

The hollow Men

An original Dragon Warriors Adventure by Dave Morris

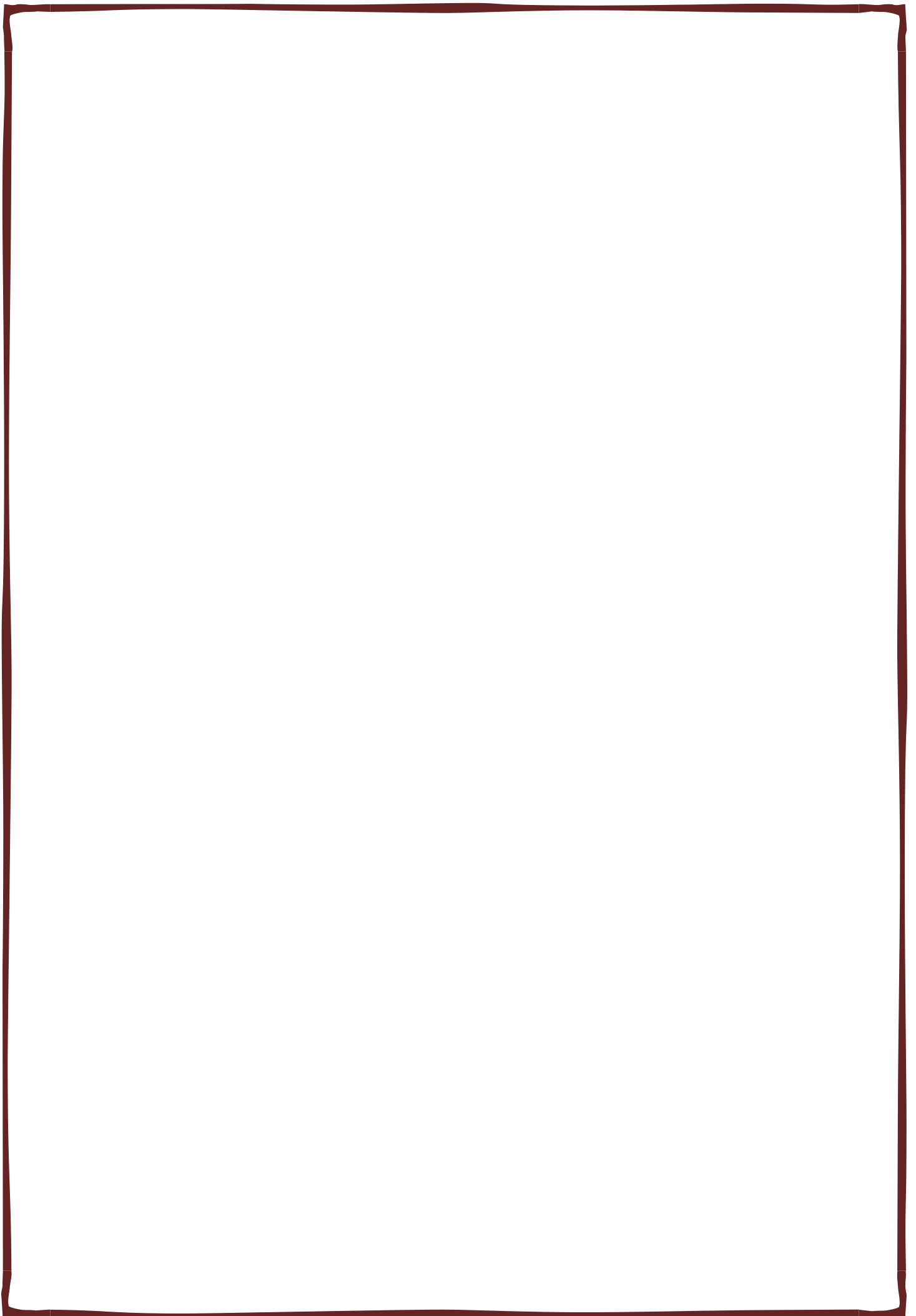
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Introduction

This adventure was written by Dave Morris for the Iron Men, a small mercenary band spun off from a much larger group called the Company of Bronze. The Company was largely wiped out, except for the PCs, in a massacre a few years ago. After a long campaign, all of the Iron Men characters died in spectacular fashion, but occasional adventures, like this one, fill gaps in their timeline.

To evoke the mood of the Iron Men campaign, I extracted this from Dave's blog about the final days of Joseph Lynch:

Sleep of the Sword

Joseph Lynch was brawny and big-boned. At wrestling he always won, and there was no door he couldn't heave from its hinges, or failing that break it down with his head. His beard was as red as fox fur and broad as a shovel. Upon his nose he had a wart with a tuft of hairs red as the bristles in a sow's ears. His nostrils were black and wide, his mouth as big as a furnace door, and by his side he wore a sword few men could lift, even with both hands.

Joseph was one of the Iron Men, a small mercenary band out of Ellesland who lived in the latter time as the millennium wound down towards Judgment Day. I stood alongside him in a mountain hall facing goblins in the darkness, and once in a wood we fought a slithering thing that stuck to the misty hollows and might have been a dragon. At least, we called it that.

After our ship put in at a cove among the Stranded Isles, we had gone out to forage for supplies, and when our horses were stopped by robbers on the road our first thoughts might have been to pity them. My thoughts, anyway; Joseph was less given to pity. But by ill luck one of their swords found a space under his arm, and the blade slid in and punctured his lung, and Joseph fell like an oak.

With us travelled a man from Krarth called Kal ki-Lan Tor, who claimed to be a magus. I made him use his magic to call back blood into Joseph's limbs and air into his lungs. But if any man has the art to defy Death, he will find that new life can only be borrowed for a short time. The flame had gone, and although Joseph continued on for a few days, he grew in pallor and we noticed that when he forgot to draw breath he sat as still as a figure of clay.

Finally he had to be put in the ground. I laid my sword of faerie steel beside him and covered the grave with rocks, for the soil of that shore was too hard and cold to dia. And that was the second and final death of Joe Lvnch.

Overview

The adventure comprises 4 scenes, written more to be a guide for GMs than a detailed step-by-step adventure-by-numbers. Whilst this adventure is written for a specific company of PCs, it can easily be adapted to suit any campaign in which there is a recurring villain or revenge theme. The adventure is suitable for high-level characters.

Setting the Scene

The PCs represent a mercenary company in the employ of the army of Baron Verlaine of Trefell, who is fighting an insurrection by his younger son Keele, who is working in concert with a Cornumbrian lord called Pengarth.

Scene 1: Appleford Manor

The PCs are sent to take Appleford Manor, a fortified manor of strategic importance currently held by Keele's forces. During the battle the PCs will see Gorshin, whom the PCs may consider responsible for the massacre of the Company of Bronze. Gorshin will flee the battle, but will the PCs desert the battle to give chase?

Scene 2: Spring Festival in Axbridge

The PCs catch up with Gorshin in Axbridge, where a Spring Festival provides plenty of distractions for the PCs. The PCs will find Gorshin, but will they believe his story? Either way, the PCs should learn enough to want to speak to Brother Lowring of Tarrowden

Scene 3: Journey to Tarrowden

Tarrowden hides across the Coronach Marsh and the PCs must brave the sucking mud and malevolent denizens in order to reach the village.

Scene 4: The Village of Tarrowden

The PCs will find Tarrowden a ramshackle and sinister place. A local legend will point the way to the final confrontation with Brother Lowring and his henchmen, but will take a Hellish twist.

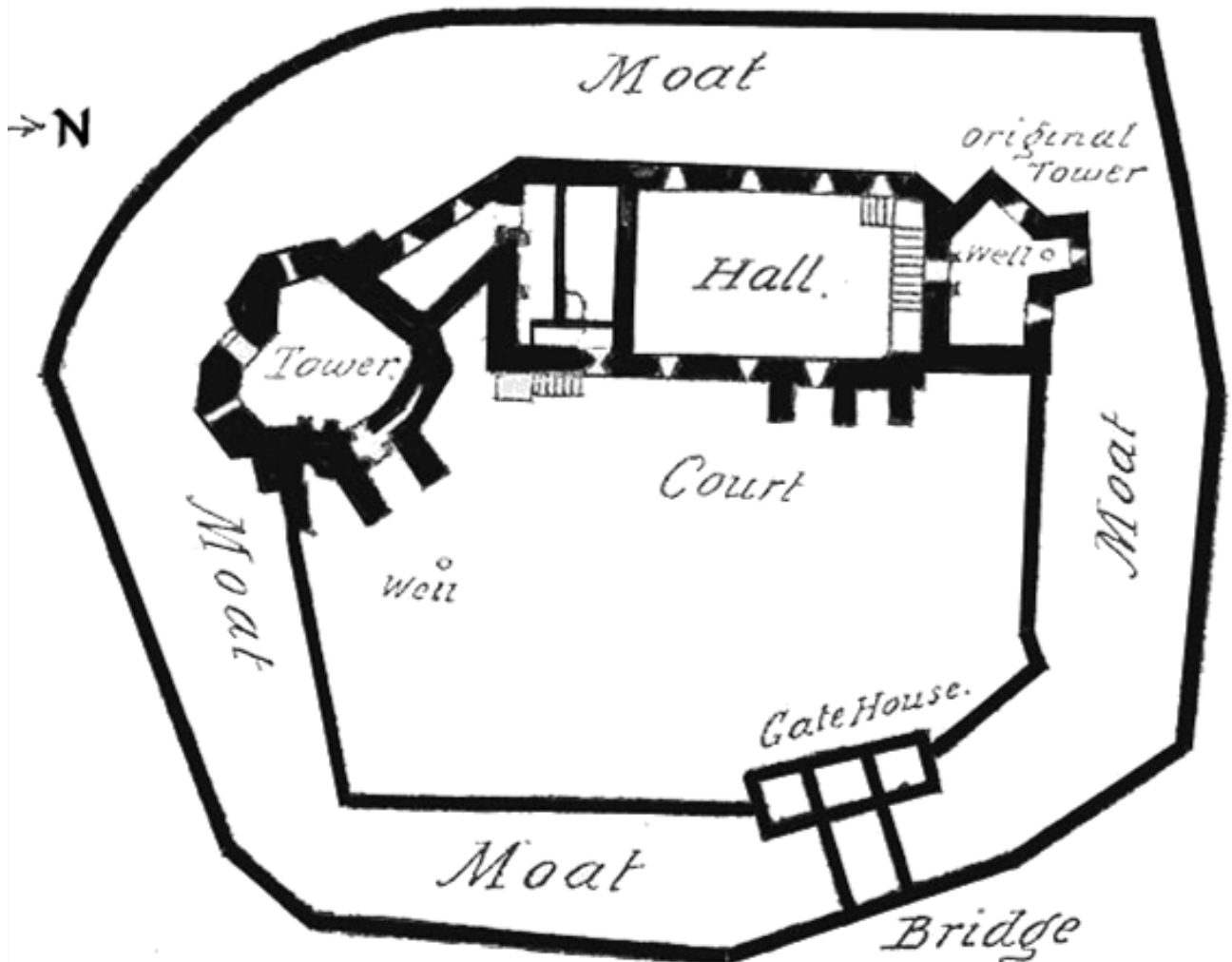
Real-life Appleford

Appleford Manor is based on Stokesay Castle in Shropshire, England, and GMs looking to include more flavour to the opening scene are encouraged to visit or research Stokesay Castle.

The photograph on the front of this document is of the Castle, as viewed from the church, and the plan provided on the opposite page is also of Stokesay Castle.

Scene 1: Appleford Manor

Sketch map © Robert Carney, used without permission



By way of scale, the hall is 20m long, and the moat approximately 5-10m wide.

On the day of the battle the characters are sent to Appleford under the command of Turvatelle de l'Abîme. Appleford is a small hamlet with a stream running through it with a fortified manor that could provide a bolt-hole for a sizeable part of Keele's forces even if Verlaine's army can carry the day. Turvatelle's mission is to secure the manor for Baron Verlaine.

The adventure is written assuming the party have reached the church (about 100m north of the manor's walls), having waded upriver to avoid patrols of Keele's men and stayed under cover of the orchard as they advanced towards the church. However, GMs are free to start the adventure earlier in the assault, and task the characters to come up with their own strategy.

The hollow Men, A Dragon Warriors Adventure

Should the PCs encounter a patrol of Keele's men, it will consist of 4 men-at-arms:

APPLEFORD MANOR PATROL		Reflexes: 10
Attack 13	Current Health Points	
Defence 8 Magic Def 12	1. _____ 2. _____	
Stealth 13	3. _____ 4. _____	
Perception 4 Vision Normal		
Evasion 4		
Health Points 1d6+6		
Movement 10m (20m)		
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4) or Bow (d6, 4)		
Armour/Defences Hauberk (AF: 3) + Shield		
Rank Equivalence 2		

Ten men-at-arms remain inside the manor, led by two garrison commanders, Niul and Ganeth, both of Arran, and whilst the walls do not have battlements, the manor and the gatehouse have slits from which the men-at-arms will fire arrows at approaching soldiers. The PCs will either need to be stealthy, fast, crafty or lucky to avoid being shot before making it over the walls. The walls are approximately 10m high and have a difficulty of 15 to climb. If a character fails his climbing test, he will fall into the moat.

APPLEFORD MANOR DEFENDERS		Reflexes: 10
Attack 13	Current Health Points	
Defence 8 Magic Def 12	1. _____ 2. _____	
Stealth 13	3. _____ 4. _____	
Perception 4 Vision Normal		
Evasion 4		
Health Points 1d6+6		
Movement 10m (20m)		
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4) or Bow (d6, 4)		
Armour/Defences Hauberk (AF: 3) + Shield		
Rank Equivalence 2		
	5. _____ 6. _____	
	7. _____ 8. _____	
	9. _____ 10. _____	

NUIL OF ARRAN	Reflexes: 10
Attack 16	
Defence 9 Magic Def 5	
Stealth 13	
Perception 6 Vision Normal	
Evasion 4	
Health Points 14 _____	
Movement 10m (20m)	
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4) or Bow (d6, 4)	
Armour/Defences Mail (AF: 4) + Shield	
Rank Equivalence 3	

GANETH OF ARRAN	Reflexes: 11
Attack 15	
Defence 9 Magic Def 7	
Stealth 13	
Perception 7 Vision Normal	
Evasion 4	
Health Points 11 _____	
Movement 10m (20m)	
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4) or Bow (d6, 4)	
Armour/Defences Mail (AF: 4) + Shield	
Rank Equivalence 3	

The hollow Men, A Dragon Warriors Adventure

If the PCs subdue the men-at-arms guarding the manor, any men-at-arms on patrol will surrender when they return to the manor.

A Familiar Face

As the PCs breach the walls, the gatehouse drawbridge will crash open and one of the defenders will gallop away on horseback. The PCs will recognise the mounted man as Gorshin, who was supposed to be on sentry duty on the night the Company of Bronze was wiped out in a surprise attack.

Players considering deserting to give chase, should be reminded of the severity of the crime they are considering. Doing so is likely to greatly affect their standing with the Baron.

If the PCs desert to give chase, they will not need to make any track rolls to determine that Gorshin is headed for Axbridge. If, however, the PCs stay to secure the manor, they must use their track skills and

Deserting a Battle

The Lands of Legend are set in a pseudo Dark Age setting, during which deserting a battle would carry the same penalty as treason, and would also be a breach of a Knight's feudal oath.

Whilst Knight PCs may consider the pursuit of justice for the massacre of the Company of Bronze suitable justification for desertion, it should not be without consequence.

the GM should make finding Gorshin slightly harder during the next scene, but not impossible. The adventure depends on the PCs intercepting Gorshin and finding out about Lowring and Tarrowden.

If the battle for the manor is successful and the PCs do not have the Track ability, Commander Turvatelle can be convinced to release a scout from his command to help the PCs track Gorshin.

Some history

Joseph Lynch, one of the Iron Men, was present when the Company of Bronze commander, Pieter de Fleur, instructed Gorshin to hand-pick the sentries. Pieter then ordered Joseph and the rest of the Iron Men out on the scouting mission that spared them from the massacre.

The Company of Bronze were in the employ of Baron Grisaille at the time. However, in an arms limitation deal with Montombre, Grisaille agreed to release the Company. To avoid having to pay them their fee, Grisaille bribed Brother Lowring, a senior officer in the Company, to arrange for there to be no sentries one night so Grisaille could send in his assassins to wipe out the Company.

Since that night, Gorshin has continued in the employ of Brother Lowring.

How much of this the PCs find out during this adventure is up to the GM.

Scene 2: Spring Festival in Axbridge

Axbridge is medium-sized town in the throes of its spring festival. Because of the approach of the year 1000, the celebrations are tinged with a note of hysteric abandon.

Events at the festival include:

- The **Jacks-in-the-Green** dance through the streets whacking folk with sticks made from bound reeds. Whilst some of the dancers seem to enjoy their licence to hit folk more than others, it is more annoying than harmful, and the crowds that follow the dancers around will mob any character that attempts to retaliate.
- The **passion players**, a theatrical troupe, are performing the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah in the town square.
- A **procession of giants** (Millstone and Hobbler).
- **Bear-baiting**
- **Cock-fighting**, on which the PCs may place small bets.
- **Wrestling** in the church courtyard. If the PCs wander past the wrestling, the current champion, Bors Jellybones (so-called because he reduces other people's bones to jelly), will goad the strongest-looking PC into accepting his challenge. Refusing will bring jeers and taunts from the crowd.
- **Jugglers and acrobats** performing in the streets.
- A **puppet show** has set up that recreates the story of St Millais, supposed to have grabbed Old Nick and drowned him in a pond that's been said to boil ever since, parochially known as the Old Kettle.

Bors Jellybones

Bors is a Cornumbrian giant with a thicket of golden hair and a face like a badly-made stone wall.

Bors suffers from overpowering body odour – or, rather, his opponents suffer from it. If Bors has a character in hold, they must test their Strength on 1d20 or suffer -1 to their Strength or Reflexes for the purpose of getting free.

Bors has a Strength score of 17 and a Reflexes score of 9.

Taverns

- The Nonesuch
- The Sheaf of Barley
- The Old Mustard (Gorshin is hiding out here)
- The Three Legged Mare
- The Hangwell

Finding Gorshin

If the characters wander around the festival asking around for someone meeting Gorshin's description, they may learn that someone that looked like him was here a little while ago, but was last seen heading towards some other part of town (or another festival event), and the GM can keep this up for as long as he can keep the players entertained by doing so. Eventually, however, someone will have seen Gorshin entering the Old Mustard Tavern, which is where the PCs will find him. If the GM is feeling particularly obstructive, some of the festival-goers may even want a little favour from the PCs in return for information (for example, a disgruntled gambler looking to get even with a cheat, etc.)

Gorshin will not put up a fight and to save his skin, knowing that he would be outclassed in any violent confrontation by the Iron Men. Instead, Gorshin bargains for his life by offering to tell all about the night the Company of Bronze were ambushed. He was on sentry duty, but an officer called Brother Lowring came round with some other mercenaries and told Gorshin to make himself scarce. Gorshin says he was given a gold crown to go off to the nearest tavern.

Character may test their Intelligence on 1d20 to recall that there was no tavern within ten miles of where the Company was camped that night.

If pressed, Gorshin admits he was in cahoots with Brother Lowring, though he claims it was under duress. He was led off across the stream and they watched as a surprise attack was launched and, without sentries, the Company was wiped out.

How to Wrestle

During each round, the two wrestlers test strength on 1d20. The winner is the person that rolls highest and still succeeds. In the event of a tie, the wrestler with the highest strength score wins. If it is still a tie, both combatants reroll. The winner gets the other in a hold.

Once in a hold, the wrestler can either attempt to break free (using Strength) or escape (using Reflexes), his choice. The wrestler holding the other makes a Strength check, the wrestler being held makes either a Strength or Reflexes check. Again, the wrestler that rolls the highest and still succeeds their roll wins (i.e., either maintains the hold for a round, or breaks free). All ties favour the wrestler holding the other. If a wrestler can keep another in hold for 3 consecutive rounds, they win a point.

The contest ends when one of the wrestlers scores 3 points.

The hollow Men, A Dragon Warriors Adventure

The truth is that Gorshin is still Lowring's henchmen, and is supposed to get supplies from the apothecary here in Axbridge to take back to Tallowden. Gorshin is selfish and will act and say anything to save his own skin and whilst he has no particular loyalty to Lowring, theirs is a convenient and profitable relationship that Gorshin will not lightly jeopardise.

Whether the PCs believe Gorshin acted under duress or not, rage, pride, or vengeance may drive the PCs to kill Gorshin. If they do this, they will find a scrip for the apothecary, Dr Banders, on his person. If they let Gorshin live, he will answer more questions if able to (he knows, and will share, that Lowring is in Tallowden, for example), but will not reveal his continued association with Lowring. As soon as Gorshin is allowed to leave, he will immediately head to the apothecary so he can get away from Axbridge as soon as possible. Gorshin makes no attempt to hide his movements, should any PC wish to follow him.

Axbridge Militia

Whilst it is not expected that the characters will need to fight their way through Axbridge's militia, a public confrontation with Gorshin is likely to create unwanted attention.

A patrol of 10 militiamen will be called, along with their captain, Wald of Osterlin. Combat statistics are provided for completeness, but the characters should be provided an opportunity to talk their way out of a beating, being banished from the town, and/or being thrown in a cell to await the lord's justice (which might not go well if they deserted before securing Appleford Manor).

WALD OF OSTERLIN Reflexes: 12

Attack	16	
Defence	9	Magic Def 4
Stealth	13	
Perception	6	Vision Normal
Evasion	4	
Health Points	14 _____	
Movement	10m (20m)	
Weapons/Attacks	Sword (d8, 4)	
Armour/Defences	Mail (AF: 4) + Shield	
Rank Equivalence	3	

AXBRIDGE MILITIAMEN Reflexes: 11

		Current Health Points
Attack	14	
Defence	8	Magic Def 4
Stealth	13	
Perception	5	Vision Normal
Evasion	4	
Health Points	1d6+6	
Movement	10m (20m)	
Weapons/Attacks	Sword (d8, 4)	
Armour/Defences	Hauberk (AF: 3)	
Rank Equivalence	2	
		1. _____ 2. _____
		3. _____ 4. _____
		5. _____ 6. _____
		7. _____ 8. _____
		9. _____ 10. _____

The Apothecary

Dr Banders is an honest but not a particularly brave man, so if serious-looking armed men (like the PCs) turn up asking questions about one of his customers, he will freely share that he has been making up prescriptions of a liver potion for Gorshin for the last year or more. Gorshin arrives every six weeks and collects enough for six or seven heavy drinkers (the medicine is supposed to ease digestive ailments). During Gorshin's last visit, the batch was not quite ready, so Dr Banders told Gorshin to come back in a fortnight's time.

Being opportunistic, Gorshin figured he could earn some extra coin by moonlighting for Keele while he waited for the medicine to be ready.

Dr Banders does not know anything of Gorshin's relationship with Brother Lowring, but will know that Brother Lowring is the Lord of Tarrowden.

Rumours

It may be that the PCs do not get enough information from Gorshin to know what to do next. However, asking around the town about Brother Lowring should reveal some or all of the following:

- "Brother Lowring is no monk, he's just a lord that does as he pleases, like all the rest of 'em."
- "Lowring used to be lord of Tarrowden, but I heard he abandoned his fief."
- "Tarrowden? Isn't that that place that lies t'other side of the Caronach Marsh?"
- "You could say that Tarrowden is disputed; it's such a worthless piece of land that neither Albion nor Cornumbria want it."
- "If you're travelling through the Coronach Marsh, you should stick to the road. One false step and you could find yourself up to your neck in all kinds of trouble."
- "Tarrowden? No-one trades with that forsaken hole – even if you can find the place, you should count yourself lucky if the Marsh claims your life before you get there."

Some or all of which should be enough to point the PCs in the direction of Tarrowden.

It may even be that the PCs fail to catch up with Gorshin to learn about Lowring. In this case, the PCs may discover, from asking around (a travelling peddler, should the PCs not even make it to Axbridge!) that Gorshin was seen with "Brother Lowring on Dobby's Walk." This should be enough to get the PCs back on track.

Scene 3: Journey to Tarrowden

The route to Tarrowden lies across the Coronach Marsh, where the land rises up to a wild landscape often shrouded in fog and drizzle. The Marsh is a confusing place and keeping to the road without a guide is difficult.

If the PCs thought to hire a local guide in Axbridge (or return to hire a guide after being caught out by the dangers of the Marsh), they will come upon Tarrowden after a few hours with no further incident.

However, if the characters set out to find Tarrowden by themselves, the character nominated as the guide must make a Perception checks on 1d20 every hour, with a failed roll indicating that the PCs have become lost, and must roll 1d6:

- 1-4. The PCs have travelled an hour in the wrong direction and now become hemmed about by quagmire and must retrace their steps.
5. The PCs become separated in the fog and a random PC is attacked by a group of 5 swamp goblins. These bloated brown sprites with rubbery hides and toad-like eyes pick off stragglers and haul them into the waterlogged hollows to drown. The goblins will surprise the character on a 1-3 (1-5 at night) on a d6.

Travelling at Night

Each Perception check represents 1 hour's travel, and it is 4 hours to Tarrowden. Each failed Perception check not only wastes an hour, but puts the PCs an hour farther away from Tarrowden.

At night, add 4 to the difficulty of the Perception check to stay on the path, and 1 to the d6 roll for getting lost. Wise characters may choose instead to wait out the night...

SWAMP GOBLINS

Reflexes: 12

Attack 13
Defence 7 **Magic Def** 5
Stealth 21 (16 vs. Sorcerers)
Perception 13 **Vision** Normal
Evasion 5
Health Points 1d6+4
Movement 12m (25m)
Weapons/Attacks Drowning
Armour/Defences Rubbery hide (AF: 1)
Rank Equivalence 2

Current Health Points

1. _____ 2. _____
 3. _____ 4. _____
 5. _____

The hollow Men, A Dragon Warriors Adventure

If a goblin's attack succeeds, it has latched onto its target and starts to pull him down. Each goblin that grapples the character imparts a -3 penalty to Attack and Defence and a -2 penalty to Evasion. If the character's Evasion score is reduced to zero, the character has been pulled into the water and can only thrash around, hoping to draw the attention of his comrades before he drowns.

The goblins' magical stealth abilities mean that the other PCs must each succeed a Perception check against a Stealth of 16 (11 vs. Sorcerers) to be able to come to his aid.

If overcome, the character will be stripped of all he owns and his dead body left on the path.

- 6-7. One of the PCs stumbles into a sucking mire and is being pulled under by the belching mud. If the PC remains calm, he will notice that he stops sinking as the mud reaches his chest, but the freezing mud leeches his strength. For every round the character is stuck in the mud, he loses 1 Strength point. If his Strength reaches zero, the character falls unconscious and begins losing Health Points at the rate of 1 per round. If his Health reaches zero, he dies.

If the character gets sucked into the freezing mud at night, he loses 1 Strength *and* 1 Health Point each round.

The mud has an effective Strength of 18, and if the characters get a rope to their comrade, can attempt to pull him out. If the trapped PC falls unconscious, he will not be able to hold onto the rope (although if he ties it around himself before losing consciousness, the characters could still attempt to free him).

The character with the highest Strength score must test his Strength against the mud, with each additional character pulling on the rope adding 1 to his effective strength. As with wrestling, the highest d20 roll that succeeds, wins the contest. Ties favour the rescuers. If the PCs succeed in three consecutive rolls, they have freed their companion from the mud.

Once free of the mud, with a little rest and warmth, the character's Strength and Health Points return.

Drowning

A character engaged in strenuous activity can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his Strength score. Thereafter, he loses 1 Health Point per round until he draws breath or dies.

These Health Points are recovered if the character can breathe normally for a number of minutes equal to the number of rounds he was underwater.

Scene 4: The Village of Tarrowden

Finally clear of the Coronach Marsh, the characters will spy a lane leading down off the moors to the west down a very steep hill that leads into a sunken lane overhung with dank trees. This part isn't so steep but it is dark and eerily silent. Jammed at the bottom of a wedge of land that slopes down between two heavy growths of ancient forest, there is a church, a manor, and a few cottages: the village of Tarrowden.

The Fields

The first view the PCs will have of Tarrowden as they wind their way down the overgrown lane is of the fields that used to feed the residents of Tarrowden. Last year's crop has obviously been left to rot, as the whole hillside is a mass of tangled, rank vegetation in which dark rat-like forms root and scurry.

Nearer to the cottages there are some furlongs at the edge of the lowest field that have been ploughed and sown. They are obviously not the best plots, but are the ones typically allowed for villagers' private use.

Scarecrows

Three scarecrows of baleful appearance stand watch over the freshly sown seeds. The gaze from sunken hollows in the scarecrows' leathery faces seemingly following the PCs as they pick their way through snaking brambles that cut across their path towards the cottages.

If the PCs inspect the scarecrows, they will find them to be made from cured human skins that have been stuffed with straw and roughly stitched up. Beyond their sinister appearance, there is nothing for the PCs to fear from these scarecrows.

Whence Came the Skins?

The skins from which the scarecrows are sewn came from bandits thinking Tarrowden might make for easy pickings.

Lowring and his men drowned these opportunistic thieves in the mere and left them here as a warning. The cottagers do not go near them.

The Cottagers

The PCs' arrival is likely to cause the villagers to stay indoors, especially after what happened to the last group of mendicants that wandered this way. However, one or other of the braver souls may venture out to address the PCs, and if the PCs can convince them of their intentions, perhaps even secure some co-operation.

There are a dozen households here, but only Martin Long, Seamus the White, Niall the Smith and Young Corvus are brave enough to address the PCs. Use one or more of these cottagers to provide the PCs with the following information – either all in one go or as the PCs explore the sites and ask questions.

Of the crops... the villagers say that they do not dare touch them because they belong to the Lord, and he stopped taking an interest in the fief a year-or-so back.

Of the church... the villagers say that there is no priest. “Well, there is; but he run away. Father Wissell his name was. And might still be.”

Of the manor... the villagers say the Lord moved out last summer and they have hardly seen him since. “Only that Gorshin that runs and fixes for him.”

Of the scarecrows... the villagers will go silent and look uncomfortable, but if pressed will tell the PCs about the brigands that came to town and about how the Lord drowned them in the mere.

Of the mere... the villagers will again look uncomfortable and warn the PCs against going to it. “It is an accursed place of devilry. St Millais drowned Old Nick in that mere and it's not right for men to go near.” The villagers may refer to this place as the Old Kettle, as they certainly believe it to be the place spoken of in the story of St Millais (which the PCs may either have learned from the puppet show in Axbridge, or by seeing the frieze in the church).

The Church

The church is a proud stone building that, despite being small, dominates the village. Its heavy wooden door shrieks open on rusty hinges, which disturbs a lonely crow nesting in the rafters. The panicked flapping of the bird's wings echoes in the lonely silence of the abandoned House of God.

Characters may test their Perception on 1d20 to notice carved wooden panels around the pulpit that show St Millais drowning the Devil in a mere. A painted plaster frieze continues the story and shows St Millais returning to the village to discover men drinking and wenching with the gold the Devil gave them, so he takes them to the mere and makes them throw the gold in. The inscription reads: *Redde Caesari quae sunt Caesaris* [Translation: Render unto Ceasar that which is Ceasar's].

The Manor

The manor stands deserted. It is devoid of anything of value and shows early signs of disrepair – a few missing roof tiles, an overflowing gutter, a broken hinge on a window shutter, etc. Inside, vermin scuttle openly across the plain stone floors, hearths sit cold beneath chimneys choked with soot and leaves, and the attic is now home to a colony of bats, the overpowering smell of their guano heralding their presence long before the PCs make it into the roof space.

Into the Woods

Lowring returned to Tarrowden with five accomplices. Looking for a place to hide their loot, they found an old Cornumbrian drinking hall and, nearby, a pool known to the locals as the Old Kettle.

The PCs will hopefully have had enough clues to want to check out the mere for themselves. Whilst the villagers will not accompany them, they will point the PCs in the right direction.

The Old Kettle

The Old Kettle is a stagnant pool of murky black water, banked by sickly reeds and slime-caked stones. For half an hour at dawn and dusk, as the balance of day and night is contested in the heavens, the pool froths, bringing the reek of rotted meat to the surface.

Hellion Flukes

Lowring and his men are infected with hellion flukes. These are eating them away inside. They still think they are normal men, but the truth is they are mere shells – and inside the shells are devils.

When still, the water in the pool is so icy cold as to sap a man's strength in moments, but when it boils as if the Devil's own breath surges from its depths, it can be swum in. One of Lowring's men discovered this and dived down, returning with gold coins. They have been hoarding the coins they retrieved in the old hall ever since, finally moving into the hall, ruinous and inhospitable though it is, to be nearer to the pool.

Lowring and his men soon started feeling ill, particularly with liver pains, but greed kept them going. Gorshin was sent to Axbridge regularly to fetch medicines from the apothecary.

Lord of the Manor

Brother Lowring's fief consists of low-quality arable land, few roads and almost no natural resources, so he abandoned his impoverished fief to become a mercenary, returning here only when he needed to lie low after accepting a payment to betray the Company of Bronze.

Lowring's title of Brother is not due to any religious rank, but acquired as a nickname because of his silent mien, which among mercenaries suggested a priest-like introspection.

The Drinking hall

Any PC who can track will see plenty of signs of human activity near the pool and be able to follow it back to the Drinking Hall, a long, lichen-spotted stone wall overhung with a low moss-covered roof. The Drinking Hall is so set into the bank that you could easily miss it.

This is the old Cornumbrian hall which was the nucleus of the original settlement. Lowring and his henchmen moved here after discovering the treasure in the Old Kettle.

The treasure in the hall amounts to 2,000 crowns, should the PCs dare take it...

Inside the Drinking Hall are Lowring and his men. Driven part insane by greed and the Hellion flukes eating them from the inside, they will attack on sight to prevent the PCs from either taking, or reporting to anyone, the gold stashed here.

The Final Confrontation

If Brother Lowring or his men are dealt more than 4 Health Points of damage, their skin splits, releasing a gout of flame. The character who injured them must drop his weapon or take 1d3 burn damage (no armour). There is a chance (10% for an ordinary weapon; 1% for a magical weapon) that the weapon will be destroyed, but even if the weapon survives, a non-magical edged weapon will still lose 1 from its damage until an armourer can fix it.

Once one of the men has been thus struck, his outer skin will blister and burn away, filling the air with the stench of burning flesh and revealing the Hellion within as it bursts through clothing and shreds their mail armour.

In Hellion form:

- The Hellions continuously emit waves of intolerable heat. Each round in melee combat with a Hellion requires the PC to make a Strength check on 1d20 or suffer 1HP damage.
- The Hellions attack and defend with the combat characteristics of the men they consumed, but now have 1d6+12HP, regenerating 1HP per round (except on holy ground, although this is unlikely to apply to this encounter).
- The bony carapace of these Hellions provides an AF of 6.
- The steel-sharp barbed talons of the Hellions are unable to wield swords effectively, instead raking at their opponents with natural weapons as (d10, 5) weapons.
- Instead of making a melee attack, a Hellion may choose to blast his opponent with fire equivalent to a *Dragonbreath* spell, but with a Speed of 14.

The hollow Men, A Dragon Warriors Adventure

LOWRING Reflexes: 13

Attack 21
Defence 15 **Magic Def** 12
Stealth 15
Perception 9 **Vision** Normal
Evasion 6
Health Points 4 (then 1d6+12)
Movement 10m (20m)
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4)
(then claws – d10, 5)
Armour/Defences Mail (AF: 4) + Shield
(then carapace – AF: 6)
Rank Equivalence 9

OLBECK Reflexes: 9

Attack 17
Defence 11 **Magic Def** 6
Stealth 14
Perception 7 **Vision** Normal
Evasion 5
Health Points 4 (then 1d6+12)
Movement 10m (20m)
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4)
(then claws – d10, 5)
Armour/Defences Mail (AF: 4) + Shield
(then carapace – AF: 6)
Rank Equivalence 6

GUSTON Reflexes: 11

Attack 19
Defence 12 **Magic Def** 9
Stealth 14
Perception 7 **Vision** Normal
Evasion 5
Health Points 4 (then 1d6+12)
Movement 10m (20m)
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4)
(then claws – d10, 5)
Armour/Defences Mail (AF: 4) + Shield
(then carapace – AF: 6)
Rank Equivalence 7

ULFAR Reflexes: 9

Attack 17
Defence 10 **Magic Def** 6
Stealth 14
Perception 6 **Vision** Normal
Evasion 4
Health Points 4 (then 1d6+12)
Movement 10m (20m)
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4)
(then claws – d10, 5)
Armour/Defences Mail (AF: 4) + Shield
(then carapace – AF: 6)
Rank Equivalence 5

FYFE Reflexes: 11

Attack 17
Defence 11 **Magic Def** 8
Stealth 14
Perception 7 **Vision** Normal
Evasion 5
Health Points 4 (then 1d6+12)
Movement 10m (20m)
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4)
(then claws – d10, 5)
Armour/Defences Mail (AF: 4) + Shield
(then carapace – AF: 6)
Rank Equivalence 6

QUINTUS Reflexes: 16

Attack 16
Defence 11 **Magic Def** 5
Stealth 14
Perception 6 **Vision** Normal
Evasion 6
Health Points 4 (then 1d6+12)
Movement 10m (20m)
Weapons/Attacks Sword (d8, 4)
(then claws – d10, 5)
Armour/Defences Mail (AF: 4) + Shield
(then carapace – AF: 6)
Rank Equivalence 4

Health Point Tracks:

Lowring: _____ Olbeck: _____ Guston: _____

Ulfar: _____ Fyfe: _____ Quintus: _____

Ending the Adventure

This adventure probably raises as many questions as it answers:

- Who won the battle between Keele and Verlaine?
- If Keele won, what was Pengarth's price for supporting him (and, if Verlaine won the day, what is Pengarth's next play)?
- Will the PCs take the gold from the Drinking Hall, throw it back into the Old Kette, or use it to rebuild Tarrowden? Is the gold cursed and will it taint all the good the PCs may do with it?
- And so on....

The GM should feel free to answer those (and many other!) questions this adventure raises as befits his own campaign. Importantly, this adventure introduces a new Fief to Ellesland, tinged with devilry and tragic politics, populated by desperate and lordless peasants, unwanted by both Cornumbria and Albion. Where better for noble PCs to strive against the tide of circumstances that have impoverished this once proud fief?

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