

A 0-Level Dungeon Crawl Classics Adventure

By Mark Bishop

# Nebín Pendlebrook's Perilous Pantry



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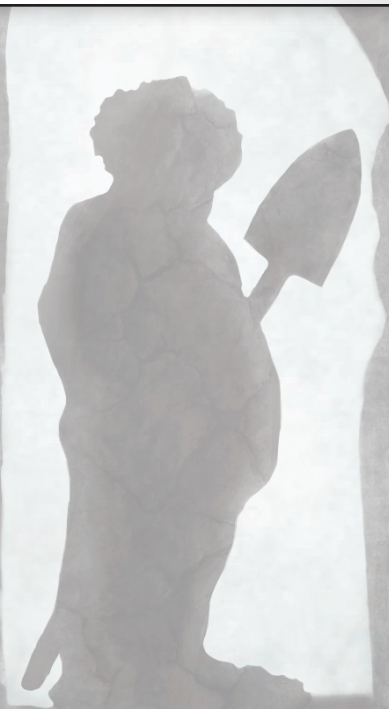


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An *Instant Action* 0-level Funnel Adventure  
by Mark Bishop



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# Nebin Pendlebrook's Perilous Pantry

## Danger Under Bitterweed Barrow

### Introduction

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The sleepy little village of *Bitterweed Barrow* harbors an ancient secret. Beneath the placid farms and the quaint town square runs a dark and mysterious labyrinth; a network of tunnels forged in another dimension by a twisted wizard named *Moldark Zeroth*. The town's portly halfling—*Nebin Pendlebrook*—uncovered a doorway into this hidden place while burrowing into the hillside to enlarge his food pantry before the coming winter, soon after vanishing into the inky darkness without trace. The local constable investigated the matter and now he is missing too! The folks of Bitterweed Barrow have grown fearful of what might have been unleashed upon their village and in desperation have gathered to form a search party. Their task? To find their neighbors and uncover the mystery that lies beyond Nebin Pendlebrook's unexpectedly perilous pantry!

This 0-level funnel adventure is intended to be run in one short action-packed session with 16 to 24 0-level characters divided equally among the players. Along the way, players will encounter creative and mysterious environments, foreign and dangerous creatures and an opportunity to forge an origin story for their future wizards, warriors, clerics, and thieves.

### Background and Overview

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Nebin Pendlebrook is a rotund and jolly halfling who lives on the outskirts of Bitterweed Barrow. His home is a simple dwelling burrowed into the west-facing hill. A week ago while digging further into the hillside to enlarge his food pantry before winter, Nebin's shovel unearthed a tunnel that descended downward into cool, shadowy gloom. With his curiosity defeating common sense, Nebin stepped into the dark to investigate, and never returned. Three days passed before anyone in the village noticed his absence, and another morning went by before the village constable entered the breach to search for the halfling. While the rest of the village waited in mounting dread, three days slid by in agonizing silence. With no sign of the



constable, it appears something terrible waits in the dark below Nebin Pendlebrook's formerly cozy home.

The local residents have gathered together at ***The Bloody Bullfrog Tavern*** to discuss the matter and to form a search party. There are no seasoned adventurers in Bitterweed Barrow, only hardy folk who work and toil each day to eek out a meager existence in a harsh borderland environment. Most have lived their entire lives in the village, never venturing more than a few miles from the modest dwellings where they were born.

They survive the harsh winters by bartering their goods and services, and some have never earned or even needed a coin. The forests and farms of Bitterweed Barrow have held little mystery for them... until now. They do not know it, but this may be the last day of toiling that many of these simple villagers will ever know. But for those who survive, the adventure that begins in Nebin Pendlebrook's pantry will change their lives and fortunes forever.



## **Player Introduction**

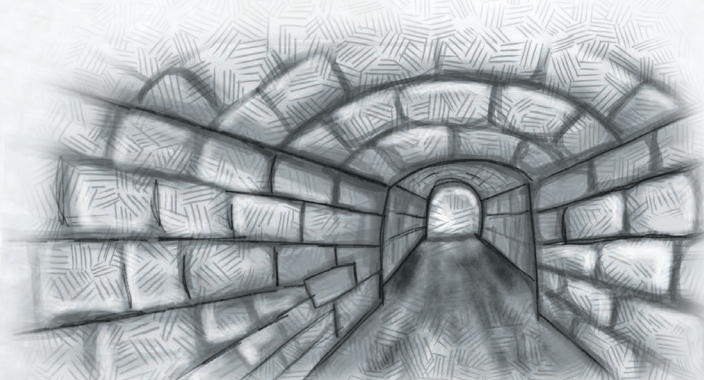
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(Read after character creation but before the players have spent their coin...)

*The tiny village of Bitterweed Barrow sits on the edge of Ebon Wood, against the Barrier Hills. It is the only home that any of you have ever known. You are not adventurers, rather apple-pickers and shoe-cobblers; blacksmiths and poultry-farmers who form the backbone of this secluded borderland village.*

*Just last week, one of your neighbors –a portly halfling by the name of Nebin Pendlebrook– was digging into the side of the hill to enlarge his food pantry before the coming winter when his shovel unearthed a long-buried tunnel. No one even knew that the halfling had discovered the mysterious passageway until he was finally noticed missing three days later. Kelvran, the local constable, investigated the matter, and with lantern in hand descended downward into the tunnel to bring Nebin Pendlebrook back. Three more days have passed, and neither man has returned from his descent into the darkness.*

*So here you are, gathered together at the Bloody Bullfrog Tavern in your work aprons and muddy boots, holding shovels and sheep-shearing knives, to form a makeshift search party. Nebin Pendlebrook's hillside home is no more than a ten-minute walk from here. Should you anticipate needing any sundry items for the task, this would be the most opportune time to acquire them from the Tavern's stores, providing you can gather a few copper coins for the purchase. After that, you and your fellow citizens should tighten your belts, hold your makeshift weapon's close, and make the short journey to meet whatever fate awaits at Nebin Pendlebrook's hillside home.*



# Gathering Information

The Perilous Pantry is an *Instant Action Adventure* designed to be completed in a single session of danger-filled derring-do. If that's what you're looking for, proceed directly to page nine! (For additional tips about running the adventure in a tight time window, see **Appendix B: Moving Things Along** and **Appendix C: Judging Tips**.)

But if time is not an issue at your table—such as it might be at a gaming convention or game store event—then your players may wish to spend a little time conversing with the village's other patrons at The Bloody Bullfrog Tavern. Conversation may reveal bits of useful information. Regardless, it will provide an opportunity for players to role-play their new characters and meet their fellow adventurers. These activities can be combined with shopping for supplies at the tavern.

## **People and Places of Bitterweed Barrow**

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**The Bloody Bullfrog Tavern:** The inn and tavern was built nearly fifty years ago by the great-grandfather of the current owner (Solomon Gruth) who swore that on the day he broke ground for the foundation he witnessed a miracle: with the first spade of upturned earth, the sky turned dark and then—incredibly—it began to rain frogs upon the land where Solomon stood; the large amphibians bursting on impact in geysers of blood for a full minute! He knew then and there only one name could suit his tavern. Village lore, conversely, only remembers that old Solomon was deep in his cups that day.

**Solomon Gruth III:** Third in a line of Gruth men to own and run the Bloody Bullfrog Tavern, Solomon, along with his wife (**Sarah**) and daughter (**September**) serve an evening meal for those villagers who can afford such niceties. Although travelers seldom traverse the crooked path to Bitterweed Barrow, once every few weeks a merchant might pass through bearing finer fabrics and spices than the locals usually see. When this happens Solomon offers a meal and the spare room at the back of the tavern for a silver piece. Solomon is lean and lank, standing a little over six feet tall, fifty-ish with tufts of gray hair sprouting around each ear. Otherwise he is completely bald. He usually wears an apron and fancies himself a fine dancer. In the evenings, he will indulge this talent whenever his daughter picks up the fiddle.



**September Gruth:** The Gruth's twenty-two year old daughter, named for the month she was born, cooks meals, serves drinks, and cleans rooms at the tavern. She is slender like her father, with flowing brown hair. After the dishes are done for the evening, locals relax with a pint and listen around the crackling fireplace as she plays the fiddle. It was September who alerted the constable when Nebin failed to answer his door when she made her regular grocery delivery.

**Constable Kelvran Stockton:** A retired soldier, Kelvran returned to his birthplace in Bitterweed Barrow with a noticeable limp, favoring his right leg. Thirty-ish with a mop of unruly brown hair, Kelvran is the only law enforcement presence in the village. Tasked three days ago with finding the missing halfling, he too has come up missing.

**Nebin Pendlebrook:** Looked upon favorably by all of the villagers, this short and round halfling prides himself on good manners and a cheery disposition. His hair is as black as coal; his nose a fat and wide anchor upon which thick glasses rest. Nebin is nearly blind without his spectacles and is rarely seen without them. Recently, he purchased a fine top hat from a traveling merchant who regaled Nebin with fanciful stories of the bigger cities, filling his head with notions of wonderment concerning all that life outside the barrow might hold. And so of late, Nebin wore the hat everywhere and jabbered about perhaps one day taking a trip. It would be out of character indeed for the halfling to leave without saying goodbye, however.

## **Rumors and Scuttlebutt**

If the players have taken the time to speak with the locals, each should select one of their characters to roll a d10 to uncover a piece of random information from the table below.

### **D10 Rumors:**

1. "They say that he disappeared down a hole and has yet to return. I think he found a hidden mine and that he's keeping a great treasure to himself!"
2. "I've never known Mr. Pendlebrook to miss a meal, not that he couldn't stand to lose a few pounds. But the poor fellow can hardly see without his glasses... he just doesn't seem the exploring type."

3. "Ever since that peddler came through and filled his head with fanciful thoughts of high society life, he's not been the same... him and that silly hat! I wouldn't be surprised to learn he just up and left us."

4. "I've been by there in the wee hours and I've seen the light from inside and I heard the digging. He's up to something. It's time his secret was revealed."

5. "I don't know if it's a coincidence or not, but ever since he came up missing, my garden has been overrun by frogs. I suppose that sounds silly... but it's true!"

6. "What a fine fellow he was! Or is... it's sad to think something might have happened to the little bloke. If you are going to search for him, please take him these biscuits... he's sure to be starving." (Receive three wrapped biscuits.)

7. "I heard my father say that this land was somehow cursed and that one day we would all know it to be true. First Nebin... then the constable... I wonder if this is leading to something much, much worse for us all?"

8. "I'm afraid I lack the courage to investigate the matter. I can't imagine Nebin, half-blind as he is, plunging himself into a deep hole either. I feel the cold eyes of Death himself looking over our shoulders!"

9. "He did tell me of a tunnel he had unearthed, that sometimes, late at night, he heard whispers from the tunnel's darkness. I knew that his curiosity would get the better of him. He should not have gone in alone."

10. "Speak of this to no one... The halfling came to me in a dream. I swear it to be true! His face was pale and his eyes were empty but he sat upon a great treasure, singing and laughing. He was happy and sad, all at the same time..."





# Into the Perilous Pantry

## Encounter Table

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Area	Type	Encounter
1-1	C	Piranha Salamanders
1-2	C	Toad-Spiders
1-3	T	Wizard's Chasm
1-5	C/T	Two-headed Hounds/Demon Fountains
1-6	T	Mirror Closet
1-7	C	Sentient Pudding
1-9	C	Giant Cave Grub
1-10	C/T	Skeletal Dwarves and Tortoise Nebin Pendlebrook/Door Trap
1-11	T	Prison Cell Block Drop
1-12	C	Stone Behemoth/Chest Mimic/Wizard

**Luck Mechanic:** Be sure to remind new players that they may burn luck to affect active attack and skill rolls. (DCC Rulebook, Page 95.) The burning of Luck points early on in the adventure could make some encounters easier to overcome, but low Luck scores could very well put the adventurer in greater peril later on in the story, so the players should be encouraged to be judicious!

## Areas of the Map

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When the characters have assembled their party, purchased their provisions and gathered at Nebin Pendlebrook's home, read or paraphrase the following:

**Area 1-1, Nebin's home:** *The day's work is done and you have all gathered to form a search party in front of Nebin's home. The orange twilight casts a soft glow upon the hand-carved walnut door set into the hillside. No light is burning from within. Nebin dug his pantry inside the walls of his home so that he would not have to walk in the frigid snows of winter; within, you will need to go.*

The door is unlocked. If anyone wishes to listen before entering, a successful DC 10 Listen check overhears skittering noises from inside. By peeking through the windows, characters can detect shadowy, indiscernible movements.



# NEBIN PENDLEBROOK'S PERILOUS PANTRY





The first person through the door (or window) is greeted by a wave of skittering yellow salamanders pouring over their feet and limbs! The salamanders have blood-red eyes but under normal circumstances will not attack, instead quickly dispersing into the tall grasses and rocks of Nebin's lawn. If, however, someone happens to be holding any food (or small pets) in their hands, the tasty tidbits will attract the ravenous lizards, and the treat-bearer will discover that the starving salamanders possess rows of razor-sharp teeth. The character(s) must make a DC 8 Reflex save (to quickly discard the food or pet) or suffer 1d4 damage from a piranha-like attack: being viscously nibbled by thousands of tiny gnashing teeth. Unlucky characters in the front rank coming through the door—whose occupations provided a small animal—will see that creature devoured alive before their eyes.

Once inside, the party is greeted by a home obviously overrun by hundreds of starving piranha salamanders. Anything even remotely edible was devoured long ago. On the far wall leans a shovel resting near a large hole dug deeper into the hill. A **new torch** and **50' of rope** sit upon a small chair. A rough pathway is just visible beyond the mouth of the hole descending into darkness.

**Area 1-2, Lair of the Toad Spiders:** *The tunnel before you slopes downward into cool and silent darkness. The walls are rough-hewn rock but the footpath appears to be smooth, well-worn and covered in a thick layer of dust. There are two sets of footprints in the dust, both leading downward; neither lead back up.*

If the party continues into the opening, ask them about their light source and who is holding it, and then read the following:

*The tunnel descends for nearly fifty feet before it opens into a taller and wider chamber. Stalactites hang from the ceiling above while stalagmites force a meandering path around the chamber floor. One set of footprints lead to the opposite wall of the chamber where they end abruptly. The other set simply stops in the middle of the cavern where the disturbed dust hints at some sort of scuffle. A small, shiny object glints in the dirt nearby.*

The darkness above conceals two large, rubbery-skinned **toad-spiders** that will wait for the room to fill before they drop upon the two adventurers with the lowest Luck scores. Since they fear fire, anyone holding a torch is automatically exempted from the attack. The

toad-spiders will drop, envelop their prey in gooey strands of sinewy web (DC 16 Reflex save to avoid) and then quickly ascend with a character in their clutches back toward the ceiling, making no further attack until their next turn in the initiative order. On the next round their bound prey will suffer an acidic bite from the toad-spider's dagger-sized fangs. If a toad-spider is killed, it falls from the ceiling. Its captive has a 50% chance of falling with it, otherwise remaining suspended in the sinewy strands of thick webbing (DC 12 Strength check to escape). If the character and the spider should both fall, have the character roll under their Luck to see if their landing is cushioned by the dead spider, otherwise the fall and spider's weight causes 1d6 damage. Characters (trapped or otherwise) near the ceiling notice a small ledge if they look for it. If a character on the ground has no ranged weapon, there are ample angular rocks to throw at the spiders (Agility mod as the attack bonus; 1d4 damage). Ranged attacks into melee rules apply (DCC rulebook, page 96).

**Toad-spiders (2+2):** Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4 + acid); AC 12; HP 12; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP acid (DC 6 Fort save or additional 1d3 damage); SV Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +0 AL N. *(A gangly, eight-legged creature with sickly green skin like an open festering wound, but with the bulbous head of a toad.)*



There are three “cocoons” hanging amidst the moist webbing, near the ceiling (30' in height). Inside one of them is the decaying half-eaten body of Kelvan the constable. The other two bodies are dried husks

from an age past, their intestines long sucked out. If the characters manage to hack the cocoons down, they discover amongst the corpses a **hand axe**, a **rusty dagger**, a human-sized set of **padded armor**, and a pouch containing **14 copper pieces**. The shiny object on the floor in the middle of the room is a **set of eye-glasses**. The characters recognize the glasses as Nebin Pendlebrook's.

The hidden ledge holds the skeletal remains of an aged explorer, clutching a **fine dagger** in his withered hand. Turning out his pockets



reveals a **glass eyeball**, **7 gold coins**, and a small **kit of thieves' tools**. However, taking time to loot the body exposes the party to additional danger. Once the body is looted, two more spiders will emerge from the dark recesses of the ledge and attack in 1d3 rounds!

Where the second set of footprints ends at the wall of the chamber, characters examining the thick webs covering the wall notice they are subtly "breathing". Behind the layers of sticky strands another tunnel continues on into the dark, its floor covered in more dusty footprints.

**Area 1-3, Wizard's Chasm:** *Again the tunnel winds downward, growing narrower as it descends. The walls and pathway are cold and damp, turning the dust to slime. From ahead you hear the flutter of a thousand wings. Suddenly, you are engulfed in a cloud of screeching, fluttering bats! As you attempt to fight off the bats, you find yourselves slipping forward on the path's steep slick surface of mud and loose gravel!*

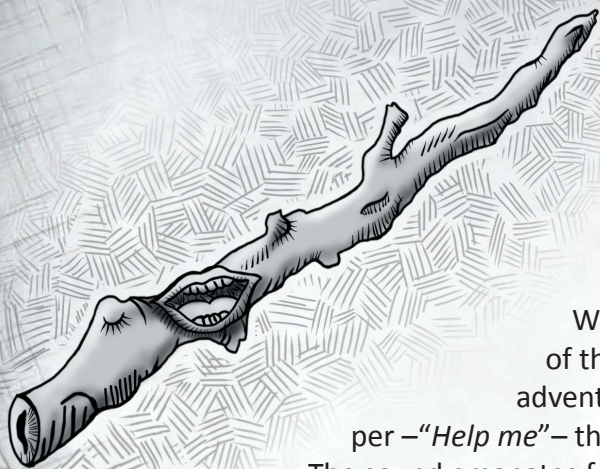
This steep footpath ends at a gaping chasm. All on the path must succeed on a DC 6 Reflex save or tumble and slide into the chasm. All who slide over the edge may attempt a final DC 10 Luck check to grab the edge of the crevice or the nearby tree bridge. Failure results in falling 30 feet into the dark crevice and a likely grisly death, with characters suffering 3d6 falling damage.

(If the party is struggling to this point, or is low on numbers, consider exempting the back half of the party from needing to make saves (or lower the DC to 4) as they have additional time to catch themselves.)

Once the party has righted themselves at the chasm's edge, read or paraphrase the following:

*The footsteps in the slime lead to a mossy, rotten tree that crosses the 20' chasm. The tree was obviously placed here as a rough bridge, as the gulf seems too wide to jump, but that was clearly long ago. Outcroppings of rocks jut out from the far side, and you can barely discern—a door?—set into the far wall.*

Unencumbered, it takes a DC 18 Agility check to make the miraculous jump. Crossing the 20' chasm via the rotten bridge is simple, as long as the characters proceed one at a time, and avoid attempting to cross bearing inordinate weight. As the last person crosses, there is a 50% chance that the tree bridge finally gives way. That character must



make a DC 8 Reflex save or plummet to the bottom with the old log unless secured by rope or some other manner.

While standing near the edge of the chasm on either side, the adventurers will hear a faint whisper – “*Help me*” – that rises from the dark depths.

The sound emanates from a speaking branch ensorcelled by a **magic mouth** spell. It has been whispering for ages. Near the branch lies the broken body of a long-dead man in wizardly robes. Should someone investigate the body, the man’s leather carrying bag contains various spell casting components such as raven’s feet, brittle frog husks and the skin of a snake, rolled like a parchment and tied with a ribbon. If someone unwinds the parchment, the runes inscribed upon it will begin to glow. A DC 12 Intelligence check grants the user the ability to cast **magic missile** (DCC rulebook, page 144) 1d4 times before the power is spent. (*Spell check: 1d16. Roll upon the manifestation table in the spell’s description to see how the spell manifests.*) The speaking branch is not a wand (merely a stick) and will continue to whisper its plea wherever it may go (the judge should remember this if the carrier of the whispering stick tries to make any sort of stealth check later).

A small tunnel, nearly hidden in the dark of the chasm, leads to the east. It is barely more than a crawl space, but humans can struggle through with minimal effort.

If characters cross the chasm by using the log or by jumping its width, on the far side they notice footprints in the muck leading up to the door to **Area 1-5**. If tested, the door is unlocked.

**Area 1-4, The Secret Tunnel:** *Not far from the old wizard’s crumpled and rotted body you spy an opening in the side of the chasm wall. It is a dark tunnel, much smaller than the one you just traversed. You would have to crawl single-file to navigate it, but it appears to be sound and dry.*



This tunnel leads to the secret room in **Area 1-7b**. As the crawl space is navigated, a slight draft pulls any torch flames slightly forward. At times the tunnel becomes extremely cramped, but if the adventurers push on, they will arrive at an overhead grate without incident. A DC 12 Strength check is required to lift the wrought-iron grate and push it to the side. There is only room for a single character to make an attempt at a time. The small room above is dark.

**Area 1-5, The Wellspring:** *The weathered door is dry-rotted but sturdy. It swings open on rusty hinges revealing an open chamber of smooth marble walls and ornate tile floors covered in dust. In the center of the room, a circular column of water, six feet in diameter, rises from a well in the floor. It stands perfectly placid and still, defying gravity as it reaches all the way from floor to ceiling where it disappears into another hole above.*

If the party ventures further into the room with a light source, read or paraphrase the following: *There is a door on each of the four walls. Numerous scattered bones lie close to the door on the eastern wall. In the far northeastern corner a fountain protrudes from the wall in the misshapen form of a vaguely humanoid tree. It is carved of stone, and in its open cupped hands drops of condensation have formed a tiny pool. In the southeastern corner a small demon face juts from the wall. Its lower pool contains an equal amount of collected water.*

The room is approximately 40'x50'. The doors on each of the four walls are of similar construction: thick wood with wrought-iron metalwork. A DC 12 Intelligence check reveals the workmanship of the doors and room's masonry to be of dwarven craft. A dwarven character recognizes this automatically.

If the adventurers examine the footprints in the dust, they appear to have entered the room from the western door, proceeding first to the tree fountain. A DC 14 Intelligence check is required to deduce what path the footsteps followed from there: from the fountain to the northern door (which appears to have been opened, but not entered), then to the southern door (which appears to have remained shut) and finally to the door upon the eastern wall which appears to have been opened and passed through.





The column of water that defies gravity in the center of the room reaches from the floor to the ceiling, twenty feet straight up. If the characters touch the water, their hands will pass through the surface with no ill effect other than becoming wet. If the party tarries in the room for an extended period, they may notice a bucket dropped into the top of the water column from above. They will recognize it as the bucket used at the well in the village common area. It will quickly be filled and drawn back up. The characters can swim in the column of water but should they swim downward, they reach no bottom, only deepening darkness. Those swimming to the top of the column of water find themselves floating at the bottom of the village well. It is likely late evening, and, if so, no one hears their calls.



The tree-shaped forest sprite fountain contains one sip of water which magically bestows *1d4 temporary hp* to the first explorer of Lawful or Neutral alignment to drink from it. These hp will be the first subtracted from any hp loss. If a Chaotic character drinks, their true nature will be revealed for all to see as two small purple horns suddenly emerge from the top of their head! The horns gradually subside over the course of a week. (*You sip the cool waters and suddenly you hear the distant laughter and singing of faerie-folk.*)

Ancient script is inscribed above the forest sprite fountain. A DC 12 Intelligence check reveals the inscription to be a prayer to the goddess of nature, Ildavir. If the prayer is whispered in sincerity, a small stone medallion previously undetectable as part of the engraved tree will begin to glow. If detached from the wall it can act as a holy symbol, granting the owner the ability to **turn unholy** (DCC rulebook, page 96) in Ildavir's name three times. (*Spell check: 1d20*).

If the single available sip in the demon-face fountain is imbibed by a Lawful character, it will inflict *1d4 poison damage 1d4 rounds* after drinking. A Neutral character will be overwhelmed by an irrational fear of dark and confined places (!) and will avoid any action for *1d3 rounds*. A Chaotic character will gain *1d4 temporary hp*, but in *1d3 rounds* will make an unprovoked attack against the nearest creature, friend or foe. (*As you taste the tepid water, the demon's stone face briefly contorts into a smile.*)

As characters approach the eastern door, the scattered bones begin to rattle and coalesce into the forms of three skeletal guard dogs, each with two heads! The bone creatures will lunge at the nearest characters, attacking relentlessly until destroyed.

**Two-headed Skeleton Hounds (3):** Init +2; Atk bite -1 melee (1d4); AC 12; HP 4; MV 25'; Act 2d20; SP Makes two attacks (one from each head) on same target; un-dead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort -1; Ref +2; Will +0; AL C. (*Cobbled together by ancient magic, their bleached bones are inscribed with glowing runes and glyphs.*)



**Area 1-6, Mirror Closet:** *The door is unlocked and opens outward into the chamber. Beyond is a small closet containing a mirror that runs from floor to ceiling; nothing else is present in the small enclosure. The mirror is covered in a thick layer of dust, so obscured you can barely see your own movements in its dim reflection.*

If a character wipes the dust from the mirror, they will clearly see a circlet of ethereal green glyphs and symbols rotating around the column of water, but only in the reflection in the mirror. The symbols are not visible in the actual room. The mirror is in fact an interplanar portal that leads to another realm, placed here long ago by the deceased wizard found at the bottom of the chasm (*See sidebar: **The Realm Beyond the Mirror***). If the mirror is broken for whatever reason, the nearest adventurer to it must make a DC 14 Will save or be sucked into it as it repairs itself and reassembles. Anyone trapped inside the mirror may explore the room in the “mirror universe”, where they will

## The Realm Beyond The Mirror

The Mirror Portal hints to the adventurers that there are things at work in this underground labyrinth far beyond their previous comprehensions. The strange creatures... the gravity defying well... the broken wizard... all are artifacts of the foreign realm linked by this portal.

Four centuries ago, the mad wizard **Moldark Zelroth** grew very powerful in arcane knowledge. His insatiable lust for power eventually led him to enslave an entire dwarven mining community. He commanded them to create the elaborate underground lair of his dreams. A century into the construction, the dwarves uncovered the portal between their world and ours. Even the mad wizard Moldark Zelroth feared the dangers of beings from two dimensions traveling back and forth between the two realms unfettered. He spent years in dedicated research before constructing and placing the gate at the threshold, cloaking the portal in the illusion of a simple mirror, a barrier of the mind as well as a tangible force. Perhaps this is why small creatures such as baby toad spiders and piranha salamanders unknowingly skitter back and forth between the two worlds uninhibited and free. But to any creature with reasoning power, the locked gate is a formidable barrier requiring great concentration and knowledge to cross.



confront the same Skeleton Hounds and other challenges as in the original labyrinth. Once a character crosses into the other plane, however, they cannot re-enter this plane from here, and will need to find their way home through further adventure!

The armory and secret room in **Area 1-7** can be approached from either **Area 1-5** or **Area 1-4**. If the party approaches from **Area 1-5**, they find the door locked (DC 12 Intelligence check to jimmy the lock, DC 10 with lock-picks; DC 12 Strength check to smash). If they approach the room via the tunnel from **Area 1-4**, they must enter through the heavy metal drainage grate (DC 12 Strength check to lift and move).



**Area 1-7a, Armory:** If the party arrives via **Area 1-5**, read or paraphrase the following:

*The creaky wooden door jingles slightly, opening into a small room with two tables. The room is lined with stone alcoves and appears to have been an armory once, long ago. It stands mostly empty now, with thick dust upon the floor and shelves, but a few dust-covered items peek out of the gloom. As you enter, a few familiar skittering salamanders scamper across the walls and into the crevices of the stone walls where some of the large stones appear to be crumbling or loose.*

The armory room is cramped, only 10'x10' square. On the tables and shelves, the characters find **two rusty short swords** in sheaths, a **batleaxe** with a dwarven face carved into the hilt, a **longbow**, a **quiver with 4 arrows** and a **rusty grappling hook** (50% chance it breaks on each use). There are also **two suits of rusty chain mail** fitted for a dwarf. Because of their age and disrepair, they will only offer a +2 bonus to AC. Closely examining the loose stones in the wall reveals that one large stone can be easily shifted, uncovering a short passageway to a hidden chamber beyond. If a character crawls through the 2'x2' crawl space, they discover the tiny chamber.



**Area 1-7b, Secret Chamber:** If the party arrives from the Wizard's Chasm tunnel (**Area 1-4**) read or paraphrase the following:

*A tiny chamber waits beyond the drainage grate. Even standing shoulder to shoulder, you can only squeeze four—maybe five—of your party into the room at a time. A small stone alter stands in the middle of the tiny room. Atop it rests a peculiar artifact: a massive four-fingered hand affixed to the end of an oaken branch.*

The hidden chamber is only 5' square and 6' tall. The item on the pedestal is a 3' long **heavy club** with a severed troll hand attached to the end. (1d6 damage. On a critical hit the troll fingers snap shut delivering an additional 1d4 claw damage, but the entire hand will detach from the shaft.)

As the party enters the chamber they disturb and awaken a **sentient pudding**. It takes the first opportunity to creep up the leg of the character with the lowest Luck score in the room when the club is lifted from the pedestal. If the pudding is subjected to a fire-based attack, it will flee into the tunnel, attacking the nearest adventurer as it retreats. While in the tiny confines of this room, the pudding can only be attacked by party-members actually in the chamber.

The crawl space leading to the armory is easily detected. It requires a DC 10 Strength check to push the stone aside and gain access to the armory.





**Sentient Pudding:** Init (last after a surprise round); Atk acidic creep +2 melee (1d4); AC 10; HP 8; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from slicing and piercing weapons; double damage from fire-based attacks; SV Fort +0; Ref +2; Will -4; AL N. (*A mass of orange-brown mucous that quivers and creeps as it grafts itself to your skin.*)

The key that unlocks the door in **Area 1-5** leading to the hallway (and **Area 1-10**) hangs on the back of the armory door. Without this key, the door can alternately be smashed with a DC 12 Strength check or jimmied open with a DC 12 Intelligence check. Whoever opens the door will notice their hand is now coated with drying blood from the door handle. Though they cannot know for certain, it is indeed the blood of Nebin Pendlebrook.

**Area 1-10, Dwarven Sanctum Hallway:** *Beyond the doorway a set of stairs rises upward, ending in a crossing hallway running north and south. When the party proceeds: The passageway that leads to the north turns to the east about 30' from your location. A flicker of light dances from some source around the bend, beyond your sight. To the south, the hallway reaches another set of stairs that descend downward into darkness. Just before you at the junction, a black top hat lies on its side in the dust.*

The top hat is Nebin Pendlebrook's. Close inspection reveals a spatter of blood upon the rim. Should the adventurers search for more foot-steps, they easily discover dozens, marching north and south. A DC 14 Intelligence check reveals that something has also been dragged down the hallway that leads to the north.

**Going North:** The northern passageway leads directly to the Great Dwarven Hall (**Area 1-10**), a once festive and lively dinner hall for the dwarven miners. As the adventurers approach the northern-most bend in the passageway, they hear the faint sound of snoring. If they reach the doorway into the hall, read the description for **Area 1-10** The Great Dwarven Hall.

**Going South:** The southern hallway leads to a set of steps descending into darkness. Unless the adventurers have infravision, they require a light source to navigate the staircase by more than feel. The stairs end at another closed door (unlocked). Behind the door waits a long-abandoned kitchen, once used to prepare food for the miners. If the adventurers open the kitchen door, read or paraphrase the following:

**Area 1-8, The Dwarven Cookery:** *The door creaks open on rusty hinges, brushing back cobwebs spun thick across the jamb; many years have passed since last the door was opened. Inside, it is dark and the faintest aroma of old cheese wafts from the room. Though obviously long abandoned, it appears the chamber once served as a kitchen. Two preparing tables dominate the room, and an old stone hearth sits cold in the northern corner. Dozens of small shapes dangle from the ceiling wrapped in webs.*

The kitchen is covered in a thick layer of undisturbed dust, with no sign of footprints. The tables sit empty; the cupboards bare. A **wheel of cheese** peeks from a tattered and dilapidated burlap sack, hanging in the center of the room from an iron spike hammered into a ceiling joist. A horde of large blue spiders have spun elaborate webs near the joists that run alongside the hanging cheese, using it as irresistible and perpetual bait for mice and rats. Hundreds of tiny rodent bones picked clean by the spiders are still trapped in the webbing. Though the blue spiders are large and numerous, they pose no real threat; retreating into the shadows and crevices when approached. The cheese wheel, should it be procured, is dwarven made and cured to perfection using techniques lost to time. Dwarves and PCs with culinary occupations (cheese maker, baker, etc.) will recognize it could bring a handsome price of 25 gold pieces from knowledgeable merchants. Any aristocratic or noble dwarf would pay even more!

A small, wide door is fitted into the eastern wall, by its size clearly meant for none but dwarven-kind. It leads to the pantry/sleeping quarters for the cook's crew.

**Area 1-9, The Dwarven Pantry:** *This side room appears to have been an extension of the kitchen—a pantry perhaps—with a few beds, sized for a dwarven staff scattered about. In addition to the door you just entered, another door exits through the northern wall. It seems an earthquake or some other cataclysmic event has nearly sucked the room back into the bowels of the earth. The ceiling joists are broken and large stones have fallen through. The floor tiles are cracked and the loose earth has been pushed up. Beds and tables are overturned.*

As players make their way across this room to the northern door, dust and pebbles fall from the broken beams in the ceiling. And though players may guess a cave-in is the room's greatest threat, they would



be wrong: a large cave grub has made this area of the labyrinth its home, and is easily summoned by any noise or vibration. Characters must succeed on a DC 8 Agility check to quietly navigate the beams and rubble. A failed check will alert the grub to that character's presence, spurring a surprise round attack. After determining who is in the room, read or paraphrase the following:

*Your boot catches a beam and a handful of pebbles and stones fall from the ceiling to the floor. As you hold your breath, the floor beneath you begins to rumble and quake. Suddenly a large alabaster-skinned grub-like creature pushes through the earth, as big around as the trunk of a tree! It arches its head like a snake, its open maw revealing row after row of finger-sized yellow teeth!*

**Judges Prerogative:** At this point in the adventure, the judge may use their discretion as to whether the worm gets a surprise attack or if everyone rolls for initiative first. If the party has so far circumvented most of the encounters with little loss and you wish to offer them a true challenge, a surprise attack before rolling initiative is in order. If on the other hand, the party has suffered many losses at the hands of fickle die rolls or poor decisions, it might be appropriate to roll initiative first and let the heroes have a chance to draw first blood.

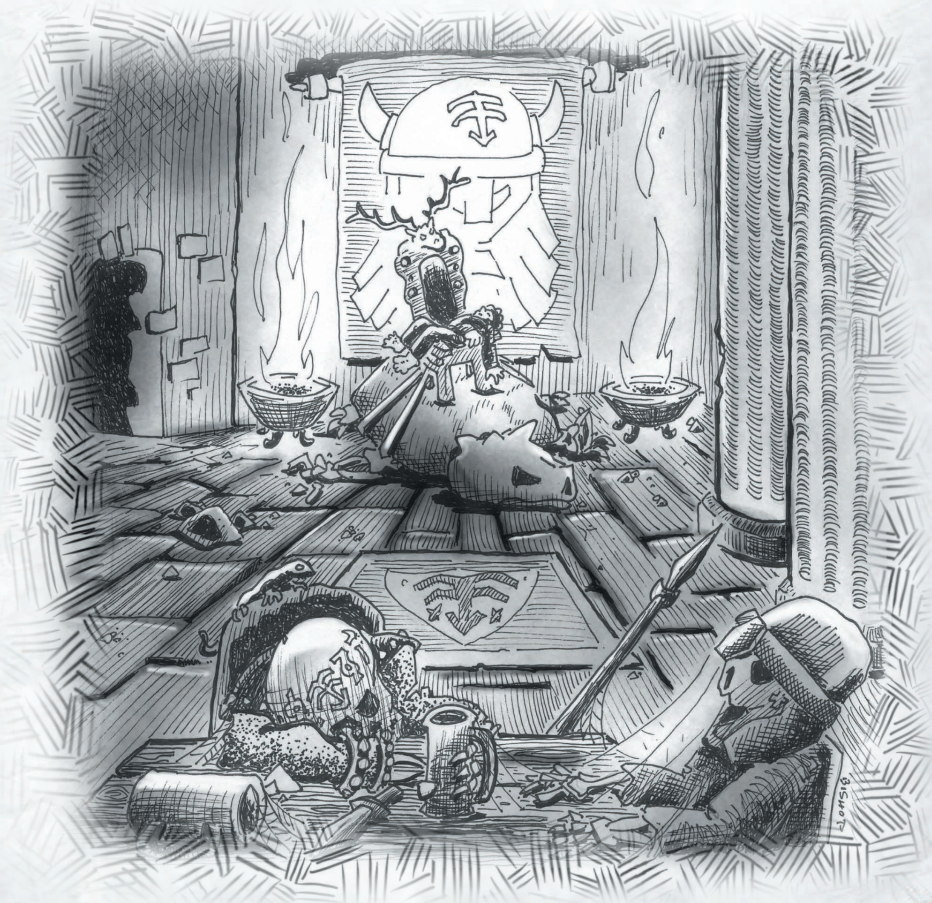
**Giant Cave Grub:** Init +0; Atk +3 melee (1d4 + swallow); AC 10; HP 20; MV 40' (burrow); Act 1d20; SP The worm waits beneath the ground to erupt and swallow any unlucky victim on a hit in a surprise round. Swallowed characters take 1d4 dmg, and an additional 1d4 damage every round they are inside. The character can escape with a DC 14 Agility check on their round. The grub is large enough to hold two characters at a time in its innards, retreating to the depths with its prizes when full. Trapped characters have one final round to escape before being lost forever as the grub vanishes into the earth; SV Fort +3; Ref +0; Will+0; AL N.





There is nothing of value in this room, only a few broken beds and dry-rotted mattresses. The door on the northern wall leads to a set of ascending stairs. When climbed, a crack of flickering light shines from beneath the closed door ahead. It is unlocked and leads to **Area 1-10**, the Great Dwarven Hall.

**Area 1-10, The Great Dwarven Hall:** *Flickering light shines from two large braziers burning at the northern end of a great hall. This is the largest chamber you have so far encountered in the underground labyrinth, its ceiling rising some 30 feet above! The light from the braziers cause shadow and light to dance across tall marble pillars lining the eastern wall. In the middle of the room dining tables are attended by the skeletal remains of long-dead miners slumped over dusty tankards and plates. Between the two burning braziers stands a peculiar throne: a tall wooden chair with the head of a great stag carved*





*ornately into the top. The chair appears to be strapped to the large bleached hull of a skeletal tortoise. Atop the throne, a smallish figure lies crossways with legs and head resting on the arms of the chair. The figure appears to be snoring.*

The room is a 40'x60' rectangle and is well-appointed compared to the other rooms of the labyrinth. Tapestries upon the walls bear the regal crests of long-dead dwarven lineages. Carpets adorn the stone floors. A gigantic chandelier made of numerous deer antlers hangs in the middle of the room above the tables and the dwarven skeletons. The chandelier's securing rope runs along the ceiling and down the middle of the western wall where it is spooled around a wooden securing pin. The figure sleeping in the chair is Nebin Pendlebrook. When the characters enter the room, Nebin will not awaken until someone fails a DC 12 Agility check. Even then, he will greet the characters with a cheerful recognition. After a stretch and a yawn, he will say:

*"My greatest wish... if such a thing could be wished for... is that my rescue party might have brought biscuits and jam for their long-lost halfling friend!"*

Nebin will spin around to sit more properly upon the throne. In this new light, the characters will see that Nebin has suffered a great bloody wound to the side of his face. His jacket and pants are stained with dried blood. His features are pale; his eyes sunken and blood-shot. His mood betrays none of these things as he speaks to the party from atop the modest throne in a jubilant tone.

*"No need to skulk about in the shadows my friends! Come and see your friend as you have never seen him before!"*

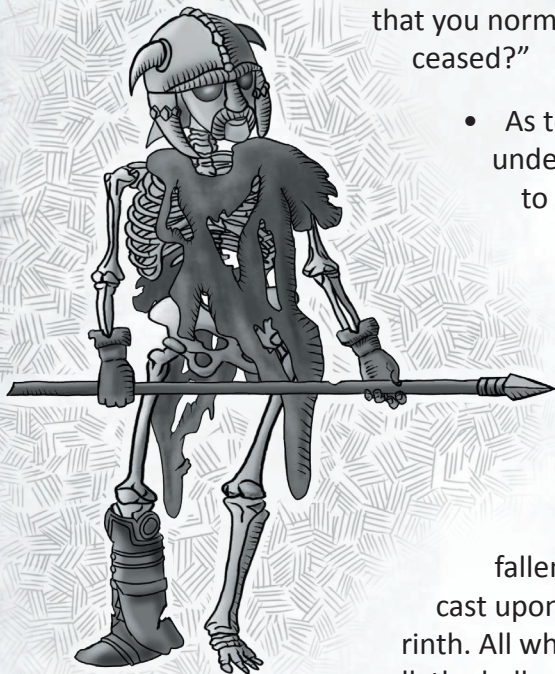
## **Roleplaying Nebin Pendlebrook**

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If the characters have not yet deduced that Nebin has joined the ranks of the undead, it will probably be revealed as you—the judge—role-play the following interaction. No doubt the players will have many questions, and to answer them, you need to know the following:

- Nebin did explore the caverns alone, and after an altercation with the skeletal hounds, was discovered on the second day by the dwarves (listed below). Of course, without his glasses and in the dim light, he could not see the dwarves for what they were.

- Nebin knows that something has changed but he will not quibble with the party about being “dead”, “un-dead” or any such “foolishness!” His retorts will be along the lines of: “You say that your friend is dead... I say that I stand before you, walking and talking. Are these qualities that you normally associate with the deceased?”



- As to why he is here, Nebin only understands he feels compelled to stay. And that he possesses an overwhelming desire to “guard the great treasures of the most magnificent wizard who ever lived” (he will point to the door on the eastern wall as he says this).

In truth, Nebin in death has fallen victim to a powerful spell cast upon the entire Dwarven labyrinth. All who die here are compelled to walk the halls and stand as guardians for all eternity. If questioned what treasures are being guarded, he replies cryptically: “Some treasures are even greater than gold and silver!”

Nebin will eventually grow tired of conversation and under no circumstance can he be persuaded to leave. (If he is kidnapped and taken outside of the labyrinth, he will truly die as a result of the curse.) When the halfling decides to end the conversation, he becomes agitated, suddenly standing in the chair and raising his arms. As he does, the turtle he stands upon will also rise and lift its head. At the tables in the great hall, the **skeletal dwarven soldiers** will also begin to animate and face the party.

*“The time for words has passed. How can you not see the great gift of immortality that stands before you? What has been bestowed upon me shall now be bestowed upon you! It is a gift! You will thank me for it, I can assure you!”*



The skeletal dwarves will begin to advance upon the characters, each brandishing a spear. Their bones appear to be cobbled together much like the guardian hounds earlier. Roll initiative, with the dwarves all acting on the same initiative. Roll initiative for the giant skeletal turtle as well. Nebin will act on the turtle's initiative so long as he rides astride its back. He has no ranged attack (without his glasses and cursed with bad vision even in un-death!) so unless he is engaged with a melee attack, he will mostly only bark commands. If he leaves the back of the skeletal tortoise for any reason, move his turn in the initiative order directly behind the tortoise.

Nebin, throughout the contest, will implore the characters to... "give in to your destiny! We are chosen to perform a great task!"

*(See the Sidebar: **The Wizard's War** to learn more about the curse that controls Nebin so completely.)*

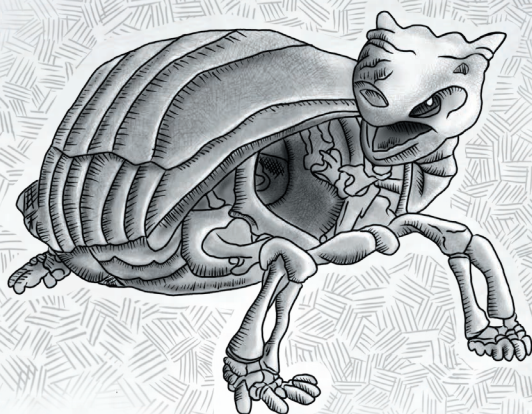
Should the party attempt to lure the skeletons beneath the chandelier, do not deprive them of the joy of dropping it! If a character is standing by the western wall where the rope is secured, it only takes an action to cut it or loosen it. If a character is not within reach of the securing rope, and finds some other creative way to sever the rope (an arrow shot, thrown dagger, etc...), a ranged attack against AC 14 is required. Upon a success, roll a d6 to see how many dwarves are under the massive chandelier when it falls. Each dwarf must succeed on a DC 16 Reflex save to dodge or suffer 2d10 damage.

**Skeletal Dwarves (6):** Init +1; Atk spear +2 melee (1d6); AC 11; HP 8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2; Ref +1; Will +2; AL C. Each skeleton wears leather armor and carries a spear. *(Like the guardian hounds earlier, these dwarves appear to be cobbled together by a mish-mash of parts; arms for legs, heads turned upside-down, and skulls inscribed with glowing glyphs.)*

**Nebin Pendlebrook:** Init +2; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4); AC 11; HP 4; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1; Ref +2; Will +0; AL N.

**Large Skeletal Tortoise:** Init +0; Atk bite (\*and tail slap if flanked) +3 melee; Dmg 1d6; AC 13; HP 14; MV 20'; Act (\*2)d20; SV Fort +3; Ref +0; Will +0; AL C.

Again, regardless of the outcome of the encounter, Nebin will not leave the sanctum of his own volition. If he survives and is conscious, Nebin will reveal the eastern door beyond the pillars as the place where the “great treasure” is stored. The door is locked and Nebin will claim that it is



forbidden for the guardians to enter, lest they provoke the anger of “the master”. Dwarven script is etched into a small indentation in the stone wall next to the door. Beneath these cryptic runes hang three distinctly **decorated keys** on three pegs (See **Handout A-1** at the end of the adventure).

Only one key will open the door. The other two spring traps. A dwarf in the party (or others who can read dwarven) can decipher the runes as a riddle, anyone else will need to succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence check to recognize the runes as such. The inscription reads: *A wee little man with a red, red coat... a staff in my hand, a stone in my throat... guess who I am to avoid death's bloat.*

The key designed with the cherry motif is the correct choice. If either of the wrong keys are used (or if the door is battered), traps will trigger. (These traps are beyond the abilities of low level characters to detect or disarm.) The first incorrect choice causes the stone floor to give way: any adventurer within 5' of the door will fall into a 20' deep spiked pit (DC 10 Reflex save or take 3d6 damage).

If players then jury rig access to the door using tables, etc, and a second incorrect key is used, a large stone falls from the ceiling onto the 5' area in front of the door, compacting everything in its path down into the spiked pit! (DC 12 Reflex save or take 3d10 crushing damage).



## The Wizards' War

The adventurers and Nebin Pendlebrook are now entangled in the swirling eldritch eddies of an ancient quarrel between two powerful wizards from another realm. As it is in this realm, magic in that other place is also a dangerous and foolhardy art, and arcane knowledge is sought with the utmost respect and trepidation. Such was the rivalry between **Varooth Moss** and **Moldark Zelroth** however, that each seized upon dangerous strategies to gain superiority over the other.

As sometimes happens among those who derive their magic from a mystical being of immense power, Varooth Moss fell out of favor with his patron **Bobugubilz**, and in his weakness was subdued by his nemesis Moldark Zelroth. Fearing that Bobugubilz might someday forgive Varooth and search for his once-devoted follower, Moldark whisked the rival wizard away to this realm in an effort to better hide his prisoner. The ruse worked: Varooth Moss remains encased in a magical block of ice, guarded by a Stone Behemoth in this very catacomb, seemingly locked away forever. (*Described in **Area 1-12: The Inner Sanctum.***)

As magnificent as Moldark Zelroth had become, in his old age he was still subject to the simple laws of gravity. One day long ago, while surveying his spectacular underground network, alone and isolated from everyone and everything, he tripped and fell into a deep chasm. Trapped with multiple broken bones and punctured organs, he could only muster a simple cantrip to try and stave off a lonely death. With his final faltering breaths he cast one last spell upon a nearby branch, commanding it to call for help when his own voice had gone silent. Unfortunately, no one heard the quiet cries and the great wizard perished alone in the dark.

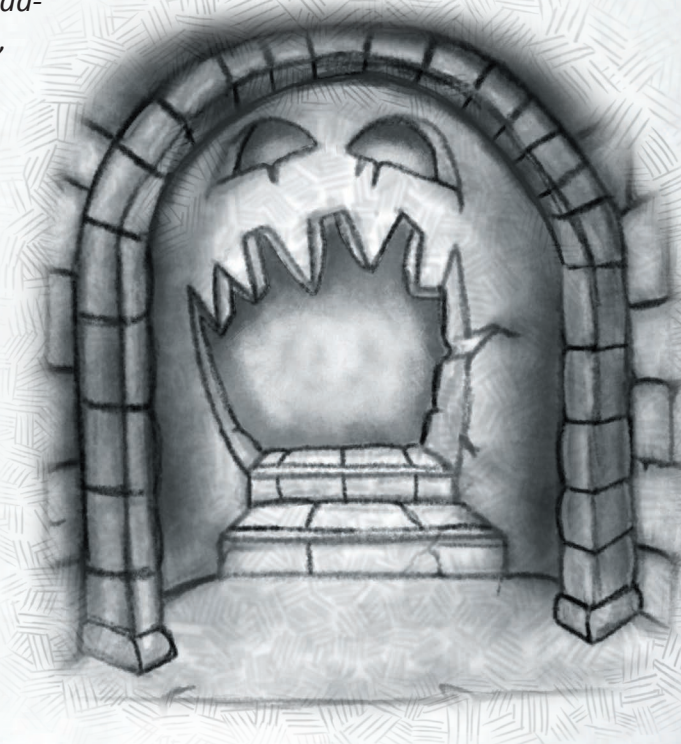
Though the evil wizard Moldark Zelroth is gone, all that he conjured and built remains, feeding off the energy coursing between realms. Great magics is still at work in the dark places beneath the village of Bitterweed Barrow and it was only a matter of time before someone like Nebin Pendlebrook would accidentally unearth it! (*See **Appendix A: The Second Death** for ways to use Moldark's legacy and curse to spice things up as character deaths begin to pile up!*)

**Area 1-11, Ascension of Great Sorrow:** *Beyond the door a hallway leads to a set of ascending stone steps. Wall-mounted sconces flicker with a sickly greenish light, casting an unearthly pall. As you climb the stairs and look around at the grizzled faces of your comrades, they appear as they would in death: pale, gaunt, drawn and staring with sunken eyes filled with despair. Is the effect a twisted illusion or merely an artifact*

*of the flickering shadows? As you climb, you come upon four small holding cells hewn into the rock walls on your right, each protected by a door of iron bars. Suddenly prisoners appear from the shadows behind each set of bars, pleading for freedom!*

There is no key to be found for the cells; a DC 12 Intelligence check is required to jimmy any lock; a DC 16 Strength check will smash an iron bar, but at a cost: on any attempt to smash the bars (or any failed attempt to force a lock) a large stone in the ceiling of the targeted cell will fall and flatten the inmate with a sickeningly bloody thud. A very heavy **iron rod**, 2" in diameter and 6' in length leans against the wall opposite the cells. It is so heavy that it requires a DC 14 Strength check to lift! Clever players may use the rod to prop up the stone ceiling of a cell where future lock picks or smash attempts are made.

If the players succeed in freeing any of the prisoners, and need to reinforce their numbers for the final confrontation, kindly judges might allow them to create characters for each prisoner, or supply them with pre-gen characters representing the freed slaves. If their num-





bers are so decimated that they need more than one prisoner per cell to replenish their force, simply add more prisoners so that each player has at least two for the final confrontation.

The prisoners can only vaguely recall waking up in this long-forsaken dungeon. To them, it seemed only yesterday, and perhaps in this realm it might have been, but in the place beyond the portal from whence they came, much more time has passed. The prisoners were all faithful apprentices and devotees of a once great wizard named Varooth Moss, captured and imprisoned by his nemesis Moldark Zelroth long ago (*See Sidebar: **The Wizard's War***). By some strange magic, they have been imprisoned here for over a hundred years. Should they be questioned about the wizards, they will gladly impart any knowledge they possess for the chance at freedom.

### **Some things the prisoners might remember**

- Varooth Moss was a devotee of the amphibian lord Bobugbubilz until he began to understand the true depth of the demon lord's chaotic nature. His attempt to break his pact with his master triggered great disfavor.
- A rival wizard named Moldark Zeroth took advantage of Varooth Moss' weakened state to defeat him and his followers.
- They fear that Varooth Moss has been killed by Moldark and that they will suffer the same fate.

After the prisoners have been freed and the party is ready to proceed, read or paraphrase the following:

*The stairs continue to climb upward until they reach an opening in a large stone wall. As you draw near, it becomes clear the doorway at the top of the stairs has been carved to mimic the gaping maw of some large grotesque beast! The only way to pass is through the enormous stone teeth. A flickering warm light from inside the chamber illuminates the hewn-out eyes and upper jaw of the contorted demon face, giving it the fey illusion of life. It seems to call you forward...*

**Area 1-12, Moldark Zelroth's Inner Sanctum:** *As you enter beneath the jagged archway, you find yourselves in a cavernous room; larger even than the great hall of the dwarves, with 30' ceilings. The rock walls are tinted putrescent purple, etched everywhere with*

*strange symbols and hieroglyphs in bright yellow chalk. The markings reach from wall to wall and floor to ceiling.*

*A torch is affixed to each of the four walls. In the center of the room a 6'x6' square block of ice sits inside a runic circle inscribed upon the floor. Empty torch holders flank each of the four sides of the block.*



When the party enters the room, read or paraphrase the following:

*Near the back of the room, large boulders appear to have fallen from the ceiling and now rest in a pile of rubble. Amidst the fallen stones, you spot a wooden chest with copper hinges. As your eyes return to the block of ice, you notice that a figure seems to be trapped deep within, frozen in some defensive position. Closer inspection reveals it to be a man garbed in regal dress, and though his hands appear to be human, his head is grotesquely frog-like. You're almost certain that the creature's bulbous eyes are following you.*

The wizard Varooth Moss is trapped inside the ice, and is aware of any visitor's presence. If the characters seem hesitant to free him he will use a cantrip to communicate with them, manipulating a small rock to scratch phrases on the floor at their feet. Phrases include "long forgotten in this place" and "free me for great fortune". The choice to free the wizard is up to the adventurers. Regardless, after a few moments, the pile of stones behind the block of ice, triggered by the wizard's use of magic, will reanimate and coalesce into a massive stone guardian intent on ridding the chamber of living creatures. The enormous stone behemoth has been commanded to stand guard over



the entombed wizard, and the spell holds true despite the fact that his summoner has long since perished. Once animated, it will not halt its rampage until either it or the adventurers are vanquished. (To add insult to injury, the broken chest is a sinister mimic that bites when approached. It contains no treasure.)

*The heavy stones from the pile of rubble begin to rumble and coalesce, rising up to form a towering guardian whose head nearly touches the thirty-foot ceiling! As the massive creature turns to face you, another message is hastily scratched upon the floor; "Free me or perish!"*

In its rampage, the stone behemoth will smash into the ceiling the first round, and again at the beginning of each round (apart from his turn in the initiative.) Parts of the chamber ceiling and earth will fall with each collision, revealing cracks of daylight above. This will also temporarily seal the doorway from which the party entered. Have the players roll under their Luck to avoid being targeted by falling rubble. PC's failing their Luck roll must succeed on a DC 8 Reflex save to avoid 1d10 crushing damage. If the characters are taking massive losses, you could choose to have the stone behemoth use its turn in the initiative order to clumsily slap torches from the holders that the characters might have placed in order to free the wizard (see below).

**Freeing the Wizard:** Varooth Moss can be partially freed (enough to be of some aid) by placing the wall torches in the empty holders surrounding the ice and reading the incantation written in the runic circle (**DC 13 Intelligence check**). Taking a torch from the wall and placing it in a holder counts as one action (a move action), the check to read the incantation counts as one action as well. When all the torches are placed and the incantation has been read, the ice will melt enough to free the wizard's wand hand in 1d3 rounds. He will immediately drop the wand, and in the dust the word "*flame*" will be scrawled. Anyone in possession of the **Flame Wand** can attempt to cast a pre-loaded **flaming hands** spell (DCC Rulebook, Page 142. Spell check: d20). On subsequent rounds the wizard can fire off **magic missile** spells.

**Stone Behemoth:** Init +4; Atk slam +5 melee (1d10); AC 14; HP 30; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +5; Ref +4; Will -2; AL N. (*Formed stones that occasionally resemble a gigantic humanoid form. Attacks against it result in pulses of blue light at the point of contact, as though you are not attacking the stone, but the magic that binds it.*)

**Chest Mimic:** Init +0; Atk bite +1 melee; Dmg 1d4; AC 8; HP 6; MV 5'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1; Ref +0; Will +0; AL N. (*By all appearances, a normal chest, until it is approached. Only then does it reveal a set of razor-sharp teeth.*)

**Varooth Moss (2nd level Wizard):**

Init+0; Atk dagger +1 melee (Dmg 1d4) or spell +1 (*Magic Missile* pg 144; *Dispel Magic* pg 208); AC 12; HP 8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +4; AL N

**Role-playing Varooth Moss**

After the battle, if Varooth Moss is freed he will thank the adventurers for releasing him. In his weakened state, he is no more powerful than a level 2 wizard. Judges will find the following information useful in the role-playing interaction.



- Though his head is that of a frog, Varooth still speaks the common tongue in a croaky lisp. He is eager to pass back through the portal (asking the adventurers for directions) to his own realm in order to beseech Bobugubilz for mercy.
- He has been counting the days since he was imprisoned by Moldark Zelroth (146 years, 7 months, 14 days, 22 hours). Amazingly, he was just *beginning* to think that Moldark had forgotten about him. Unless told by the characters, he is unaware that his captor is long dead.
- He has no interest in the treasures spread about Moldark's inner sanctum and is glad to see it distributed amongst his liberators. Varooth will implore the characters to keep the catacombs a secret as he ponders the implications of the portal between the two worlds.
- If Nebin has somehow survived to this point, when Varooth is freed the terrified Halfling suddenly clutches his chest and falls to his knees. Raising his gaze to the sky he screams: "I have failed you Mighty Moldark!" His eyes filling with confusion, the halfling tumbles forward into the rocks, never to rise again. Any dwarves left behind in the Great Hall crumble to dust.



## **Conclusion**

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If the party manages to defeat the Stone Behemoth, the following treasures are theirs for the taking spread throughout the rubble: **300 gold coins**, a polished **silver mirror** (20 sp), a fine **dwarven shield** of bronze and copper, set with **8 rubies** (worth 25gp each), a **silver mace** with the head of Ildavir as the hammer, a **mithril dagger** with a black onyx handle that contains a reservoir for poison, a **deed to a building and a map** to the location (future quest seed), and a **golden tankard** filled with **15 green emeralds**. (The tankard is worth 25gp, the emeralds 20gp each).

To offer some finality to your adventurer's journey, you may choose to read the following to your players, depending on the outcome.

### **If there are survivors**

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*The great stone creature has been defeated and the bright sunlight of morning peeks through the broken roof above. You believe you could easily climb the mountain of rubble to your freedom if the stones are approached with care. A few days past you would never have considered such a thing!*

*Somehow, from among all of the hardy souls that began this adventure, fate has chosen you to survive. As you climb into the morning sunlight in your tattered and bloody clothes, you realize that this experience has forever changed you from the simple peasant you were before. You'll tell your grandchildren one day of the friends you lost and of how you somehow survived the fantastic terrors that were waiting beneath Nebin Pendlebrook's Perilous Pantry!*

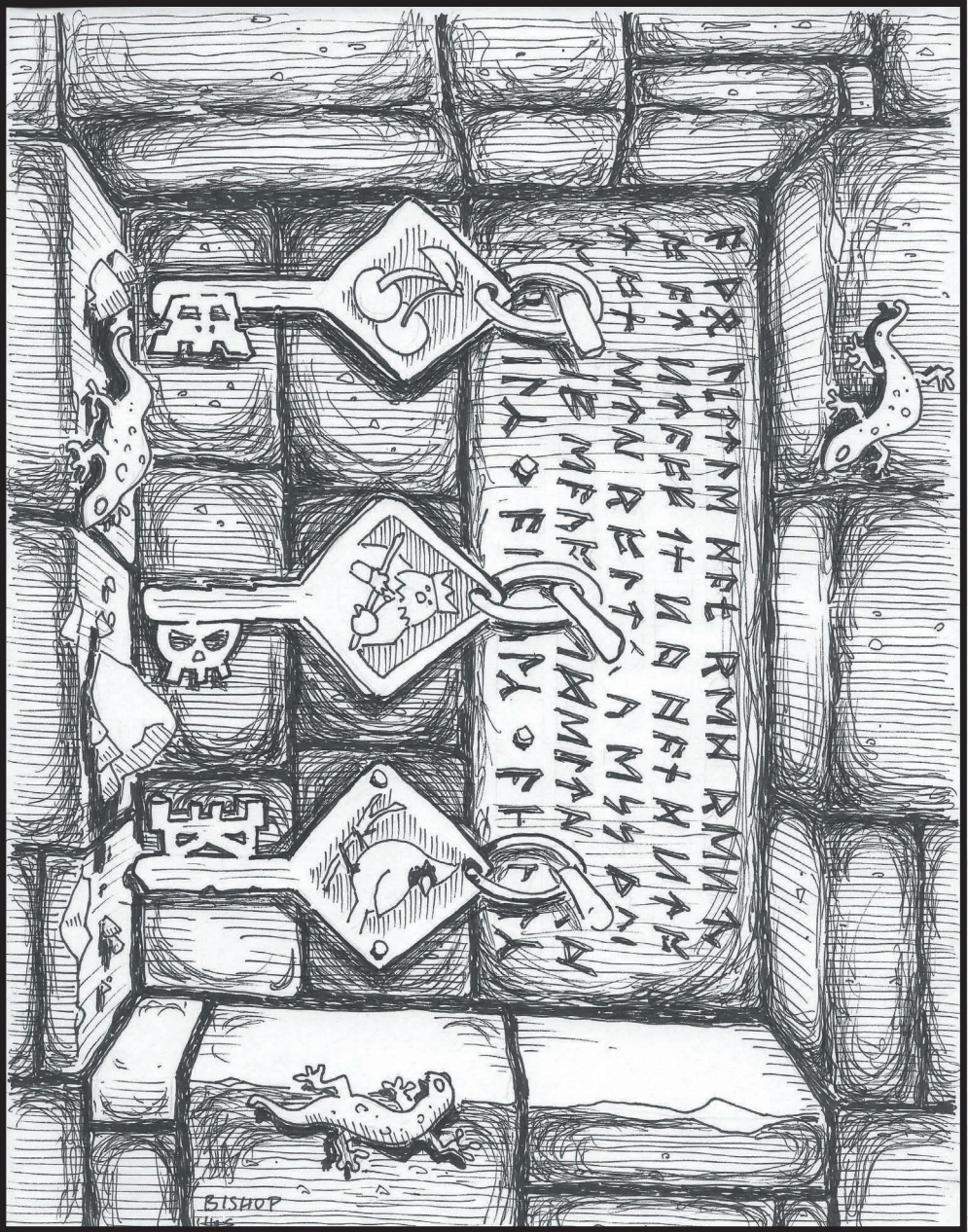
### **If there are no survivors**

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*As the last warrior falls, so too does the stone behemoth, returning to its natural state, nothing more than a pile of rubble amidst a great treasure—its task is now complete. If the grisly scene is discovered later, it will appear that the adventurers were caught in a cave-in and were smashed beneath the stone roof. Should any hardy souls venture further into the underground labyrinth, they may possibly hear whispers hissing from the darkened halls. "Welcome!" the whispers will say. "We have a great task ahead of us. Won't you join us?"*



# Handout A-1



(The separate printable appendix PDF contains every image included in the adventure, as well as the map, paper miniatures, and rough and ready battlemaps (with and without grids) for the entire labyrinth!)



## Appendix A: The 2nd Death

The nature of Moldark's curse means that *everything* that dies in the labyrinth eventually rises as a guardian. Of course, this includes player characters, which can create some interesting complications! Here are ways you can use the new un-dead to add spice to the adventure.

- If play begins to lag, and you feel the players are being a bit too deliberate in their approach, raise some fallen comrades to slowly begin closing in from behind to speed them along.
- In the case of a Total Party Kill (TPK) the fallen can be used to restock the dungeon with fresh foes for a new band of villagers to encounter on a second go at the dungeon.
- If the party is destroyed by the Stone Behemoth, the fallen adventurers can eventually rise and begin spilling out of the damaged Inner Sanctum to threaten the village. The curse will kill them before the sun rises, but an evening battle with a new band of village defenders could prove extremely exciting!
- Alternately, the curse is finally beginning to weaken. When the fallen adventurers rise, they retain a small measure of autonomy in un-death. A debris-covered stairwell in the inner sanctum leads down to a forgotten temple and further dangers! Allow the players to reform the party as a mob of un-dead, driven by a crazed desire to recover the bones of Moldark in the chasm, seeking some method in the dark ruins below to either barter or desecrate the wizard's remains to break the curse and regain their lives!
- Rather than succumbing to Moldark's curse if the party frees Varruth, Nebin rises again as a final expression of the curse's power, tasked with hunting down the survivors and punishing them for their acts of desecration! Over the course of further adventures, provide the players with subtle clues that *something* is following them, haunting their every move. Nebin uses the time stalking to slowly evolve into something far more deadly than the simple halfling the characters once knew!

## Appendix B: Moving Things Along

If you are running this adventure at a gaming convention or your local gaming store, you will most likely find yourself with certain time constraints. Here are some tips and observations that may be beneficial should you find the clock on the wall an adversary!

- The Perilous Pantry has been successfully run in a four-hour window, including character creation. Times *can* vary widely with playing styles. If your group tends toward extensive role-play, make sure that you leave plenty of time for the back half of the adventure where most role-playing interactions exist. Testing suggests you'll have plenty of time if you enter the Great Dwarven Hall with at least an hour and fifteen to an hour and thirty minutes still on the clock.
- If you need to trim some of the adventure (and most likely you will not be aware of this until you are at least halfway through the labyrinth), one easy area to discard is the dwarven kitchen and pantry. Add a simple cave-in on the hallway stairs and you'll save valuable time with no detriment to the main story line.
- Dwarven Kamikaze! To expedite the engagement in the Great Dwarven Hall, have the skeletal dwarves be the ones to drop the chandelier on themselves and every other adventurer who engages them beneath it! What do they care? They're dead to begin with!
- More characters per player equals more time to play them. If the players don't need the reinforcements from the prison cells, make the prisoners frail, gaunt and unable to contribute.
- Varooth Moss collapses unconscious when freed from the block of ice! Yes, it postpones an opportunity for role-play interaction at the end of this session, but now the characters have an unconscious wizard of unknown power lying at their feet. Is he cruel? Is he kind? Can he be held for ransom? Can his organs be harvested for the black market? Will we get warts if we touch him? This option of ending the game saves time when there is no time left, and it gives your players a great cliff-hanger that will leave them wanting more. No doubt they will have fantastic ideas about what to do with an unconscious wizard with the head of a frog!



## Appendix C: Judging Tips

We've tried to include tips throughout the text of Nebin Pendlebrook's *Perilous Pantry* to help judges new to *Dungeon Crawl Classics* run their first funnel adventure. But there's no getting around the fact that the need for creative, seat-of-your-pants judging is baked into the very DNA of DCC! Funnel adventures are often wild and unpredictable, but that's a major reason why they're so fun! Stay on your toes, keep things moving, and realize that adapting to the crazy things your players do will often create the most memorable gaming moments!

Keep the following in mind as you prepare to run the adventure:

- This adventure respects your initiative. If you think an encounter is too easy, increase the challenge! Too difficult? Just drop the number of foes. If a particular enemy doesn't fit in your campaign, replace them with a logical substitute with the same stats. Always bend the text to your vision!
- Demo and convention style play creates different challenges than running the adventure as part of your regular campaign. In particular, players tend to burn enormous amounts of luck early and often, as they don't need to worry about the long-term consequences. Using low luck scores as a targeting mechanism is an effective way to right the balance. There are many examples of the technique in Nebin Pendlebrook's *Perilous Pantry*, but feel free to find additional ways to reinforce the message if your players are going a bit overboard.
- With so many characters, it's important to keep things moving. If the pace seems to have bogged down, don't be afraid to edit descriptions down and limit rolls that affect the whole party to a subset of characters. (Another way that luck can come into play...)
- DCC isn't all that concerned with strict balance, but the encounters as written assume the party is being slowly whittled down to about two characters for each player (8-10 total) before the final confrontation. Adjusting the strength of the encounter in the *Dwarven Hall* is a convenient place to refine the party size: beef it up if the party is having too easy a time, or ease off if the party is facing extinction. (Assuming, of course, that you're not gunning for multiple

TPK's that have players attacking the labyrinth in waves. Some groups love that style of play!)

- That being said, the strength of the party will have a huge impact on the final challenge with the Stone Behemoth. If your group has managed to come through relatively unscathed, their combined attacks have a good chance of dropping the Behemoth in short order. Much of the fun and challenge of the encounter comes from the falling stones imperiling the party over multiple rounds, so it might be a good idea to increase the Behemoth's hits to provide the proper challenge for a large, strong party.

## **Author's Note**

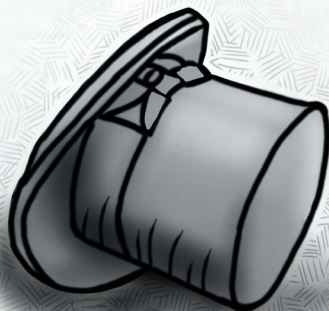
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*As a devotee of our beloved DCC RPG (Does that make Joseph Goodman my patron? Does he know Bobugubilz?!), I take great pleasure in introducing new players to the system. I have been privileged to run the very module you are holding at a few public play-tests, mostly at local gaming cons and at our local FLGS and nothing makes me happier than seeing a young person's mind blown when they realize what old-school gaming is all about.*

*In this strange little adventure, I wanted the player to enjoy all of the tropes that drew me to table-top gaming so many years ago. There are strange creatures galore and chances for heroes to act heroic. There are traps and puzzles, and—when the dust settles at the end—a nice little story about a zombie halfling will have been told by the Judge and the players.*

*Thanks Jon for invaluable aid and for all who helped playtest to make this adventure the best it could be, my thanks to you also. Ok... enough talk. It's time to break out the pencils and the dice. Let's see what makes this pantry so freakin' perilous.*

*Mark Bishop*





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**A 0-Level Dungeon Crawl Classics Adventure**

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