He had marched many hundred leagues away from Lugdunum for this wealth beyond measure and he wasn't going to lose it, not for the slaughter of his cohort by the barbarians or the barbarians themselves. Whatever it takes, Caelius was determined to get that wealth. The stories were true, the temple was here as the Gauls and Germans said, so the rest must be as well.

Gruesome death was crashing around him from the wilderness from the savage Suebi by the second. His soldiers were incapable of holding their formation for more than ten minutes before they crumpled and were picked apart by the savages. Caelius fled, ducking low, towards the temple, up the rocky hillside. Adrenaline propelled him, but it was greed that spurred him along more than the threat of death at the end of a German spear or ax blade.

Random arrows and spears showered around him but he dodged them and ignored the pleas of his men. They asked for orders and he only focused on reaching the temple. The fading light was his cue to arrive there or else it was too late. Caelius held his gladius tightly and he kept his shield to his left side as he surmounted the hill-top.

Unknown to him in the battle was how he was wounded in the side, possibly by a spear or graze with an arrow. Crimson seeped from his tunic and mail and a slight sting but he kept running. The massive and intimidating temple was before him and a sea of slaughter about him. The mountains towered in the forest, but Caelius knew the treasure was somewhere inside this ancient holy structure...or worse, below it. He slammed his back to the old Alder wood door and caught his breath...”

INTRODUCTION

This unique temple-themed adventure is based and inspired from two sources, Early Germanic Pre-Christian beliefs about the Erlking and Edvard Grieg's 'Hall of the Mountain King'. Each seemed to be naturally conflated together as his inspiration was Germanic as well, and much of Germanic folklore and Pre-Christian religion associated the landscape with spirits and

magical beings and gods. This module dates to the period of the 5th Century C.E during the 'Fall of Rome' period or thereabouts when the European Continent was in a chaotic transformation culturally.

The earliest recorded name for the 'Black Forest' is *Adnoba mons*, as documented by the Roman sources (1st Century B.C.E/C.E) but taken from the local Celtic peoples in the region. Most of Western and southwestern Germania was Celtic in culture and by the time of the Late Roman Empire was a fusion of the both Germanic and Celtic peoples making identification difficult for the Romans. So long as names were provided (tribal, place or personal), the ethnicity can usually be determined easier by later scholars however. The mountain range (Baar, Odenwald and Spessart ranges) that spans the Black Forest was considered sacred to this Celtic Hunting Goddess *Adnoba*, of which little is known, but much can be assumed based on a comparison to other similar hunting deities in Antiquity.

This adventure puts to use the historical and mythical material in the **Codex Germania** and **Codex Celtarum**, and to good use for any brave or suicidal band who wishes to explore the temple and mountain(s) of the Hunting Goddess. Germania invested much in this region as it falls in a territory where both the Gauls and Romans could, and had, traveled over the Rhine and they would eagerly give offerings to the goddess for prosperity and protection. This adventure is designed to be a catalyst or spark that will hopefully lead into endless others, possibly a campaign that centers on the mysterious Mountain King, the Hunting Goddess *Adnoba* and their dark and ancient story.

THE STORY OF ADNOBA MONS

In the furthest of ancient ages before Rome ever emerged out of Italia or there was ever an Athens, and most of the west was populated by the Gauls and the east by Germans, it is said that one daughter of the gods, *Adnoba*, born from the waters of the Danube (*Danuvius*), emerged with alder tree bow in hand to hunt the wild stag and boar in the thick woods. She was carefree and had a spirit as free as her arrows and it was said her love was meant to be precise as her hit. The Alder tree was sacred to her, and she was born from its roots feeding into the waters of the Danube.

She would hunt her prey, was lethal and stalked day after day the vibrant animals for their pelts and meat. Where the waters flowed, so did she, but over time Mankind crept out from the woods and hills and began to intrude on her territory and game. At first, this wasn't a problem but gradually even the mortal's poor skills at hunting was taking her prey and eventually they began irrigating her waters and diverting them until *Adnoba* was without her animals and watery home.

The gods themselves did not wish to aid her against the mortals, and did not, and so she was left to her own devices. *Adnoba* was given no other choice but to clash with them and deny them their spoils of the hunt. Using her abilities, she sent massive golden aurochs to stampede the villages, they were invulnerable to all weaponry and other attempts to stop them. The damage was terrible and people on both sides were slain on the Rhine,

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it was horrific. This did not deter the people although, who continued to hunt and use the water for their crops and needs.

Frustrated, Adnoba sent a volley of flaming arrows down from the night sky into the villages setting the entire region ablaze. The forest and all of its crops were now ash, many perished in the assault from the goddess. When the smoke cleared many weeks later, the people fixed Adnoba's devastation and slowly restored what was lost. Life returned stronger than ever regardless of her divine efforts.

Perched atop her mountain, Adnoba gazed across the forest and its peoples and noticed the prosperity again at her expense. This third time was going to be her last to end what the mortals were doing to her. She sought out the leader of the many peoples, it was he that held them together in these hard times. If she could defeat him, then the other peoples would fall apart and their resolution would fade to be stay together. His name was Toutorix.

While on a hunt one day, Toutorix encountered the goddess Adnoba on a trail in the forest. She fired three deadly arrows at him toward his heart without warning. Toutorix, having fast reflexes and extraordinary skill with his spear, knocked the divine arrows away and back at her. Surprised, she leapt at him enraged with dagger drawn. The two fought in the woods, shattering trees, then in the water, showering it on land, and then to the hills until only crumpled dirt was left. When they were done, three days had passed and neither were closer to death or badly wounded. Toutorix asked the goddess why she was attacking him and his people and she told him the story and her plight.

A deal was struck between the two. Toutorix was to marry her as the earthbound consort in an agreement to ensure that his people would never take from her animals too many, nor the waters too much, but the condition was a heavy one. As her chosen spouse, Toutorix was bound to dwell in a sacred temple and palace in honor to her, and his throne as her 'King', sits in the earth, deep in the earth.

A temple was first built in her honor over the spot they both came to in agreement and wed during the holy celebration of *Walpurgisnacht*. This magnificent structure was put together by the different tribes as a joint effort, an alliance and given its original Gallic name – *Elvmeton* ('Temple of the Alder'). It was built however using the Germanic *Hof* design, but using the Gallic vision and druidic guidance. Unlike the other sacred temples built throughout the Gaulish, British and Irish world, which were meant to be consumed by sacrificial flames and dedicated to the gods after a designated time, this temple's purpose was meant to remain in place and constructed out of massive timber framework and stone.

To the later Germanic peoples, this temple was simply known as *Hudre Hoff* and other confused names, its purpose shrouded in mystery. The Romans heard about it but only knew that it rested deep in the forest, too far in Germania where no Legion dared to venture, especially not after the slaughter of Teutoburg. It didn't help that the name of the ancient Gaulish ruler Toutorix was

often associated with the area and that was enough to spook the legionnaires.

As his name means 'King of the People', it truly meant it now, and he sits between the Gauls and Germans joining them who both give praise to the goddess Adnoba for both her animals on the hunt and waters. Granted immortality, Toutorix sits on his rich throne now, surrounded by immense wealth, accumulated from centuries of offerings and plunder by the local tribes who worship the goddess and vaguely remember the tale of King Toutorix. His personal 'court' of followers are magical beings, faeries and other strange beings that have found their way to his Hall to serve him loyally.

It is said that the goddess makes rare appearances in her lands or even in the Hall and its corridors, but since having made peace with the local peoples, she has no need of being present anymore. Her whereabouts are a mystery to most, but her absence isn't, as many priests and druids are aware that she must be with the other gods and enchanted beings.

THE LOCAL TRIBES OF GERMANIA

Comprising the *Marcomanni* confederation, there are two documented tribes that occupy the Black Forest region in Germania: Buri and Suebi. Many countless smaller and dependent tribes fill the area and to outsider's perception, are the Marcomanni or 'Border Men or People'. By the time of the Late Roman Empire this region's other Latin name was *Marciana silva* or the 'Forest (of the) Marcomanna/Marcyian'.

Whereas the many other Germanic peoples that live along the Roman *limes* or border became very passive and calm, if not Pro-Roman, this group were still very much active and untamed in this region by the 6th Century C.E. These tribes attempt to raid, or sneak across the walled and towered borders into the Roman Gaul when the chance arises. Mostly poor, they see Roman Gaul as prosperous and filled with a weakened populace.

Getting into the Black Forest region from the Roman territories is another matter, as traders and merchants do travel here, but on certain conditions. The days of sending armies into Germania are long over. The many vicious defeats at the hands of massive tribes in dense forests and untamed wilderness is no longer appealing to the Roman Empire.

LOUGI BURI: This tribe had its peak before the disastrous *Marcomannic Wars* of the 2nd Century C.E. As a group they populated the interior of Germania and Poland from the North Sea to the Rhine near the Black Forest but their part in the wars against Rome came at a terrible cost. By the end of the Empire they had merged into the general Germanic masses along the borders and lost their identity. Many likely still living and claiming the name near the Black Forest out of old loyalty, their bond with Adnoba strong. Because of this suffering and tragic past, the Buri are now more savage than ever and live in the shadow of their Suebian neighbors with resentment. Many of them migrated to Spain by the 5th Century C.E to find better land and prosperity, but those that remain stay loyal to the goddess.

SUEBI: One of the largest of the Germanic tribes in Germania, they were also among the earliest mentioned in the sources and amid the tribes causing the Gauls trouble, causing Julius Caesar to become 'involved', thus precipitating the Gallic Wars. This powerful tribe is distinctive for its 'Suebian knot' style of hair worn by the men. As Germanic tribes, their influence is only rivalled by the Goths, Vandals and Franks overall but their name is widespread. Norse legends and tales even speak of them. Because of the size and complexity, many numerous smaller tribes dwelled under its protection. The Suebi, before, during the *Marcomannic Wars*, and after the Migrations, still occupy the surrounding wilderness of the Black Forest upholding the ancient oaths their ancestors swore to the Goddess Adnoba. Christianity has made little effort in these areas, and it shows. If the primitive and savage Buri don't catch trespassers attempting to find the Temple of Adnoba, then the Suebian scouts or hunters will, and all will be equally ruthless. Unlike their Spanish migrants who are mostly Christian, these native groups have remained faithful to the old religion and will make sure that their promise to the goddess is kept.

Other tribes, Celtic or Celto-Germanic (Belgic), live near the Rhine, on both sides, and have tried to remain neutral to Rome while maintaining their own way of life and own oath to Adnoba as well. To outsiders, these peoples and their almost quirky but strongly faithful ways to the Goddess of the mountains in the woods would seem not too unusual. Many other examples exist in Europe that are similar, but none with this hidden treasure deep in its fastness. To those seeking the allure of endless gold and enchanted items, the oddness of the surrounding tribes is enough to endure just to get to the wealth.

EBURONES: Once living in the Rhineland and very powerful, but after the Gallic Wars, their population was reduced by slaughter and slavery due to Caesar and they remained in smaller numbers along the coastal region. By the time of the Late Empire they had reinvented themselves as the *Tungri* people and their intermarriage with the Germanic peoples across the Rhine was more important than before due to their severe lack of population after the *Gallic Wars*. Their legacy as the *Eburones* is remembered in the Roman mind as a negative thing due to Caesar, and their old tribal capital Atuatuca was ransacked and looted by the other tribes (with Rome's permission). What remains of them now is a relic and they are bitter towards Rome wishing for a return to their former glory and to be rid of their Germanic bond that has now been shared for over three-hundred and fifty years.

TREVERI: Another Belgic tribe, that although many Classical sources say they claim a Germanic heritage, their names and culture display only a Celtic one otherwise in origin. The Treveri people occupy a region by the Ardennes Forest, sacred to the Gaulish hunting goddess Arduinna, they also worship the River Goddess Reto. Unlike the other nearby Celtic tribes, the Treveri choose to separate themselves from the rest and claim to be Pro-Roman by the time of the Conquest. Their loyalty isn't so completely devoted to Adnoba, but to the many plethora of gods, and by the Christian Era they quickly shunned all early religious beliefs. In the eyes of the other tribes, the Treveri are

not trustworthy and viewed as Romans. Their territory is south of the *limes* along the Rhine on the west.

MEDIOMATRICI: This smaller tribe lies at the middle of several waterways, the Rhine, Marne and Matra. Duvodurum is their capital but their territory, south of the Treveri, is heavily populated by many Germanic tribes already (Nemetes, Vangiones and Caercates) who have since made the native Celtic peoples a subject slave populace. Their loyalty to Adnoba is divided due to the cultural problems and complexities within the region. They would rather not get the animosity of Rome and could care less about any ancient wrath or curse of the 'pagan' goddess made by Gaulish ancestors.

LEUCI: Neighbors to the Mediomatrici, but wholly Gallic or Celtic in culture still by the time of the Late Roman Empire, this tribe is small. They have a loyalty to what remains of Rome for protection against the Germanic (and Hunnish) threat from the East and their lands are a breadbasket or healthy for raising wheat crops. Their population is split between Christian and pagan, with those pagan still loyal to Adnoba in their own silent way upholding the ancient pact their ancestors made before the great changes swept over Europe. If they know strangers are making their way to the *Adnoba mons* for greed and loot, or sacrilege, they will send out assassins to stop them. The Leuci are one of the few Gallic groups that still remain true to the old ways even though their numbers are dwindling and the memory of what the druids once taught is nearly faded forever. The Leuci know it is a matter of time before the rest of Germania's land hungry tribes sweep over Gaul, and their land would be taken with a few battles. The tribe has no army of its own to defend itself as the Empire's job is to do so since the Conquest.

THE WEALTH OF ADNOBA MONS

Due to the nearly two thousand years of devoted offerings given to the goddess by devoted worshippers, they have been collected by her enchanted followers and taken below into the winding corridors of the mountain below the temple. A wealth almost beyond measure is here, almost for the taking but one must get through the ancient Temple of the Goddess first and then survive the many corridors and what dwells there.

Should they meet King Toutorix personally or even worse Adnoba, this trip to the halls will be short. Rumors only talk about what lies within the halls, not the temple over it, or the fate of those who get away...if they do. Generations of hopeful temple-robbers seek her holy temple deep in the forest but the stories and tales fall short of what happens next. A selfish Roman commander once led an expedition here with his cohort only to be destroyed at the temple itself in the 2nd Century C.E.

The greater part of Germania is unaware of it, but have heard various tales about Frau Hölle or other grim goddesses, usually conflating other nearby stories with it but knowing the dread that something fearful lies in the Black Forest. Mixed with this is the story about the immense wealth hidden deep in the forest. Some say it comes from the many plundered Gallic villages or Roman cities, but no one knows for sure its origin except that it is cursed. Later myths will evolve it into the treasure hoard of the Nibelung.

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Very little treasure sits in the temple itself, what lies there is only used as bait for the greedy. The Goddess Adnoba reviles that trait of humanity and punishes those who cannot control it by stringing her temple with golden and jeweled trinkets to lure them. Those who manage to survive the nightmarish trials and discover the secret below where the true wealth lies will suffer even worse. It is a journey of the spirit she will put the worst and greediest through who dare to come here. This is not just any treasure run for loot and plunder.

The Castle Keeper can devise more than what is provided in this adventure for the treasure and enchanted items where it suits their campaign. Taking treasure from here will come with a great burden and possible curse as later tables and story elements will reveal, but the adventure will be worth it.

KING TOUTORIX

Once a great Gallic ruler and warrior, now aged but granted immortality by the goddess, he sits on his golden and bejeweled throne deep in the mountains surrounded by his followers. The memory of who he was once is now lost, as were the many peoples and tribes that once worshipped him or even lived with him so long ago.

King Toutorix was given many names by many generations as his presence and deeds blurred or were misunderstood by the tribes. The one name that he is known by to the Germanic peoples is the *Erlking*, or the 'Elf-King' above all else (with other variations). He is the Master of the Wild-Hunt that sweeps through the forest on the occasional dark nights with his entourage of ghostly minions.

As part of his agreement with Adnoba, Toutorix can leave the confines of his subterranean lair during certain times of the year (Celtic and Germanic holy nights of 'Halloween' and 'May Day') and on other rare times. It is in these occasions that he goes hunting, to honor the favorite sport he once had before he met the goddess. Many stray women have been caught by him during his hunts and taken below to his palace for a fate unknown. Other stories tell of the Erlking's children, so that speaks of what occurred to many, although legend says that he devours his wives after a night spent with them.

King Toutorix is said to be a giant bearded man, his hair white, eyes hollow but sinister, from age and having to make this bargain with Adnoba. Riches cover him from ages past, and he only speaks in a language, Gaulish, that few know now, and that is one more reason for his bitterness. Everything he knew is now gone above as he still honors the pact with the goddess. Plunderers and looters continue to attempt their daring raids on his Hall and he must resist them, using old tricks and trusting in his insidious faeries and enchanted beings.

Alder trees are deemed protected and sacred to him, as they are blessed by his goddess Adnoba, and the Black Forest has them widespread in its reaches. Most will be oblivious to this fact, but having such a branch, shield or object made from it on hand, can make the Erlking slightly impartial towards them (or show some minor mercy).

Often wandering *Mistflarden* or other strange feminine magical beings that serve the Erlking will tempt and lure greedy men who travel too close to the temple and mountain in question, or plant the need to visit in their minds and poison them with the obsession. To common-folk who do not know too much of the Erlking's story, they consider them the 'Erlking's Daughters'. Few names are given as the tales change and no survivors return to tell the tale.

Toutorix has lived so long in his trapped world that he is a shell of man seeking a way out, a release someday. He will not give up without a fight or betray the goddess so easily, his loyalty is that strong, and it would destroy his descendants who do still live. It will require clever thinking and superior combat skills to defeat him, but once slain the pact with Adnoba is over and her legacy will die out too.

It will take some vile acts to enrage him enough to give him great cause to leave his throne and give chase, otherwise he will leave the slaughter to his many minions. See the statistics for 'The Erlking' later in this adventure for the full detail over what he is capable of doing to those trespass his domain.

FOR THE CASTLE KEEPER

There are several ways to get the adventuring party into this adventure, and in this section are some hooks or ideas that a Castle Keeper can use to spur on the story or fit it into their own existing game. Written and designed for a Mythic themed setting primarily, with some working and adjusting, the many background elements, names, etc. can be altered to any setting as needed.

- Being paid by a recently Christianized monarch from a Western kingdom, the adventurers are sent into the dreaded Black Forest to not only be rid of the scourge of the Erlking and his blight, but to free the priceless treasure therein. Their actions will be monitored by the scouts of the monarch, who will be skillful enough to evade the local tribal threat, but only barely. For their dangerous efforts, they will be rewarded a large sum of this wealth if they succeed.
- Pure greed led them here. A trail from another tribe or kingdom, strung by stories told by various Germanic peoples about a great northern temple and mountain where an ancient immortal king sits amid piles of glimmering gold and jewels. Few have ever been able to find it, or leave with what they find. Even the Roman Empire was unable to claim it and they drained lakes to take immeasurable tons of sacred wealth.
- Due to a tribal feud, the characters have been chosen to go into the territory and put an end to the ancient pact with the goddess risking her wrath or their own death. Perhaps they were sent by the righteous and very Christian and Roman Latinate Treviri tribe to do this task? Little do the adventurers know that once they do this, the immense wealth deep within the Mountain King's lair will be claimed (by armed force) for the Roman Church.

- While traveling too close on the east side of the Rhine River near the Black Forest and near the now fallen Roman border defenses, one or more *Mistflarden* enchanted the males in the party. This was either done through dreams or while they were awake, and lured them through the dense dark forests and hills towards the temple. From here it begins...

ACT 1 – GETTING TO MARCIANA SILVA

Depending on how the adventurers plan on reaching the Black Forest, and what time of the year, the roving bands of tribal scouts will keep on things more often than at other seasons. *Walpurgisnacht* is their most holy time when the goddess and King Toutorix wed. The local tribes will be celebrating with wild, frenzied bonfires and sacrifices in the depths of the hills and woods. Woe be to anyone caught then, for they will be dragged to their rituals and shown no mercy. Usually those offered as sacrifices to the Goddess of the Hunt are shot by arrows when tied to Alder trees, their death throes are then divined by the Gudja priests or burned alive and their agonizing screams listened to for any signs of portents.

Little traces of civilization can be found a few leagues into the wilderness east from the shores of the Rhine close to the Black Forest. Roman timber walls and fallen towers have crumbled and are now eroding into the damp and green earth. Faint trails and roads wind into the hills where the many mountains are visible.

There is a 3 in 6 chance that a scouting party of Suebi (D10 warriors) will find them in the day, and a 1 in 6 by night. It will take an average of 2-3 days to make the lengthy travel from the Rhine to where the edge of the true region of where the Erlking dwells and the Temple of Adnoba sits. This is the true fastness of the wilderness in Germania with no villages or Roman colonies.

The scent of the evergreen and pine fill the air and distant fires from the settlements. Once the depth of the true forest has been breached, all other civilized regions to the West are now left behind. The enormity of this woodland realm and its looming mountains become very real. How dangerous the guardian tribes are won't be apparent until the adventurers wander too close to the Temple and mountain. By day, the spying eyes and ears of the Buri and Suebi will likely be on them their entire journey, but at a distance – this is the Castle Keeper's call for the sake of the story and tension.

NOTE: In the ancient agreement with Adnoba, the tribes in the region will allow small bands of people from outside the area to the Temple as sacrifices for their greed. Anything larger must be prevented and seized by war-bands quickly as their intentions are clear. The Goddess Adnoba finds no moral wrong in luring those with the spiritual struggle of greed into the trap of her temple and the dangers that await therein to 'teach them', this is with the hope that a few will leave alive and enlightened at the expense of the others' demise as a lesson.

During the journey the Castle Keeper can liven up the experience by using this table for encounters if needed for the

daytime hours; traveling at night in the forest is a very different matter and table:

TABLE 1: DAYTIME ENCOUNTERS

D8	ENCOUNTER
1	1d4 Vogel Gryff
2	1d5 Eöten
3	1d3 Gulon
4	1 Rübezahl
5	1d6 Schnellbelgeiss
6	1 Bøyg
7	1d6 Skohls
8	1d10 Pyrs

VOGEL GRYFF: 1d4 of these winged creatures fly out of the sky and begin to harass the adventurers. Possibly smelling their blood and flesh and seeking to devour them or feed them to their hatchlings.

EÖTEN: 1d5 are wandering in the woods without any group or tribe of their own but are hungry and looking for a fight.

GULON: 1d3 of these ferocious beasts smell the adventurers and are drawn to them.

RÜBEZAH: The adventurers meet one of the odd mountain faeries that will either bless or curse their journey, depending on how they handle matters.

SCHNELBELGEISS: 1d6 of these strange demonic goats charge down from the hillsides and pounce on the party as they intrude in their territory.

BØYG: The monstrous dragon-like beast will be protecting a pass in the forest and mountains and to by, the adventurers must defeat it.

SKOHL: 1d6 of these monster wolves from the world of Helle are running in a pack.

PYRS: 1d10 of these goblin creatures ambush the adventurers to begin biting them. They will not stop until they have looted and killed them all.

TABLE 2: NIGHTTIME ENCOUNTERS

D8	ENCOUNTER
1	1d4 Mistflardan
2	1d2 Nachzerher
3	1 Helhest
4	1 Becolaep
5	1d2 Ketta
6	1d4 Scucca
7	1d2 Wichts
8	1d4 Bargest

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MISTFLARDAN: 1d4 of these ghostly women appear from the darkness to seduce and allure the adventurers. They will not only trick and lead them astray, but try to draw them towards the temple.

NACHZERHER: 1d2 of these vampires will be drawn to the adventuring party due to their scent of blood and living presence and not relent until they are slain or driven away somehow.

HELHEST: Roaming the countryside, the monstrous beast has been free from its confines of Helle to wander the Mortal Realm to cause fear and havoc.

BECOLAEP: The adventurers have unknowingly intruded upon the territory of a ghost of a witch that now wishes to haunt them with vengeance and wrath.

KETTA: 1d2 of these giant monster cats want to pounce on the adventurers to first play and then eat them.

SCUCCA: 1d4 of these ravenous demonic hounds hunt down the party snarling and ready to attack.

WICHTS: 1d2 of these ghostly entities are brought about by the presence of the Living to haunt them.

BARGEST: 1d4 of these diabolic, shape-shifting hounds thirst for the party's blood and souls. They smell them out in the darkness and have no difficulty finding them.

The Black Forest is a wild place, by day or night, with overgrown vegetation in abundance and little else but wildlife. The trek to the long sought after temple shouldn't be so simple or direct.

THE ROMAN SLAUGHTER GROUND

In the year 170 C.E Commander Caelius Hispanicus led a cohort away from their stationary post along the Rhine border due to his insatiable greed. The continued rumors of the riches deep in the Black Forest carried on the lips of Germanic and Gallic travelers to his ears was too much after a while in Lugdunum. Disobeying his orders, Caelius took his militia of a thousand men out on a forced march one spring morning from the city garrison.

The commander misinformed his soldiers of their purpose. He told them that a band of rebels caused havoc from out of the Marcomanni and reached deep into Gallia and they were the only group capable to respond quick enough. This was not true obviously.

Caelius led his cohort across the Rhine, using falsified paperwork and through the *limes* walls, passed sentries and towers. By the third day they were in the Black Forest and his men convinced they were hunting bands of threatening Suebian warriors. The only truth was in the Suebi who were quick to defend their sacred land of the goddess.

As a reward, the commander promised his soldiers the bountiful wealth that rested in the temple and inside one of the mountains he was sure the tribe was hiding – if they defeated these 'rebels.'

The Suebi saw the thousand Roman soldiers, all auxiliaries from other peoples and nations, marching into their holy land with the temple near and wasted no time ambushing them. Savage and bloodthirsty, the Germanic tribesmen appeared from all dark quarters of the forest to cut down Caelius' army.

To all appearances, Caelius' men found the rebels that ransacked Gaul and set about battling them in an orderly and efficient Roman fashion. The insane fanaticism of the Suebi and the different manner to their dress and even war-cries is what off-put Caelius and his men. This was unusual and the defeat was arriving very quickly by nightfall.

Caelius' greed was too much. He let his loyal men suffer from the spears and axes of the foe and die while he made his way to the temple on the hill; he wasn't going to let the riches go at any cost. Unfortunately as his army perished around him by dusk the commander reached the temple alone.

A thousand soldiers were being cut down in the dense woods behind him, their remains used to decorate the foliage as a reminder for any others who wish to try in the future. In the slaughter, Caelius was nearly overlooked by the Suebian men and women, but his frantic and desperate dash to the temple and its interior brought some attention. His blood trail from wounds created more attention by the hounds sent by the Suebi.

The Roman commander ran and dodged the hounds, and eventually the Suebian trackers and even the cunning traps in the temple just to find the alleged wealth. He used every ounce of his skill and ability to survive this just to get his hands on the gold, as though it would protect and redeem his foolhardy expedition here into Germania – it didn't. He was never heard from again as he found access into the mountain and the Hall of the Mountain King where the Erlking sits eternal.

The Suebi took the armor and remains of the Roman cohort, a thousand Thracians, and grimly but artfully decorated the forest not far from the temple. Bones, armor and what is left from their clothing after centuries hang on poles and trees to warn others and act as a mass sacrifice to Adnoba.

The adventuring party will arrive eventually into this part of the forest to see this old slaughter ground, now on display in the trees. The remnants of soldiers are overgrown with moss and ivy in the surrounding trees and stones in their gruesome decoration and to their horror. Due to the Celtic fondness for collecting skulls, the Roman soldiers' heads have been carefully organized and placed into grim spectacles for all to see.

This section of the woods is meant to be absolutely intimidating and foreshadowing of what is to come not only in the temple but below it in dealing with the Erlking. These woods are haunted by Wichts and Weisse Fruen and other undead or 'untoten' by night. Traveling through here by night is the most dangerous decision made by them.

THE TEMPLE OF ELVNEMETON

Constructed with the divine guidance of the goddess Adnoba, both the Germanic and Celtic tribes on both sides of the Rhine

River who were bound by the wedding between the Goddess and Toutorix allied on this holy structure. Its size is grand, and its manufacture is from alder and oak wood and grey stone. This temple is three stories tall atop the hillock and covers the entrance that goes into the mountains.

Its shingles are of thin red wood with highly ornate work on the panels and structure displaying scenes of foliage, hunting, Toutorix and the Goddess Adnoba and other images now lost in time. Elaborate forms are carved into the top of the temple structure displaying Adnoba hunting the stag or boar armed with spears or bow in hand.

A stone-lined pathway leads the worshipper to the temple from the forest-floor gradually on a scenic route, almost in a dramatic manner similar to one taken at Delphi but without the surrounding hills being so close. Since the slaughter of the Romans centuries ago, skulls line many of the steps.

FIRST LEVEL

A: ENTRY CHAMBER

Two massive alder and oak wood doors, bound in iron, with bronze hinges await the visitor. There is normally no lock or need for one as the lands are protected by the tribesmen. This grey stone chamber is ten by ten feet in size and able to hold a small number of people before its next set of doors open into the corridor into the rest of the grand temple. The few windows are here to view the forest and mountains.

B: CENTRAL CEREMONIAL CHAMBER

The largest room in the temple on this level and where most of the rituals are performed in Adnoba and the Erlking's name, especially on Walpurgisnacht. There is a raised dais and platform or center stage area for the Gudja to direct the ceremonies. Two crude wooden statues, one for the Goddess and one for the Erlking, stand here and are stained in old sacrificial blood. This chamber can hold fifty people, more if cramped together. Three pits are in between the stage and the worshippers, they are for the offerings of wealth and food and the third for the bodies of human sacrifices after the rituals are over. There is a 2 in 6 chance that assorted treasure is lying in these pits from recent ceremonies – the nature of this 'treasure' would be D4 on the treasure chart in the 'Monsters & Treasures' book.

C: HOLDING CHAMBER

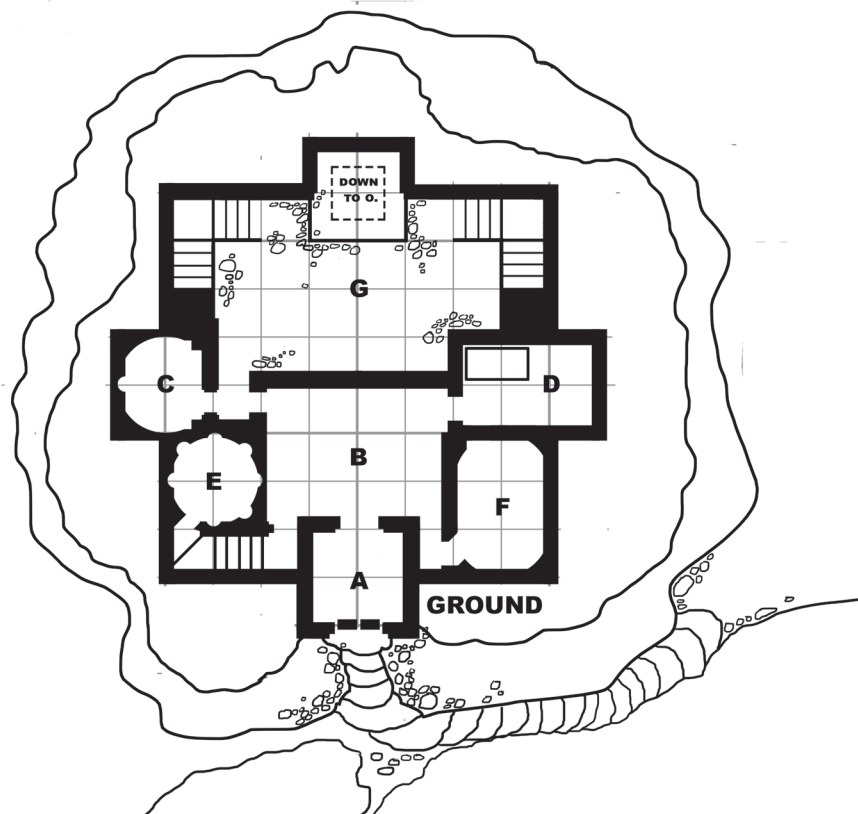
This small rounded cell-like room holds up to five people at a time. Those being held here are doomed to be led to the sacrificial dais of the Erlking. Bronze bars on shaky and very old hinges are the means to contain the awaiting victims in its heyday. Now this chamber is a dust and debris filled room where D12 Pyrs lair. These goblin-like monsters have turned this chamber into a disgusting room with a limited 'treasure' in it. (D2 from the 'Monsters & Treasures' treasure chart.) The Pyrs also act as sentries for the Erlking if needed, and will flee off into the temple towards the entrance underground.

D: WARDROBE ROOM

In the time when this temple was in its heaviest use by the local tribes, this rectangular room would house the special robes and other sacred vestments needed for the elaborate ceremonies. Those centuries are now long past, and this chamber is nothing more than a shadowy and dangerous lair for a *Nachzerher* vampire. The floor is covered in scattered bones and moldering clothing from the many victims, and the vampire sleeps in a large wooden chest filled with damp and rich earth. This room reeks of the evil of the being that now resides here, as the *Nachzerher* was once a noble and heroic warrior from a tribe who dared to come here and destroy the Erlking – he obviously failed. Of the many beings and creatures dwelling on this level, the vampire directs and controls them all due to his power and the terror he instills. Buried in his earthen bed sits: 500 GP, 250 SP, 25 gems (worth an average of 20 GP/each), +2 *Bracelets of Agility* (bonus is added to dexterity), two *potions of Healing* (one drink will heal back D12 Hit Points), and a +3 *Broadsword of Undead Bane*.

E: GUDJA'S OFFICE

Located on a small set of stairs higher, but between floors, this special rounded room is where the priests gather before and after the many ceremonies that were held here. Racks where scrolls and tomes once were kept are on both sides of the walls, while a stone desk sits against one wall. What sleeps here is a monstrous and giant *Boeman* that lurks in the shadows and darkness. Once this phantom is disturbed, it will waste no time in defending its lair and ripping the enemies apart. The remains of past slain and eaten local children from the villages are in the chamber (the monster's normal prey). This being is a ghastly creature related to the Dark Elves of the Underworld.



F: COUNCIL CHAMBER

A rounded room where once a massive wooden table sat for the many Gudja and others to hold important meetings. On the walls are carven a map of Germania, Gaul, Belgica, the Channel and Britannia with Latin writing but Germanic words and place-names for all. Now what remains of the table is rotted scraps on the mold ridden floor which lethal fungus now covers. There are no windows in this chamber and the many sconces are emptied. Opening the door causes a terrible risk (3 in 6) of stirring the mold spores from the green-grey carpet that covers the floor. If the spores are blown up by the disturbance in the air-pressure in the room, each person in the doorway or room must room at dexterity check to avoid it first, then if they fail, a constitution check of suffer the effects: in D6 hours their health will begin to decline by a D6 Hit Points for 24 hours, until it withers them away. These mold spores will settle inside them and cover their body (unless healed by magic).

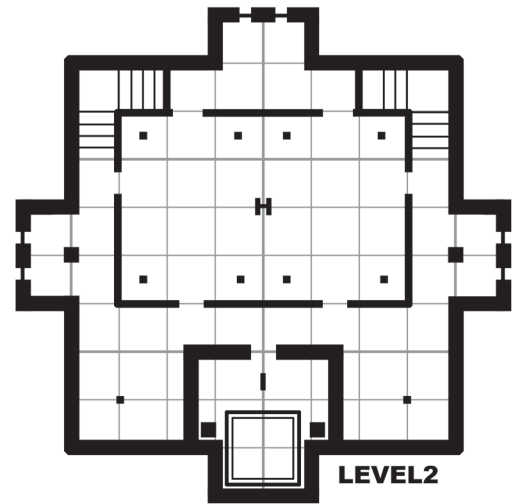
G: OSSUARY

Over the many centuries of its use, the temple had its many sacrifices and those who were left to be devoured by 'minions' of the Erlking usually ended up as bones later. Their bones would be collected in time in this massive room, rounded and water well-shaped, where they would later be gathered for other 'nefarious' purposes by the Erlking's people. Thousands of bones had been gathered from the numerous people once given to the great king Toutorix. Now, centuries past, this grim chamber still serves a terrible purpose. At the bottom of the bone-pit is a wooden door contraption where the Erlking's servants used to take the bones, now this is not only a passageway between the Halls of the Mountain King and the surface world, but it is the resting place for a *Krampus* demon. This demon sleeps here, like the *Boeman*, leaves at night to prey on children in the surrounding villages. He drags them here to eat them whole, leaving nothing but gory scraps. This passageway is the normal route between the worlds and Erlking's kingdom in the mountain and the Mortal World. If it is night, the Krampus will be gone, but if not he is assuredly there and must be defeated. Odd treasure will be found in his chamber: 150 GP, 300 SP, *Boots of Silence* (they leave no sound or foot-prints).

SECOND LEVEL

H: CELEBRANTS' BANQUET HALL

Normally such a hall would be encountered earlier and on the first floor, but in this special temple, it was constructed on the second and its lengthy size fills the middle. Six doors are normally accessible into this grand stone room, but they have since been blocked or completely covered over with stone debris. Now only two doors allow entry on both ends. The stones in this hall are carven with a detailed story of Adnoba and Toutorix on the columns and large wall sections. The tables are stone but the chairs were wooden and now nothing more than rubble. Over 2D20 Pysr dwell here and have made this into their squatting place and watch post. These hideous creatures have turned this festive hall into a smelly and foul home. One of the goblin monsters possesses a powerful horn, the *Hellslied* ('Helle's Song'), which, if given the



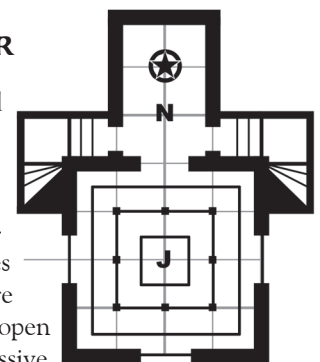
chance, he will sound and alert all of the other inhabitants of the temple by its thunderous noise, and it will spread the word below to the Erlking's realm. This black enchanted auroch horn can be heard through obstructions and over five miles in a radius by the Erlking's minions (or those of similar origins). These goblin beings have collected: 350 GP, 900 SP, 35 gems, assorted jewelry, +1 *Dagger of Splitting* (if used to parry an enemy's bladed weapon in combat, it will shatter it into pieces – foe's weapon must be non-magical), +3 *Donar's Hammer of Rage* (to a normal Fighter/Barbarian it is just a +3 weapon, but to a Berserker its innate powers are amplified: Each critical strike will summon a lightning blast as well to hit the target and other enemies within 5 ft. and cause D12 damage, this weapon also gives the Berserker an Immunity to Lightning and related attacks).

I: ADNOBA'S ROOM OF DIVINATION

Painted in its day to resemble the surrounding woodlands, this windowless chamber holds a large basin for water. Only the few special initiates to the worship of the Goddess of the Hunt possessed divination, and were led into this room to peer into the waters for visions. It was made to resemble those in the Greco-Roman world, but has its own Germanic and even slight Celtic touch. Since the days when this temple was in great use by the tribes it has fallen into ruin. What lairs in this once very magically charged room are D12+3 *Dryhtné*. These ferocious undead warriors, once loyal from the tribes that swore to defend the goddess, now they do after death. They have no need for wealth or hoarding it, only protecting the temple and underground realm of their masters beyond the death itself.

J: SACRED FIRE CHAMBER

At one time, the Gudja would light a massive blazing fire at the top of the temple at night from here. Its shine would be seen for miles around by all of the surrounding loyal and faithful tribes of the Goddess (and those who are not). One door exits out into this open air section in the roof where a massive



LEVEL 4

THRONE OF THE ERLKING 9

bronze bowl sits to hold the firewood. A spectacular view of the Black Forest can be seen from this spot high on the hill and close to the mountains. Unfortunately, it is now the nest of two *Vogel Gryff*. These griffin-like creatures have placed branches, grass and even random bones together to form a nest here. These creatures are not part of the Erlking's kingdom and have no ties to it. They will swoop down and snatch up various animals and beings for food. From their countless victims over the years, a great pile of wealth and odd objects has been collected in time: 300 GP, 250 SP, 15 gems, +4 *Edge of Blood* (the sword will suck the blood from the foe with each hit, doing D10 extra damage), +1 *Hood of Shadows* (a black cloak which enables the wearer to blend into the darkness and hide easier), and +3 *Spear of Fire* (it will burst into magical flames when held, not harming the wielder, but will spread fire and smoke to the foes by contact – D8 fire damage and 2 in 4 chance clothing/flammable objects will burst into flames, and smoke has a chance of blinding foes in a 10 ft. radius – dexterity check each turn.)

K: HALL OF ARCHERY

This long hall facing one side of the temple has multiple windows, a dozen, for those chosen archers of Adnoba. In case of an attack, these highly skilled women from the tribal alliance would shower their deadly and perfect shots on the heads of the foe. Such an attack was done when the Roman Commander Caelius and his cohort were shredded in the woods trying to reach the temple many centuries ago. The days of those sacred protectors in the temple are over, but their legacy remains in the complex art on the stonework. What remains in here now is little more than birds, squirrels and other stray wildlife. The stone floor is littered with debris gathered by the animals and from the surrounding woods. Two doorways enter or exit into this long hallway. From atop it, the kill-zone is clear below and outside by a skilled archer, slinger or spearman. Foes can only approach the temple on decent ground from one direction, in the Black Forest, otherwise they must traverse the rocky and dangerous hills and mountains to reach Elvneton. Germanic runes are boldly placed in the stones speaking of Adnoba's blessing on each arrow cast from these portals (to the outside, each 'window' appears to be a different grimacing face of a monster carved out of stone).

L: HALL OF THE KING OF THE PEOPLES

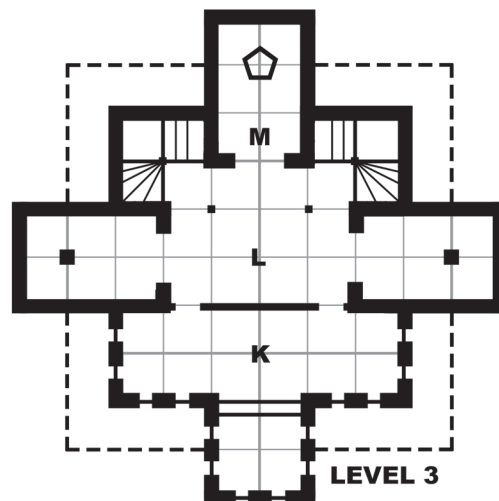
This grand chamber is to honor separately King Toutorix, and his pact with the goddess Adnoba. The walls and tree-shaped columns, made from various granite and marble, are covered in wondrous Germanic and Celtic art explaining the story of the king. His saga is told in each quarter: Birth, Youth, Manhood, and Consort of Adnoba (as the Erlking). It is obvious from the images of the King, his people view him as god among mortals and larger-than-life. His might and power are displayed in

his stature, weaponry and size compared to other beings in the artwork. It shows the idea that his reign falls over Germania and Gallia both and that he defeated Rome (Commander Caelius with a vague hint at other confrontations against the Empire not recorded). What is now in this richly decorated chamber is a demonic *Mara*, said by many to one of King Toutorix's lost loves or daughters from the many centuries ago when he was still mortal. He has scorned her, whoever she really is, and now the nightmare causing spirit lashes out at men. The *Mara* will wait until night to do her work if possible, and leave the horrific chamber, to send the victims into a state of terror in their sleep. She has no treasure or wealth, or need of it, only the bloody hearts and heads of those men who have crossed her path over the many untold years.

M: ROOM OF THE PROFANE

When the Gudja, or sacred warriors or archers to the Goddess have defiled her name and their place, and therefore betrayed all, such people are considered 'poisoned' and 'profane'. They cannot be merely slain or sacrificed as their blood and soul are no longer pure in the eyes of Adnoba or Toutorix. This dark chamber, sitting opposite to that where the Sacred Fire platform can be found, is where they are taken. Gudja and an executioner, armed with a special ax, leads the Profane to this room where their heads are placed on a stone altar to be beheaded and their blood drained into a pit. Their tainted bodies are then thrown from the roof down the hillside to rot while their blood and heads are gathered for, what is believed, to be a purification by the Gudja who burn them in a pile outside on the rooftop by the statue of Adnoba. Now what lairs here is *Becolaep*, which feeds on the long history of misery and death in this gloomy room. She has turned this room into her living space and no one or thing comes too close fearing her. Although more of wraith, she has attempted to transform this rotten space into her home, complete with bedding, a cauldron to cook by and other items. What is found here is: *Potion of Transparency* (this will grant the one who drinks it, the *Phase* spell for D8 turns), *Potion of Blackness* (if drank, the drinker will transform into a lightless form of themselves, unable to cast a shadow and blend into all sources of darkness for D6 hours), *Vial of Wretchedness* (if this

is placed in a drink or food, the victim will become vulnerable to all present sicknesses and other foul diseases for a week, then carry and spread them for another), +3 *Blade of Untoten* (Placing fresh blood from a living person on its edge, this black iron, curved dagger, can create undead or zombies from the slain after stabbing them with it in the heart), *Shroud of the Wraiths* (the wearer must first don the black, ripped old death cloak-like cloth and hood, and then possess on them one piece from a dead body for it to work – afterwards, the wearer can appear, by illusion, to be a wraith by others and even be perceived as another specter or wraith by the actual undead).



N: STATUE OF ADNOBA

On the high roof of the ancient temple stands the bronze form of the Gaulish Goddess of the Hunt, posed with her bow, quiver to her right hip and on her back, long hair braided and a fierceness in her eyes, an arrow in her hand. The statue stands over forty feet high on the slate and stone roof-top, and although tarnished by time and weather, still shines at times by the right glint of the sun. Her worshippers revere her, and this image above all else in the temple.

HALLS OF THE MOUNTAIN KING

O: PASSAGEWAY

This tunnel goes downward from the Ossuary chamber deep into the hillside. Old rusty iron hand-holds and steps are in the stone and earth. It is confining and goes almost fifteen feet downward. This is used by the minions of the Erlking often between the temple and their realm, but there are many ways in and out. There is a 3 in 6 chance that the Erlking's followers are here, and if so, the Castle Keeper can decide on what or who, based on what is occurring in the temple at the time.

P: ENTRYWAY INTO THE ERLKING'S REALM

This dark, rounded cavern has only one corridor which leads further into the mountains and Tautorix's dreaded realm. It is stone and earthen, and can hold a dozen or more beings in it at one time. Just like the Passageway, there is a 3 in 6 chance there is traffic here.

Q: CORRIDOR OF MANY ARMS

This stone corridor, crudely shaped, has a dozen smaller tunnels (six to each side) that snake off deeper into the Earth where the many magical and enchanted beings can be found. To stray and wander into these other tunnels goes outside the 'Halls of the Mountain King'. From here the Castle Keeper can choose to run a standard 'dungeon' style adventure if the adventuring party decide to travel into these depths. Otherwise, if they stick to the other end of the corridor and follow it, they will be taken into the 'Halls of the Mountain King'.

R: KITCHENS OF THE KING

Two corridors lead to these massive, old kitchens. There are always small *Germanic Kolbolds*, D20, serving, prepping and doing their chores for the Erlking and his court. The cabinets and shelves are filled with all of the necessary tools, utensils and other items for what is needed. Although a mess, and forever in use, the king has everything he needs here. The kitchen is large enough that it is two chambers, one to take over from the other, in certain situations. Obediently, the *Kolbolds* work here, and usually sleep as well. If threatened, they will flee and alert the rest of the Erlking's realm quickly.

S: ROYAL LARDER

This was a massive sarcophagus style stone chamber where heaped piles of all of the food items, taken and pilfered from the

Mortal world, are placed. One giant bronze door keeps it safe, but due to its constant use, it is always open a crack to allow the faeries access. Rats and other pests are in here, and the lingering odor of old grain and other edible foods now bad. It is hardly a safe hiding place, but due to the looming piles of food and shadows, one can remain in here for some time.

T: GARRISON OF THE SWAERTYLFE

Serving the Erlking are a troop of Dark Elves from *Swaertylfe-hám*, dedicated to fight and die for him. There are always from 50 to 100 of these strange warriors here at all times, training, cleaning their weaponry, armor and gear, or in their beds. These deadly, enchanted warriors rarely go above the surface to protect the king. If needed, they can call upon their reserves from elsewhere in this realm (100 more soldiers can arrive in time), or an even greater number sent from their own dark world. If the adventurers ever manage to get far into this massive and dangerous garrison, what plunder and riches they discover is up to the Castle Keeper.

U: HALL OF THE WÆLGASTAS

A dark, but opulent banquet feasting hall, constructed out of the stones from the earth. One long table (can sit over fifty people) and its nice chairs dominates this eerie hall. A hearth-pit is here but is never used, and plates and other utensils for eating are all throughout this grim but rich chamber. Two doors are here, one to enter from the main corridor, and one for the ghostly servants. This hall is dedicated to the 'Doomed Ghosts', as the Saxon name suggests, and 'feasts' are held in their honor here occasionally. Their dimly glowing spectral forms will dine around the table on souls given to them by the Erlking. Usually these feasts fall on Walpurgisnacht or other holidays when the gathering of the souls of the dead are at their prime.

V: LAIR OF THE WIHTS

The general name for those that serve the Erlking in Germania are the *Wihts*, although in reality this covers a broad range of enchanted beings or faery-folk. They all dwell in clustered, and tightly packed, multi-level caves converted into homes. Thousands of these beings live, breed and serve their immortal king here in these beehive-like caverns. Very few can sneak through this region of the Erlking's domain unnoticed. Mostly, these simple beings are harmless compared to the more frightening and lethal guards and warriors that dwell in his realm. They can alert the rest, and will, of strangers and find little companionship or benefit or need in befriending Mortals or people from the outside. Their loyalty to Tautorix and Adnoba is unequalled and almost impossible to alter with bribes. Faeries and other strange, grotesque beings come and go from their cavern homes, while others tend to children or chores around lamps or glowing crystals in the gloom.

W: PIT OF TERRORS

In this vast and dark rocky bowl-shaped pit are thrown the few 'fortunate' victims that dare to be given the option of being fed to the pack of hungry *Scohl*s. These wolf-like beasts prowl the

bone and corpse strewn pit starving for more edible and preferably living prey. They are never sated. If they have not fed for a time, they sleep gathered in a horde, a black mass of hairy and diabolical evil. Once awakened, their shining eyes beam and drooling maws of deadly teeth are bared and then their unique and gut-wrenching howls and growls begin. The Erlking's people usually avoid the Pit unless they are hurling the newest victims into it. This pit dominates the cavern leaving little room to travel about it without a dexterity check or a long fall, 150 ft., will occur into its awful depths.

X: SANCTUARY OF TOUTORIX

This magnificent stone cathedral is grand and built to honor the immortal king, now the 'Erlking', that rules these woods. The sights and scenes (and possible horrors) suggested in the temple above ground are nothing compared to this holy place. The faeries and other magical folk of the woodlands have spent centuries creating a wondrous sanctuary where every panel tells a chapter in the king's life. Gems, gold leaf and other riches are inlaid and spread across the marvelous and dynamic walls and columns. Blazing fires rage hot from four stands and there are always a dozen or more **Pyrs Gudja** tending to the sanctuary for those who wish to make bloody offerings (animal or even children). Extravagant rituals and sacrifices are held here often in honor of the great king. This giant sanctuary sits at a middle ground between the many previous regions in the Erlking's realm and the rest. Two doors, one on each end, await the traveler.

Y: ERLKING'S HALLS

Confused by many as the king's own 'Hall' or 'Court', these are in fact multiple halls, six in number that reach into the earth and hearth of the mountains outwards. Constructed and organized at one time lavish from stones, they are now just varied in their purposes and contents. The centuries have stretched the extent to which the Erlking and his peoples could envision a purpose for them, and no one wished to extend them further. Each Hall is over one hundred feet long in length, fifty wide and with ceilings over fifteen feet. Each of the six are detailed below

1: HALL OF MAGGOTS

This filthy Hall, beyond the doorway, is just a storeroom for the King's peoples' unused food and even murdered servants. In time terrible things now dwell here and sift through the morbid remains for anything that is foolish enough to wander in here. Lights rarely shine in this foul Hall, and when they do, malicious and festering creatures recoil into the rotting refuse and shadows. These shadowy inhabitants hope to trap those that find their way in here and devour them. Vampires and other undead dwell here and only obey the Erlking.

2: HALL OF GOBLINS

Serving loyally their immortal king, the goblins have taken over this Hall for their own and have populated it from wall to wall. Not needing a light source, it won't be obvious until it is too late. At any one time there are over two dozen goblins and their

families in here. They will not waste time in defending their territory and signaling the alarm in the Erlking's realm.

3: HALL OF TRINKETS

Piled nearly waist high in places and from one end to another, the people of the king have stuffed this Hall with hundreds of thousands of rings, bracelets, necklaces and other forms of jewelry plundered from the Mortal World, it is truly a treasure hoard in its own way. There is so much thrown here, and 95% of it mundane and pure decorative in purpose, that it is only valuable for its worth and beauty. There is no stealth in this Hall unfortunately due to the mass of metallic objects and extracting them in any quantity will be a delicate process. The Castle Keeper will have to either prepare many of these trinkets with their enchanted ability beforehand or use the '**Monsters & Treasures**' book for their properties due to the sheer number.

4: HALL OF BONES

The Erlking and his closest elite guards have chosen to place the bones (clothing, armor and weaponry, etc) of defeated honored enemies on display in this Hall. What began as a small project many, many centuries ago now has grown into a massive one with fifty slain foes. From Romans, Gauls, Germans, Slavs, Huns and others, they are collected and placed on display in this Hall but with a grim surprise for those who try to plunder from them – the Erlking has granted them the ability to animate. The moment one of the bodies is stolen from the entire Hall becomes alive, and all fight as 5th level Fighters (Undead). Only when the stolen object is returned, they are all defeated or the thieves are slain will the whole assembly return to their former 'bones on a stand' self.

5: HALL OF THE MISTFLARDEN

Arrayed from side to side are the stone sarcophagi, thirty in number, that hold the moldering ancient bodies of long dead maidens from Germania and Gaul who have since sworn their souls to serve Tautorix after the grave. These *Mistflarden* rest here when they are not serving the Erlking, running his various errands, or in the Mortal World tempting men to wander to their deaths ever closer to the Erlking's realm. Each tomb, if opened, has its own bounty of limited wealth in the form of royal jewelry, likely enchanted (Castle Keeper's decision). If angered, the *Mistflarden* will emerge from their crypts and attack the trespassers ruthlessly.

6: HALL OF SLEEP

This apparently empty but dust filled Hall is populated by the dreaded *Klaas Vaak* being which can send victims into a state of sleep. Remnants of previous victims are found on the floor as old bones and clothing in piles and little more. The exact number of these beings in this Hall are not known, but when the Erlking wishes to send them amid the mortals to put them away into slumber, he frees them. Once done with their task, they return to the dust and shadows again to await the master's call.

12 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Z: HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING

Two massive doors, richly decorated and covered in elaborate art, with a varied guard (goblin, troll, Dark Elf, etc) await the brave one who has made it this far. By this time, the traveler has made it over ten leagues of journey in the earth beneath the mountains and hills in the Black Forest, if they are smart, they haven't left a trail of bloodshed or evidence behind them because everything will now change for the worse. Toutorix himself and his vast untold real riches lie within these doors. The size of his Hall is within the hollowed heart of a mountain (one of many in the Odenwald range) with many smaller chambers (roughly 20) adjoining and adjacent to his central Courtroom. Opening the doors, the travelers will find a weaving corridor, less well-kept and filled with chests of coins and 'petty' wealth (this is enough, if it were able to be somehow carried and loaded, to grant nearly 1,000 XP to each party member). The Erlking's many guards and servants scamper about beyond. This area is dominated by Toutorix's throne room, all other rooms and adjoining chambers radiate out from it. There is a 5 in 6 chance that the Erlking is present on his throne.

THRONE-ROOM

A circular room with a domed ceiling, high above where bats and shadowy spirits and faeries swirl about in a frightening and mesmerizing dance. In the middle sits a giant richly adorned throne, covered in gold and gems, Germanic and Celtic in style. The Erlking himself maybe present on it (see *'The Erlking: King Toutorix'*) and will either challenge by riddles and/or eventually battle the trespassers. On the green marble floor are piled the endless mounds of wealth gathered from ages around him. Unfortunately, the Erlking and his hellish court will be present as well and all of their terrible glory (unless the adventuring party is clever enough to set up a smart distraction and lure them away, but such a task would take some intense plotting and devising). There is also the chance the Erlking may also be sleeping on his throne or elsewhere, in which case, they must begin plundering with care. This is where the Castle Keeper must really go overboard in sucking in the players with their lust for wealth and greed. The Goddess Adnoba has this entire and terrible realm and its dangers cleverly designed for a divine purpose – to enlighten one way or another those with the avarice. Added to the complexity of this lust for the wealth of the Erlking is taking it out alive. The reality of what an impossible situation this is must dawn on the adventuring party by the time they finally reach the legendary 'Hall of the Mountain King', as its incalculable wealth and its untold enchanted items within, will also be a curse in many ways: a.) There is no way to sensibly get it out and still have any wealth worth anything in the end after all is said and done, b.) Dealing with the nearly endless inhabitants of the Mountain King who will deny them any reasonable escape alive, c.) Adnoba's Curse (see *'Adnoba's Curse'*).

NOTE: The Castle Keeper can choose to handle the heaping mounds of treasure in this Hall however they decide depending on the level of their campaign.

ADNOBA'S CURSE

The Goddess Adnoba, finding greed of any kind the most vile of Human vices has placed the treasure hoard of King Toutorix under a divine curse for any who are fortunate enough to obtain it all and live through the many trials. The basis for the later *Nibelung* hoard of Germanic and Norse legend, this divine treasure possesses an awful cloud over it with these stipulations:

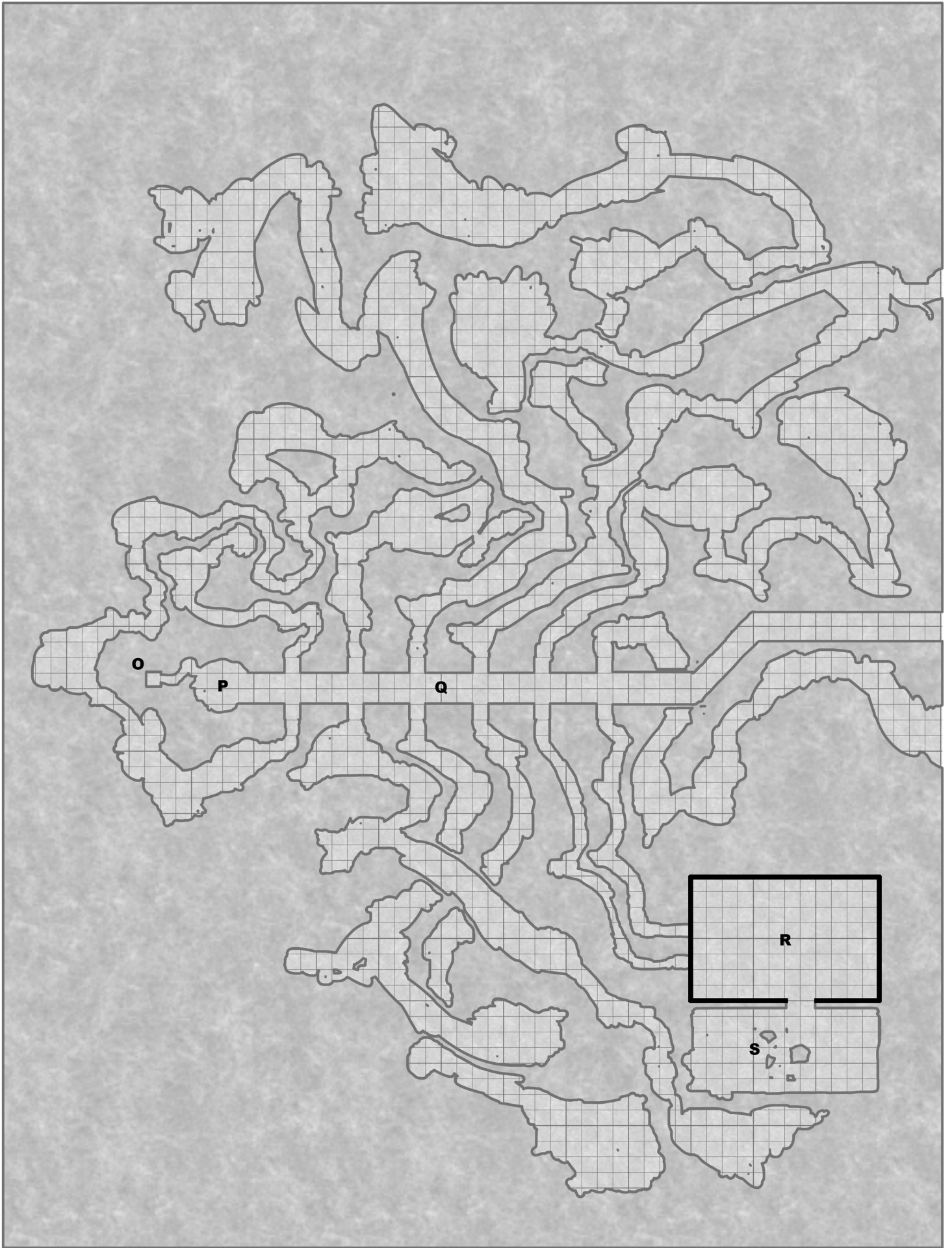
- Hostility will occur instantly once the treasure is taken (assuming it is hidden from them) in the company of strangers. The hoard will draw them to it by many unlikely means of coincidences until the owners of it are forced to contend with the problems.
- The personal lives of those who possess it will become quickly embroiled in unspeakable and sanity crushing events in time (i.e, sons marrying sisters/mothers, infanticide, etc).
- Magical and enchanted beings will be lured to the treasure. Perhaps a few or many at a time, they will come to make the place where it is kept their 'home' and even prevent those who now lay claim it to use or spend it without some difficulty.
- Separately, but a little related to the last one, a dragon may even be drawn to it due in time to its scent. Nothing will prevent it from getting to it.
- Finally, no matter how much is spent and where, eventually, the hoard will find its way back together again somewhere again. The only way to break this curse is to give the treasure hoard back to the mountain where it belonged.

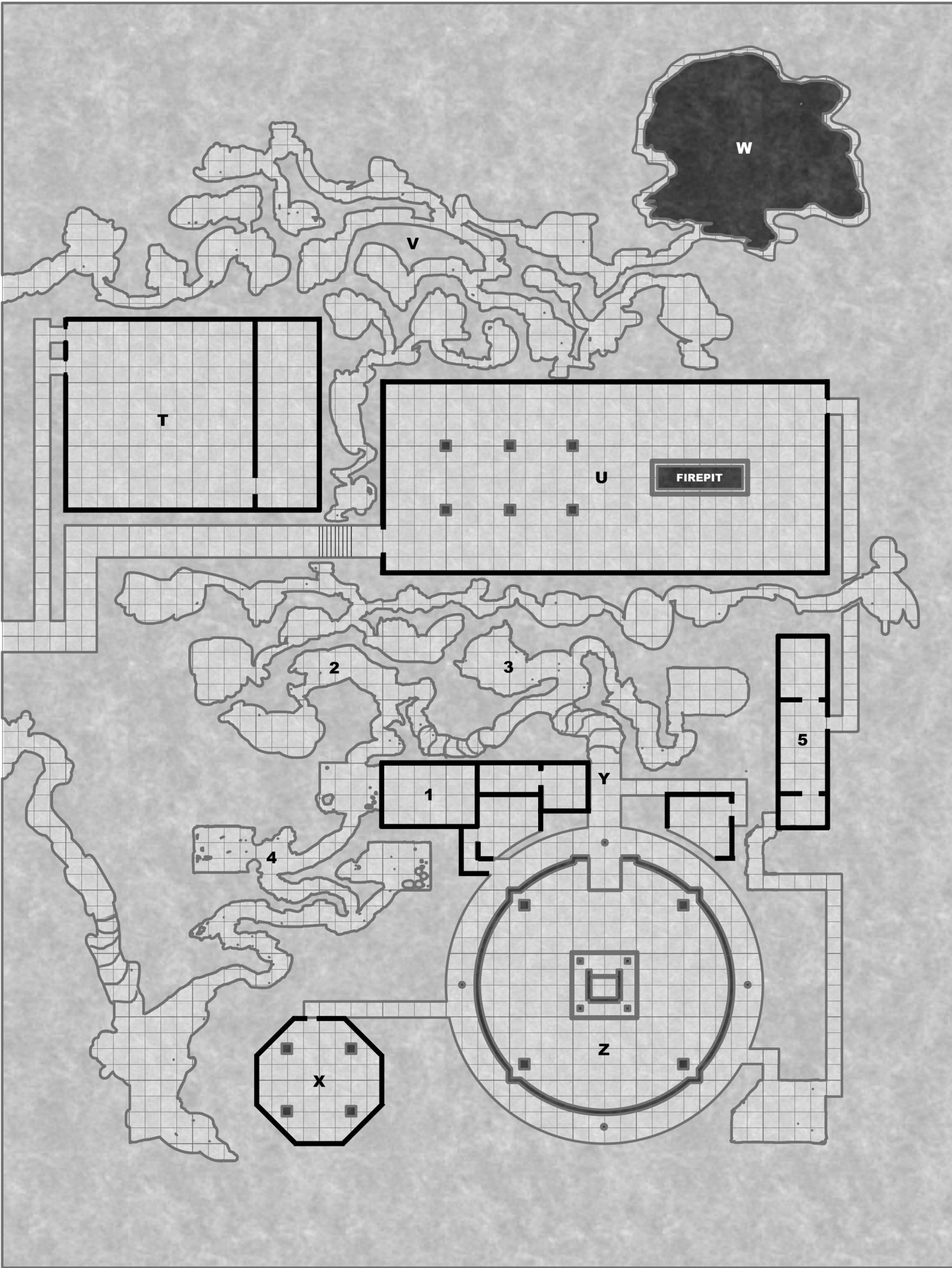
THE ERLKING: KING TOUTORIX

The Gallic king, made immortal by the Goddess Adnoba in times past. He is weary from his centuries of guardianship over the hoard and temple. Secretly deep down he wishes to end his torment at the hand of a worthy foe.

TOUTORIX (10th Level Barbarian (Giant) with vital statistics of HD 12d12, AC 25, HP 144. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks using a +5 Ax of Soul-Splitting (which renders its victim incapable of using magic for 24 hours, this includes spell-casting, drinking potions or any other magical enhancement), Shield of Truth (victim must make charisma check or fall gibbering to the ground completely overwhelmed by their vices). Combat Sense, Deerstalker, Intimidate, Primeval Instincts, Whirlwind Attack, Primeval Will, and Ancestral Calling.)

NOTE: The Erlking can heal back his damage 5d20 HP/round due to the blessing of Adnoba, but he has one weakness – his crown. It would require a Critical Hit atop his head to knock it free. Once this golden and bejeweled and priceless item is taken from him, his immortality is gone and he will suffer death at long last. Toutorix has secretly wanted to lose his crown to a worthy opponent. After the crown falls from his head, a powerful enchanted flash of magic fills the Hall and it loses its hold on him and never again can possess the power.





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