

PAL6-04

Tooth and Nail

A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK[®] Theocracy of the Pale Regional Adventure

Version 1.0

by Jason Clark

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A mysterious Cult, an incurable curse, and the unspoken threat of a troll invasion snake out from the Fens like malignant tentacles. What constitutes a credible menace to those in power, however, is too often ignored until the coils constrict. In the shadows of more eminent intrigues, darker evils have begun to coalesce. This outdoor-based, search-and-destroy mission is part two of *The Necessary Goddess*, begun in PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper*, and is recommended for tenacious heroes. A one-round Theocracy of the Pale Regional adventure for characters level 2-12 (APLs 4-10).

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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Players Read No Farther

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

Preparing for Play

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D rule books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*.

Throughout this adventure, text in ***bold italics*** provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain

important information for you, including special instruction on running the adventure. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in Appendix 1. For your convenience, that appendix is split by APL.

Along with this adventure you'll find a RPGA Session Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play. You'll also find a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure Record (AR).

LIVING GREYHAWK Levels of Play

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportionate to the modified average character level of the PCs participating in the adventure. To determine this modified Average Party Level (APL) follow the steps below:

1. Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts) or the warhorse of a character with the Mounted Combat feat, use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum of step one. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.

Mundane Animals' Effect on APL	# of Animals			
	1	2	3	4
1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
CR of Animal	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4
	3	3	4	5
	4	4	6	7
	5	5	7	8
	6	6	8	9
	7	7	9	10

- Sum the results of step 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round up to the nearest whole number.
- If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC can gain at the end of the adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that character receives only one-half of the experience points and gold for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Furthermore, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure.

LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1st-level characters may find the challenge of an APL 2 adventure difficult. Suggest the following to these groups to help increase their chances of success:

- Enlist a sixth player.
- Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them and fight for them.

Time Units and Upkeep

This is a standard one-round regional adventure, set in the Theocracy of the Pale. Characters from the Pale pay one (1) Time Unit per round, while all other characters pay two (2) Time Units per round.

Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12 gp per Time Unit. Rich Upkeep costs 50 gp per Time Unit. Luxury Upkeep costs 100 gp per Time Unit. Characters that fail to pay at least Standard Upkeep will retain temporary ability damage until the next adventure, must buy new spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may suffer other in-game penalties (or possibly gain in-game benefits) as may be detailed in this adventure.

A character that does not pay for at least Standard Upkeep may also avoid the above-described penalties by living off the wild. If the character possesses four or more ranks in the Survival skill and succeeds at a DC 20 Survival check, the character will heal temporary ability damage as if he or she paid for Standard Upkeep, may refill spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may restock up to 20 arrows or bolts if the character has at least four ranks in Craft (bowmaking). The player is allowed to Take 10 on this roll.

More information about Lifestyle and Upkeep can be found in the "Lifestyle and Upkeep" section of Chapter 3 of the *Living Greyhawk Campaign Sourcebook*.

Pale Holy Day

Some player characters may wish to give or attend services in-game on Pholtan holy days. For adventures set in the Theocracy of the Pale, a member of the Church of the One True Path may ask the judge at the beginning of an Adventure to determine how many days it is until the next Pholtan Holy day. This is accomplished by rolling a d8, rerolling if the result is 8. If a 7 is rolled, the first day of the adventure is a Pholtan Holy Day. Otherwise, the die result indicates the number of days until the next Pholtan Holy Day. Due to the special nature of the Theocracy of the Pale, on Holy Days, Judges are encouraged (but not required) to work-in a brief scene involving Pholtan worship, possibly including a brief 1-2 minute sermon by a PC if his or her level is at least fifth level and the judge believes that there is time available.

Special Rules for the Pale

See DM Aid 1: Special Rules for the Pale.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are owed to Craig Petrovich, Bill Kirchner, and George Rowland for their selfless assistance with resources necessary to help complete this scenario.

Adventure Background

A thousand and more years ago, a cult of Demogorgon, Demon Prince of the Abyss, arose in the northern lands of what would become the Great Kingdom. Even during the centuries of Aerdy rule it has survived, albeit in hiding. Lately, someone has engaged several agents of the demon lord to scour these lands, which they still regard as their own, for a lost artifact of terrible power. One group of cultists, degenerate descendants of the original Flan tribes of the Northern provinces, is based deep within the Troll Fens. At their shrine they perform loathsome breeding experiments with trolls and other swamp denizens, creating truly bizarre forms of life to further glorify their patron. From this pit of evil, several servants have been plucked to search the Pale for the missing item.

Aodhan, a necromantic half-troll priest of the Fens Cult, was assigned to search the central Rakers. Seeking help from one who knew the land, he seduced an aspirant druid named Bran Mac Colm with promises of power and revenge, playing on the man's low self-image and jealousy of his older brother, Taran. Bran willingly underwent the suicidal Ritual of Crucimigration and traded life for undeath. He was particularly drawn to an area of the mountains long shunned as a haunted place of fell spirits. Around the same time, a lucky miner discovered gold in those same mountains. The resulting "gold fever" was a fortunate break for the cultists. Aodhan quickly realized that greedy, defenseless miners would make superb (and plentiful) sacrifices to his dread lord Demogorgon. He and Bran began to kidnap and murder the hapless miners.

These disappearances eventually attracted the attention of local adventurers. While searching for missing gold miners in the hills east of Landrigard Prelacy during PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper*, adventurers unwittingly stumbled into a gruesome drama involving ritualistic human sacrifice, demonic influence and the existence of the mysterious cult. Slaying Bran and interfering with the Cult's machinations left one adventurer afflicted with a terrible curse (noted on the AR as the "Mark of Demogorgon" and detailed in Appendix 2). Upon returning to nearby Tobinsford with news of the miners, the curse-bearer was observed by a deep-cover Cult spy who, via a malign divinatory sight granted by the Cult's evil magic, quietly noted the hidden physical manifestations of the curse.

Through the gratitude and benevolence of Sir Andros of Tobinsford, inquiries and Divinations were made on behalf of the adventurers (the PCs) with regard to both Cult activity and a remedy for the curse. Andros's considerable influence met with limited success: in response to this, a new group of adventurers was assembled to undertake a mission (organized and financed by Sir Andros) that has led them deep into the Troll Fens, where the cultists were rumored to have a base. The curse-bearer accompanied this expedition in hopes that a cure could be found.

Such pointed inquiry into the Cult's activities, however subtle, could not go unnoticed for long: the Tobinsford spy used similar contacts within the Church of the One True Path to sabotage the expedition. Among three Pholtan loyalists chosen to lead the PCs to a Prelatal Army encampment just inside the Fens was another cultist, himself a dupe for the Cult's greater fiendish scheme, who led the PCs far off course and into a trap. Upon reaching the allegedly Pholtan encampment, both he and the PCs were viciously attacked by cultists who were expecting them and were well prepared for a fight. Thus, the PCs begin the adventure in combat. Within the camp is an injured prisoner, cruelly nailed to a ritualistic cross...

Cast of Characters

The Spy from Tobinsford (offscreen): the spy does not play a central role in this scenario and is having its identity withheld, pending revelation in a future chapter of this series.

Sir Andros of Tobinsford (offscreen): this well-loved knight, nearly fifty years old, is secretly one of the Lords of the Gloaming, an elite order of Pholtan paladins. He hails from an old, well-regarded family in the Tobinsford district of the Prelacy of Landrigard. As a Captain of the Pholtan Knights Valorous, Order of Luna, he led a detachment of knights westward to Furyondy in the Great Crusade against Iuz, returning home years later to a hero's welcome. Soon after, he was approached by the Lords, who sought a member with access to the secrets of the Order of Luna. After a journey to Matinsmore (the Lords' secret fortress) and several nights of prayer and meditation, Andros accepted their offer and took up a new war, scouring the northeastern Flanaess for fiends and their dark cults. The Lords of the Gloaming is not known to the general populace and should remain behind the scenes during this adventure.

Garble Pealwhisper Shinsnicker: this male gnome gemcutter accompanies the party as the curse-bearer only if no other PC bears the curse from PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper*.

The Cult Scout-spy: This imposter has replaced a Pholtan loyalist named Sterlys and led the party into a trap deep within the Fens. He will in turn be betrayed

by his Cult allies and killed during Encounter One to preserve the ruse of Cult cell leader H'nakaalah.

H'nakaalah (“**nah-KAH-lah**”): this insane Flan leader of the first Cult camp has devised an elaborate trap for the PCs based on information provided by the Tobinsford spy. H'nakaalah poses as a victim of the Cult and attempts to bluff PCs into journeying to the second Cult camp; in truth he is sending them into a second trap in case his lizardfolk cultists fail to slay the PCs during Encounter One.

Gumboots the crocodile: this sad creature, formerly the animal companion to a druid murdered by the Cult and tortured nearly to death by the half-troll, Aodhan, wanders the Fens, surviving as best he can. Due to his predilection for chuul eggs, he may unwittingly lead PCs to a treasure-filled lair during Encounter Three. Through a combination of Wild Empathy, expert animal handling and genuine compassion, PCs may befriend him.

Malerix Moorcol: the former leader of the Fens cult, now deceased as the result of a murderous coup staged by Aodhan and H'nakaalah, survives in a dramatically altered state, as a filthy but sentient leather sack with divinatory powers and intimate knowledge of the Cult's activities. His insatiable desire for revenge prompts him to probe the PCs' thoughts in search of a suitable host to help him carry out his retribution. In exchange for this, he offers insight into the Cult's operations and hierarchy.

Willow (the Swamp Witch): this evil green hag is a longtime Fens resident, poison-crafter and seer. She offers PCs her meager hospitality in gratitude for defeating the swamp denizens from Encounter Three or Four. Despite her nature, her dislike of the Cultists could make PCs second-guess their gut instincts and treat her as a risky (if temporary) ally, but her divinatory insight—in exchange for a small favor—could prove more valuable in the immediate future.

Aodhan (“**OW-dan**”) (**offscreen**): this half-troll necromantic priest and new leader of the Fens Cult has developed a strong resentment toward authority since his humiliating departure in PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper* at the hands of his quasit superior, where he was forced to abandon his creation and protégé, Bran Mac Colm. Serving in irate silence for months afterward under the flawless leadership of Malerix Moorcol, Aodhan finally snapped and, temporarily setting aside his differences with H'nakaalah, conspired with the Flan rogue to murder Malerix. With Malerix slain, Aodhan and H'nakaalah (in their last formal agreement on anything) agreed to abandon troll breeding for other pursuits; H'nakaalah prefers the company of lizardfolk, whom he finds easy to manipulate; Aodhan, on the other hand, has a more deep-seated psychosis. Because of this, he has become a megalomaniac and can tolerate only the most servile of minions or the mindless undead, among which he is more

comfortable and which he can easily control. To preserve his imagined rarity as a half-troll, he has destroyed the Breeding Pens. He has become quite fanatical and has splintered from the Cult's original purpose, taking most of his camp's inhabitants away from the Fens on a special mission, which is not covered in this scenario. The Cult's benefactor is not pleased and has begun separate negotiation for the lost artifact.

Adventure Summary

Map #1 shows the general layout of the encounters, including distances and relative locations.

Introduction: The PCs have unknowingly been betrayed by a Cult spy from Tobinsford and sent to their deaths in the Troll Fens. The scout-spy guiding them to an allegedly Pholtan camp (in truth a Cult camp) has also been betrayed by his comrades to make the double-bluff plan of the Cult cell leader (see below) appear genuine.

Encounter One: Lizardfolk cultists attack the PCs and their three escorts immediately but make a point of attacking the scout-spy with brutal abandon to drive the ruse home. The PCs should be a little bewildered here, allowing the cultists some tactical advantage. An apparent prisoner nailed to a cross (really cell leader H'nakaalah, also part of the ruse) may divide the party's attention and resources.

Encounter Two: The PCs attend to the “prisoner”, H'nakaalah, who pretends to be an innocent victim. His orders are to kill the PCs, which he attempts to accomplish via deception. Believing him sends the PCs to a deadly local swamp denizen (Encounter Three); PCs demonstrating overwhelming compassion for the defenseless “victim” may persuade him to accompany them (also Encounter Three); failing to deceive the PCs here forces him to try and sacrifice his life or flee, leaving them to find the second Cult camp on their own (Encounter Four).

Encounter Three: The PCs are fooled by the Cult cell leader in Encounter Two and sent on a false path toward the second Cult site. This leads them into the territory of a vicious swamp denizen that is avoided by all local inhabitants. A half-crazed crocodile may cross their path.

Encounter Four: The PCs confronted or killed the Cult cell leader in Encounter Two and must find their own way. Along the way an unforeseen swamp predator attacks the party.

Encounter Five: The PCs encounter the Swamp Witch, a noted Fens inhabitant, who offers healing and a place to spend the night in gratitude for dealing with the denizens in Encounter Three or Four. She also offers mystical insight into the Cult's activities,

including suggestions on how to remove the curse, and directions to the second camp if the PCs can perform a favor that tests their skills on several levels. She will not harm the PCs, but they may also choose to forego her company or attack her outright (a side encounter, Five-A, is provided for these contingencies).

Encounter Six: The PCs journey to the second Cult campsite, where they discover the abandoned troll-breeding pens and must then overcome natural obstacles to defeat Aodhan's acolyte cultists and hired mercenaries. The half-troll priest is conspicuously absent from the camp. Successful Intimidation of his defeated minions could provide invaluable insight into his clandestine schemes. Several caged and tortured prisoners await rescue here; also present are the nails necessary to help undo the curse, but when PCs approach the cross from which the nails project, the curse mutates.

Conclusion: The PCs may return to Griffwatch Castle or a nearby Pale city (Wintershiven or Rakervale being the closest) to report their success and turn in any prisoners. Foremost in the PCs' minds should be the nagging question of who betrayed their expedition and also what role the nails play in removing the curse. In part three of this series, each PC will be allowed to investigate the party's betrayal.

Preparation for Play

Read the Introduction to the players and allow them to introduce their characters to one another (especially if one has the curse) and to the three guides (and to Garble, if present); allow them to select spells as they would on a multi-day overland journey. The Introduction text and the backing of Sir Andros are intended to establish a false sense of security among the players; once they are ready, unveil the read-aloud text from Encounter One and have them roll Initiative. The ambush is designed to leave the PCs disoriented, wondering who possibly could have betrayed them.

The majority of this scenario takes place in the Troll Fens, where keen senses could mean the difference between life and death. To expedite combats, have each PC roll 3 (each) of the following skill checks: Listen, Spot, Move Silently and Hide.

Additionally, have them list their Sense Motive modifiers; to prevent awkward moments that negate any element of surprise (especially during Encounter Two), secretly roll 3-4 Sense Motive checks for each player. It is also advisable to roll 8-10 Bluff checks for cell leader H'nakaalah, preferably one for each listed falsehood and 3-4 in reserve for unexpected PC questions.

Finally, take note of PC alignments, as the NPC Malerix Moorcol will be scanning for a suitable CN or

N host during Encounter Three. Be prepared to slip a note to qualifying PCs when the time comes.

Remember that this scenario occurs during the so-called Troll Winter. While descriptive text has been included, you are encouraged to ad-lib relevant terrain and environment descriptions that heighten this experience for the players.

Suggested Timeline for a 4-Hour Slot

0000-0015: character introductions and setting the scene

0015-0045 (30 mins): Encounter One

0045-0115 (30 mins): Encounter Two

0115-0200 (45 mins): Encounter Three or Four

0200-0245 (45 mins): Encounter Five (or Five-A)

0245-0330 (45 mins): Encounter Six

0330-0400 (30 mins): Conclusion

A Word on Describing Evil Activities

Please be considerate toward your players' sensibilities when you run this scenario, especially if the players include children. Tone down or omit the more graphic descriptions of violence, gore, sacrifice, and sadomasochism. The Ritual of Crucimigration, which makes undead out of willing creatures (as described in *Libris Mortis*), may strike some players as a blasphemy of the crucifixion in Christian belief, but it is not intended as such.

Introduction

The PCs find themselves deep within the Troll Fens in the company of three guides (all human) provided by Sir Andros's contacts within the Church of the One True Path: Brother Lahnal, a priest of Pholtus; Terrick, a fighter loyal to the Theocracy; and Sterlys, a scout familiar with the Fens. Sterlys, however, is an impostor. The real Sterlys was murdered weeks ago and replaced by a cultist, based upon information provided by the Tobinsford spy. This false "Sterlys" is CN (does not radiate evil); the other two NPCs had never met him, so his ruse is not readily apparent. A capable tracker, he is leading the PCs into an ambush; his presence here is the final movement in a complex orchestration that began shortly after Sir Andros started making inquiries into Cult activities.

Since Sir Andros has financed their expedition, the PCs should believe that Sterlys is leading them to a Prelatal Army bivouac just inside the Fens; Terrick and Lahnal know that such a bivouac exists and is being used to gather intelligence about the Troll King's activities, but they do not know precisely where it is and thus trust Sterlys to lead the way. In truth, "Sterlys" is leading them to a Cult campsite where his

allies wait in ambush, having intricately prearranged this trap weeks ago, even down to the arrival time, allowing them ample preparation via spells.

(This camp is about thirty miles west of the sites featured in PAL5-07 *Troll Winter*, in case the players ask. Those who have played *Troll Winter* and/or succeed on a DC 15 Knowledge (local—Nyronnd and Her Environs) check can verify the existence of the bivouac as accurate.)

The PCs have been traveling due north on foot for three days from Griffwatch Castle. There have been no hostile encounters along the way, and indeed the only other beings the PCs have seen were a squad of Prelatal Army regulars en route to Castle Arndulant who eyed the party with some curiosity. The weather has been cold, overcast and oppressive since the PCs left the Castle; using Survival to predict the weather for the next few days indicates continued clouds and chill, and a few flurries but no big snows. Ask the players for a standard marching order and watch schedule, if any, along with any in-place spell effects upon their characters, then proceed with the following:

Sir Andros of Tobinsford does not disappoint: acting on information recently gathered by a group of daring adventurers, he has made discreet inquiries among his contacts within the Church of the One True Path and uncovered startling news. Allies of those responsible for the depredations outside Tobinsford some months ago have been traced to a campsite within the Troll Fens. At his own expense, Andros has taken pains to assemble your group—including Brother Lahnal, a priest of Pholtus; Terrick, a knight loyal to the Theocracy; and Sterlys, a Scout familiar with the Fens—with the goal of traveling there on a twofold mission: to capture or destroy those responsible for the Tobinsford incident and to search for a cure to the mysterious curse which has afflicted one of your companions.

Brother Lahnal hails from Wintershiven. He is in his late twenties, has close-cut brown hair, brown eyes and a strong Oeridian jaw. He wears white robes with pearlescent trim over a new breastplate and carries a quarterstaff. He is conversant on all things Pholtan but avoids discussion centered on fiends or the occult. He is highly superstitious.

Terrick is also in his late twenties, with mixed Flan and Oeridian features, tousled shoulder-length brown hair, dark gray eyes and a crescent-shaped turquoise jewel in his left ear. He is loyal to the Theocracy but bristles at the idea of working under the yoke of the Army or Pale Patrol; thus, he prefers the so-called “adventuring life,” aiding the Pale as his expertise allows while retaining a degree of his individual liberty. He has no official religious affiliation. He wears a finely crafted chain shirt and confidently wields an equally impressive falchion with Flan patterns on the

blade; he bought it in Hardby. He is gregarious with PCs, happily chatting on any topic, but politely insists on taking the lead (behind Sterlys and Brother Lahnal), reminding PCs that he is one of their guides and that he “has had some experience as an adventurer.”

“Sterlys” is Flan and in his mid-twenties, with dark brown eyes and wildly flowing, long brown hair. Unlike more “traditional”-looking Flan people (rare in the Pale anyway), his hair is not braided, nor does he have any visible tattoos. He wears well-worn studded leather armor and carries two short swords. Strapped about his waist are various sacks, pouches, rope, and other more exotic equipment recognizable as professional tools for one skilled in marshland survival. He makes every effort to maintain his cover identity: stopping to rest if PCs request it, answering (tersely) basic questions they might have about the area and using his ranger skills to make it all convincing.

Allow the players to introduce their characters to one another and to the three guides (and to the gnome, Garble, if present); note that the impostor “Sterlys” should appear extremely knowledgeable about the Fens, since he is in fact a member of the Cult based there. In the interest of time, allow the players to interact with the NPCs only briefly—just long enough for the players to remember who is who. The guides know nothing of the Cult’s nature or any specifics about the curse; they were merely hired to escort the PCs to the bivouac. Garble’s comments concerning the curse can be found in Appendix 2. If a PC has the curse, the guides ask no questions; any information the PC chooses to reveal about the Mark of Demogorgon, either to the NPCs or to other PCs, is completely voluntary.

PCs who have not played PAL5-06 *My Brother’s Keeper* may attempt a DC 10 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or DC 15 Knowledge (local - Nyronnd and her environs) check to confirm Sir Andros’s identity and his good standing within the Pale.

Sterlys is leading the PCs and the other two guides to his Cult campsite where his master and comrades lie in wait; he is expecting them to attack and brutalize the PCs upon arrival, so he should be portrayed as confident and alert.

Garble: N male gnome Exp7 (gemcutter); hp 30; Appraise +14.

Lahnal: LN male human Clr3 (Pholtus); hp 19; Diplomacy +5; Knowledge (religion) +8.

Terrick: NG male human Ftr4; hp 32.

Sterlys: CN male human Rgr3/Rog2; hp 30.

Encounter One: Cross Your Heart and Hope to Die

“Sterlys” has led the party to a Cult camp where his master and comrades lie in ambush. Though the PCs may believe they will soon be among Prelatal Army Scouts, in truth they will be viciously attacked. Unbeknownst to their treacherous guide, however, he will be attacked as well. Based on information from both their agent within the Church and the Tobinsford spy, he has timed his arrival to within thirty minutes of a prearranged timetable; thus, his allies are expecting him and have cast some long-term preparatory spells to enhance their ambush.

The plan as “Sterlys” knows it is to kill the PCs, perhaps keeping one alive for sacrifice to their dread Lord. However, the cell leader (a sadomasochistic Flan rogue named H’nakaalah) has orchestrated a plan to destroy them that has its own built-in failsafe. While the intelligence the PCs were given by Sir Andros pointed to a possible camp within the Fens, there are in fact two campsites, each referred to by the cultists as a “cell”. The PCs were intentionally led to this one.

H’nakaalah’s plan is twofold: upon entering the camp the PCs will immediately be attacked by his minions; meanwhile, he will be posing as a victim by having himself nailed to a cross used by the Cult for sacrifices. (PCs that drank the Oerthblood at the end of PAL5-06 *My Brother’s Keeper* might find this scene similar to the one in their vision.) To further the ruse, not only will the lizardfolk Cultists attack “Sterlys” but also H’nakaalah will be damaged, bleeding and wailing while the PCs fight. He hopes the PCs will be killed before his ruse is discovered, but he is prepared to deceive them further if they are victorious.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The Troll Winter has not spared the Fens from its merciless effects: patches of icy slush and blankets of thick fog cover the ground while weblike clusters of snow and ice make bare tree branches sag like encumbered hirelings. The skies are grayish-white and silent, offering no clues as to their inclination. The scout, Sterlys, kept a vigorous pace since leaving Griffwatch Castle three days ago, efficiently guiding your party across the northern reaches of the Pale into the realm of the elusive Troll King. As the morning sun climbed unseen toward its zenith, Sterlys motioned for the party to stop.

Ahead was a high embankment of hard-packed snow, clearly a man-made levee or barrier of some sort and likely the base camp of Pholtan Scouts hinted at by Sir Andros. A narrow tunnel had been carved so as to appear indistinct from a distance, allowing those within it some privacy.

Sterlys whistled a reedy note, signaling his companions within. Moments passed with no response. He then silently drew his sword and moved forward, motioning you to follow. The two other Pholtan guides preceded you, directly on Sterlys’s heels.

The chill tunnel air was accompanied by a pervasive, low-lying mist that obscured everything below waist level. Suddenly a low whistle was heard nearby, eerily amplified by the tunnel’s acoustics and those of you toward the front saw Sterlys relax his stance and move forward into a clearing. Then things got complicated.

Draw out the southern half of Map #2, place figures for “Sterlys” and the two guides (preferably figures that allow the players to distinguish these NPCs from each other), and allow the players to place their characters where they like within the tunnel or outside the snow-levée. No PC may be ahead of the spot marked “x.” Only the forward PC will have a complete view of what immediately follows. Then continue with the following:

As one of your companions reached the end of the tunnel, Sterlys whirled and, shrieking a blasphemous oath, viciously attacked Brother Lahnal. Before the priest’s limp body had hit the ground, Sterlys yelled, “We have them! Attack!” to his true allies within the clearing: a group of three lizardfolk dressed in filthy, dark furs. Terrick swiftly unsheathed his falchion to attack the traitor but before he could strike, one of the lizardfolk chanted a foul incantation and released a coruscating bolt of energy that struck Terrick in midstride. A second lizardfolk rushed forward, wielding a wicked nail-spiked club as if to finish him off, but instead brought his weapon crashing into the skull of a surprised Sterlys, who reeled from the blow and staggered backwards. Seizing his opportunity to improve the odds, Terrick swung and felled the treacherous scout himself. Weak from the ray, Terrick fell to his knees and threw himself over the Pholtan priest in a defensive posture, shouting, “It’s a trap!”

Meanwhile, the third lizardfolk stood on the far side of the clearing near a gore-stained stone altar and looked to be casting a spell, barely audible over a man’s piercing wail. This man, dressed in rags, had literally been nailed to a large, wooden cross and was screaming in agony for aid. As the lizardfolk who had loosed the ray began to retrieve something from its belt pouch, the lizardfolk grasped his club to deliver another crushing blow and cruelly eyed your foremost companion...

Once combat begins, “Sterlys” is dead. Lahnal is dying (-5 hp) and Terrick is prone in his square, taking total defense. Terrick has a -7 Strength penalty from the ray

of *enfeeblement* (current Str 8) so he is too weak to do much but defend Lahnal.

Snow has been removed from the clearing, so the PCs do face any movement restrictions once they exit the tunnel. As noted on Map #2, there is a 10-foot gap between the PC at the head of the party and the club-wielding lizardfolk. If the PCs fare well on their initiatives, they have enough room to move into the clearing, although this may provoke an attack of opportunity. However, if they fare poorly, they could all be trapped in the tunnel while this lizardfolk steps forward to assault the PC in front. Should this happen, the PCs have another option: they may hack an improvised tunnel through the packed snow:

Snow Levee/Wall/Berm: 10 ft. thick; hardness 0; hp 60 (per 5-ft. square); AC 6; Break DC 15. Slashing weapons and picks do normal damage; bludgeoning weapons and piercing weapons besides picks do half damage; fire-based attacks such as torches and spells with the Fire descriptor do triple damage. The levee itself is fifteen feet high and can be climbed with a DC 15 Climb check. Note that most PCs are effectively safe within the tunnel, as the lizardfolk concentrate their attacks on the PCs in front and do not leave the clearing, even to flee.

APL 4 (EL 5)

☛ **Cult Sorcerer:** male lizardfolk Sor2; hp 20; Appendix 1.

☛ **Cult Savage:** male lizardfolk Bbn1; hp 26; Appendix 1.

☛ **Vekk (Cult Shaman):** male lizardfolk Clr1; hp 21; Appendix 1.

APL 6 (EL 7)

☛ **Cult Sorcerer:** male lizardfolk Sor4; hp 28; Appendix 1.

☛ **Cult Savage:** male lizardfolk Bbn3; hp 46; Appendix 1.

☛ **Vekk (Cult Shaman):** male lizardfolk Clr3; hp 35; Appendix 1.

APL 8 (EL 9)

☛ **Cult Sorcerer:** male lizardfolk Sor6; hp 36; Appendix 1.

☛ **Cult Savage:** male lizardfolk Bbn5; hp 66; Appendix 1.

☛ **Vekk (Cult Shaman):** male lizardfolk Clr5; hp 49; Appendix 1.

APL 10 (EL 11)

☛ **Cult Sorcerer:** male lizardfolk Sor8; hp 44; Appendix 1.

☛ **Cult Savage:** male lizardfolk Bbn7; hp 86; Appendix 1.

☛ **Vekk (Cult Shaman):** male lizardfolk Clr7; hp 63; Appendix 1.

Tactics: The shaman Vekk is unique among his kind: an enlightened savage seduced by H'nakaalah's teachings who has abandoned his heritage and embraced the Cult philosophy; he is now more focused than both of his masters. [Note: Current Living Greyhawk rules prohibit demon lords granting powers directly to clerics but allow surrogates. The priests of this Cult of Demogorgon obtain their divine powers from Vaprak, the chaotic evil god of trolls.] Vekk is the undisputed leader of this tribe of lizardfolk, despite being less powerful than his savage and sorcerer lieutenants. He leads by force of personality, embodies the worst aspects of the Strength domain, and tries to learn from the PCs' tactics during the fight.

The lizardfolk have been briefed by H'nakaalah on the individual bearing the Mark, be it one of the PCs or the NPC Garble. All three lizardfolk try not to kill this individual, but instead incapacitate him or her for future sacrifice. PCs are the primary targets, but if an opportunity arises the lizardfolk will not hesitate to attack Terrick or coup-de-grace Lahnal.

At all APLs, the three lizardfolk benefit from *mage armor* cast by the sorcerer; at APLs 6-10 Vekk has cast *shield other* on the sorcerer (having learned from prior fights how dangerous it is to take half of a barbarian's wounds), and at APLs 8-10 has a *magic circle against good* centered on himself; finally, at APL 10, the sorcerer has cast *resist energy* on each of the lizardfolk, with the energy type randomly determined for each one (d8: 1-2=acid, 3=cold, 4-5=electricity, 6-7=fire, 8=sonic).

The shaman always leads off by casting *enlarge person* on the savage as a full-round action (which could be disrupted). This tactic is followed by a *bull's strength* on himself (APL 4), *prayer* (APL 6-8) or *divine power* (APL 10). His third action assumes that, after two rounds of combat, several PCs will be in the clearing, so he could engage in melee or utilize *sound burst*, *calm emotions*, or *chaos hammer* (ideally centered on PCs that advertise their lawful alignment, such as faithful Pholtans) to immobilize as many PCs as possible.

The savage concentrates on attacking the PC at the head of the party; he Power Attacked Sterlys so this carries over on any attack of opportunity incurred by a PC; he has not raged yet but does so upon taking any damage. If the lead PC retreats, he steps into the tunnel and attacks the next PC in line, but does not go beyond the end of the tunnel.

The sorcerer has positioned himself to take advantage of direct line-of-sight on any PCs entering the clearing through either tunnel. At all APLs, he utilizes his ranged spell prowess and leads off with his most potent spell, to weaken or incapacitate each PC in turn. At APL 10 he moves and casts *haste* only when both of his comrades are close enough to benefit from it.

H'nakaalah does not fight the PCs or blow his cover, even if they free him before defeating the lizardfolk. If left on the cross during melee, he wails things like "Help me!" or "They killed her!" (the body on the altar; see below). If they do free him, he cowers (and Bluffs) until the lizardfolk are defeated.

Treasure:

👑 **APL 4:** Loot: 39 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 104 gp—4 *potions of cure light wounds* (4 gp each per potion), *potion of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each), *wand of magic missile* (1st; 62 gp each).

👑 **APL 6:** Loot: 39 gp; Coin: 17 gp; Magic: 150 gp—3 *potions of cure light wounds* (4 gp each per potion), *wand of magic missile* (1st; 62 gp each), 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion).

👑 **APL 8:** Loot: 34 gp; Coin: 17 gp; Magic: 317 gp—3 *potions of cure light wounds* (4 gp each per potion), 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *wand of magic missile* (1st; 62 gp each), 2 *cloaks of resistance +1* (83 gp each per cloak).

👑 **APL 10:** Loot: 9 gp; Coin: 17 gp; Magic: 642 gp—*potion of cure light wounds* (4 gp each), 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each), *potion of cure serious wounds* (63 gp each), *wand of magic missile* (1st; 62 gp each), +1 *greatclub* (192 gp each), *cloak of resistance +1* (83 gp each), *necklace of fireballs* (type I; 138 gp each).

Detect Magic Results: *Potion of cure light wounds* (faint conjuration), *potion of cure moderate wounds* (faint conjuration), *potion of cure serious wounds* (faint conjuration), *wand of magic missile* (faint evocation), +1 *greatclub* (faint transmutation), *cloak of resistance +1* (faint abjuration), *necklace of fireballs* (moderate evocation). Also, magic at the cross (see Encounter Two) (moderate necromancy and faint transmutation).

Development: You should roll a Sense Motive check (opposed by H'nakaalah's Bluff) for each PC seeing/hearing him on the cross. Success allows a PC to note that the screams aren't quite convincing and also that he seems to be paying undue attention to the lizardfolk's tactics; astute PCs may also note that the screaming did not start until they entered the clearing, although H'nakaalah has a story for this as well; no clues can be gained from the crucifixion itself, as it is quite real. If the PCs penetrate his ruse, allow them to act as they will; otherwise, they may deal with him once the lizardfolk are dispatched. Once the lizardfolk are subdued or slain, proceed to Encounter Two.

Encounter Two: A Fork in the Tongue

The Campsite

The PCs may explore the campsite anytime, though they might want to deal with H'nakaalah first. Once released, H'nakaalah does not impede the PCs' exploration and indeed replies earnestly to any questions asked of him concerning the lizardfolk. Searching the camp yields the following:

The Cross

The cross is 10 feet tall, constructed from local trees and assembled competently. After H'nakaalah has been taken down from it (see below), there are no physical clues to be found upon it beyond much blood (fresh and dried) and some small human bones near the base, but a *detect magic* yields moderate Necromancy and faint Transmutation (since it was used in the Ritual of Crucimigration that animated Aodhan's former protégé, Bran). A DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check confirms that the cross and altar constitute a demonic power conduit and form an *unhallowed* area designed for sacrificing living beings in exchange for something.

Altar

The altar is one piece of gore-stained dark granite, likely from the Griffs; it would take several strong creatures or powerful magic to bring it to this remote setting, indicating that the camp is no mere random locale.

Several words and phrases in Abyssal are inscribed on its west face relating to power, sacrifice and the persistence of conflicting duality, though nothing more specific can be gleaned; the altar back is oriented against the rising sun; a DC 20 Knowledge (the planes) check confirms that this decoration and positioning are typical for altars to many powerful fiends. A rudimentary Search check (DC 10) around the altar base locates some large, grimy feathers, sharp, spiny appendages and a handful of particularly colorful yet asymmetrical scales; a DC 20 Knowledge (the planes) check identifies the detritus of different types of powerful tanar'ri (demons).

There is a corpse on the altar. The victim is a female human (a commoner from a Palish village) and has been eviscerated. A DC 20 Heal check confirms that the multiple cuts on her abdomen were made with lizardfolk claws and that she was likely tortured over several hours, eventually succumbing to blood loss and the expert removal of her heart and spleen. H'nakaalah ate her spleen and fed her heart to the lizardfolk savage less than an hour before the PCs arrived. Avoid graphic descriptions of this scene if there are children at the table. If the PCs attempt to cast *speak with dead* on the

body, H'nakaalah tries to dissuade them from doing so (see below), but the body is intact enough to respond and reveals the following:

- Her name is Lene ("leh-NAY"); she is the wife of a carpenter from Wintershiven and was scouting the southern boundary of the Fens for a new lumber source when she was ambushed roughly two weeks ago by several lizardfolk).
- She traveled with two of her husband's apprentices and was forced to watch the lizardfolk torture and kill them before dumping their corpses in the swamp.
- She was kept blindfolded and tied to stakes in the ground for much of her stay here; occasionally they would remove the blindfold to intimidate her and cast spells that probed her thoughts; while blindfolded, she heard many different voices, but all spoke in two strange languages (Abyssal and Draconic). Once, while the blindfold was off, she saw a tiny winged creature prowling the camp with an air of absolute authority and appeared to be giving the lizardfolk orders. (PCs who saw the quasit at the end of PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper* may recognize this creature and draw conclusions.)
- There were no other prisoners in the camp, as far as she knows.
- The majority of the lizardfolk left the camp a few days ago, heavily armed.
- She does not wish to be raised from the dead, as the memories of her torture and death are too painful to relive.

PCs that return her body to Wintershiven or bury her in the Fens and remember to bring news of her death are eventually tracked down and thanked by her husband, who is grateful for their efforts. This entitles the PCs to the *Favor of the Wintershiven Carpenter's Guild*, as noted on the AR.

A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check confirms the evidence at the cross: that this sacrifice served some greater evil purpose. The altar itself detects as evil (moderate).

➤ **Stone Altar:** 30 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 450; AC 5; Break DC 50.

The PCs may destroy the altar if they wish; the Cult will learn of it sooner or later.

Storage Area

Several wooden crates are stacked here and contain a variety of mundane items (dry food stores, tools, extra daggers and spears, rolled animal hides, ice picks,

snowshoes, etc), all indicating that this camp is more of an established, permanent settlement.

Living Area

This covered area contains a dozen straw mattresses and cured hides; the stench of animals is stronger here. The area also contains a small shrine to the traditional lizardfolk deity Semuanya (DC 15 Knowledge [religion] check) and a brazier. If PCs think to dig through the coals they find a broken ceramic medallion depicting two intertwined, clawed tentacles; this is an unholy symbol of Demogorgon. A Knowledge (religion) check of DC 20 here confirms that its placement in the brazier constitutes an intentional sacrilege. Indeed, the lizardfolk here have forsaken Semuanya for the Cult of Demogorgon.

Exterior Grounds

Searching the northern entrance to the camp yields tracks (DC 20 = base DC 15, 3 days ago (+3), 9 Medium creatures (-3), +5 for covering their tracks): a large group of lizardfolk traveled south-by-southwest roughly three days ago (the bulk of the camp has gone to slaughter the Pholtan bivouac 7 miles west of here, where the PCs expected to go in the first place.)

The Lies of H'nakaalah

At some point, the PCs should attend to the screaming, injured figure on the cross.

👤 **H'nakaalah:** male human Rog5/Sor4/Asn1; hp 58 (currently 29); Appendix 1 – All APLs.

Lowering him from the cross is a full-round action requiring at least two PCs: his hands and feet have been nailed to the cross with long, jagged rusty spikes, not unlike those embedded in the club of the lizardfolk savage. Due to H'nakaalah's expertise in torture and mutilation, it is impossible to physically lower him from the cross without inflicting more damage (1d6 per spike). A third PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Heal check halves the damage (each spike requires a check). However, if this same PC making the Heal check succeeds at a Sense Motive check (versus H'nakaalah's Bluff), he or she observes that the "victim" smiles as the damage is inflicted. A PC succeeding on this Heal check (and ONLY such a PC) is allowed a second Heal check at DC 25 to note that the spike through the left wrist has been driven in with more force and at an angle inconsistent with the figure's placement; comparison with the other three spikes proves conclusively to the PC that the other three spike wounds were self-inflicted. This knowledge could radically alter the rest of the encounter.

When roleplaying H'nakaalah, keep in mind that the goal is to shunt PCs toward Encounter Three or Four and thus deeper into the Fens toward the final confrontation in Encounter Six; should PCs discover the tracks at the north end of the camp, they may want

to rush off and rescue the Pholtans (see below); play H'nakaalah shrewdly and underscore the urgency of rescuing prisoners.

Since the PCs probably managed to defeat the lizardfolk cultists, H'nakaalah's failsafe continues here. He now attempts to Bluff the PCs and send them to their deaths. He does so with a confidence borne of pure, suicidal insanity; thus, even if PCs see through this deception, he is certain that either other cultists or the Fens will claim them. He wants the PCs to believe that he is an innocent victim who was about to be sacrificed; he further wishes to incite their sense of vengeance by revealing that there is a second Cult campsite deeper in the Fens, roughly two days' travel from here.

While deceiving the PCs instead of killing them himself may seem incongruous with the methodology of an evil cultist, his ruse is not without its perverse logic: by having the PCs perish deeper in the Fens, H'nakaalah will preserve the Cult's anonymity and secret locations. The Church and the Army both believe that the PCs and their guides are going to a Prelatal Army camp, which really lies seven miles west of this campsite; if the party never arrives, their deaths will allow the two Cult cells to continue operating in relative secrecy. He is enthusiastically, incoherently grateful to the PCs for "rescuing" him and willingly reveals the following information, though he offers many truths to placate paladins and suspicious PCs who utilize divinatory magic (a reminder: pre-rolling several Bluff checks before running this encounter will lend to its realism):

- He is a non-lawful druid hiding in exile from the Pale here in the Fens (false). If a PC speaks Druidic at him, he cannot respond in kind but Bluffs that he does not like to speak Druidic in front of non-druids.
- He is powerful enough to "assume another form" (his play on a druid's wild shape ability, but no Bluff is required here, as he can technically assume another form via his *disguise self ability*). He has no curing spells left to offer the PCs (true), having surreptitiously used them on himself (false).
- He is a victim of the Cult (false).
- He is evil (true) and detects as such; if detected and questioned about his alignment, he admits that he has killed innocents (true: specifically lizardfolk) in order to survive in the Fens, but he was not aware that he had become evil (very false).
- He didn't start screaming until he saw the PCs, having learned from previous torture sessions that the lizardfolk tend to ignore him when he "plays possum" and pretends to be asleep or unconscious (false).

- He was minding his own business when he was viciously attacked by one of the Cultists (true: himself, which adds +5 to his Bluff).
- There is a second, larger Cult camp located deeper in Fens (true). He was taken there blindfolded five days ago (false) and overheard several voices arguing in Common about a "sacrifice" (true). Some of these voices were high-pitched and some low and gravelly. One sounded like it came from a very large man, possibly a giant (true—this might satisfy a PC's hunch about the half-troll Aodhan, seen in PAL5-06).
- He senses from these arguments that the second camp is the more powerful of the two or has greater authority (true).
- He was roughly moved from the second camp to this one two days ago (false).
- He is certain there were other prisoners at the second camp, as he heard them screaming and begging for "Pholtus" to save them (true; this is his most powerful hook, designed to play on PC sympathies; he directs the comment toward an obvious Pholtan priest or sympathizer).
- He speaks Draconic and believes the lizardfolk use this cross in some sort of sacrificial ritual (true).
- The lizardfolk Cultists viciously tortured and sacrificed the body on the altar (true). If the PCs give any indication of casting *speak with dead* on the body, he implores them not to, stating that he watched the lizardfolk kill her (true, although his attempt to dissuade still requires a Bluff check) and that her brutal murder is nothing anyone should have to relive, even in spirit.
- Several of the lizardfolk left the camp three days ago; they were heavily armed (true).
- He believes he can give accurate directions to the second camp (true).
- He has a crocodile companion that he has not seen since his capture (false; see below). He fears they may have left it for dead. If the PCs come across the creature, he would be grateful for its return.

H'nakaalah can see the Mark of Demogorgon on the individual who bears it (whether Garble or a PC) by virtue of the Cult's evil magic and addresses this person as often as possible, asking questions such as these:

- Are you going to the second site to deal with the other Cultists and rescue any prisoners?
- How did you know where to find this camp?
- Through his peculiar bond with the Fens, he feels that the land has been poisoned by the presence of

these Cultists. Would the PCs allow him to remain here and “cleanse the land” with Druidic prayer while they go to the other camp (this is the Big Bluff attempt)? He vows to do so and then flee into the swamp before the other lizardfolk return.

Some of these questions should leave the PCs feeling a bit uneasy, as they were clearly betrayed and led into a trap by someone. Additionally, his “missing crocodile” is a lie: his true companion is a tiny but loyal viper lurking just outside the snow levee and intently observing this encounter. If H'nakaalah completely fools the PCs, the viper will rejoin him. The actual crocodile, the sad, crazed Gumboots, can be found in Encounter Three.

In gratitude for “rescuing” him, H'nakaalah offers directions to the second camp, which he estimates to be not more than two days' travel north/northeast of here (true). As noted above, his aim is to convince PCs (via Bluff) that they should hurry to the second camp to defeat the cultists, and that his presence and bond with the land are needed here more than there (he would be useless to them, maybe even a hindrance, in his current state, etc.). Based upon how the PCs react to his Bluffs, H'nakaalah's plan will unfold in one of three ways.

a. PCs follow his directions on their own

If the PCs completely fall for his Bluff, H'nakaalah gives them false directions to the second Cult camp. Instead of toward the camp, the PCs are sent into the hunting ground of a feared and dangerous swamp denizen (proceed to Encounter Three) universally avoided for miles around, where he is sure they will perish.

b. PCs want him to go with them

If PCs are skeptical (or protective, or for any other reason) and insist he accompany them, he stays in character and reluctantly agrees to come along (casting a long, winsome glance at the damage done to the land). If this is the case, proceed to Encounter Three but adjust for H'nakaalah's presence. H'nakaalah does not give PCs true directions to the second camp unless forced to accompany them. In this way, he gets the “honor” of delivering the meddling PCs unto a certain and gruesome death, or worse. Maintaining the secrecy of the second camp (and its powerful altar) is crucial to the Cult's continued operations in the Fens. Despite their differences, H'nakaalah would sooner lead the PCs to Aodhan's camp than let them truly find it on their own, in case the combined might of both cell leaders is necessary to defeat the PCs. He does not want the Cult's abyssal masters to be forced to make an appearance.

c. PCs confront him

If the PCs aren't falling for it and manage to penetrate his ruse, either via Sense Motive, *detect evil* or by

attacking him outright, he abandons the charade and tries to take his own life. Have the PCs roll initiative.

All APLs (EL 0)

🐉 **H'nakaalah:** male human Rog5/Sor4/Asn1; hp 58 (currently 29); Appendix 1 – All APLs.

Tactics: This encounter is given as EL 0 because H'nakaalah is suicidal. Giving his life as a sacrifice to his demonic Lord is his idea of glory. He accepts all physical attacks (relishing the pain) and even voluntarily fails saving throws against damaging spells. On his initiative, he moves toward the altar and attacks himself (leading off with a self-targeting *magic missile*, whose bolts arc across the camp before returning to strike him). If the PCs wish to capture him alive they must work quickly. His death will leave them at the mercy of the swamp with no idea of where the second camp is located; they may attempt to find it on their own via Tracking, or they may Search this campsite and discover sufficient clues to lead them in the general direction (see above). In either case, the PCs must proceed to Encounter Four.

Development: Once the PCs have dealt with H'nakaalah (by killing him, leaving him here, or taking him with them), proceed to either Encounter Three or Four. It is roughly ten a.m. when the PCs arrive at Encounter One. Encounter Three occurs after four miles (roughly three hours) of travel; Encounter Four occurs after three miles (roughly one and a half to two hours) of travel; overland travel to both encounters is at half speed due to the boggy terrain. Encounter Five is automatically triggered after either Encounter Three or Four.

The PCs may rest before leaving here, but H'nakaalah urges them to go on to save the prisoners. Indeed, each day that the PCs delay will cause the death of one prisoner in Encounter Six.

Finally, if Lahnal and/or Terrick survived, the PCs must decide what to do with them. Lahnal is visibly shaken at the evidence of fiendish activity and clearly requires supervision; Terrick is sobered by the attack, his warrior-ego taken down a peg; he volunteers to come along or stay here and guard Lahnal (if alive). The PCs should quickly realize that leaving the two Pholtans here alone to face the other lizardfolk is a bad idea. Both reluctantly agree to accompany the PCs further into the Fens, but they no longer take point; if the PCs decide to leave them here, H'nakaalah becomes a factor:

- If H'nakaalah is killed or goes with the PCs to the second camp, the Pholtans hide in the swamp and the PCs will need to make a Track check to find them, cold and malnourished, upon returning from the second camp.
- If H'nakaalah has fooled the PCs into letting him stay behind to “cleanse the land,” he

promises (Bluffs) to use his druidic skill to locate a nearby hiding place for himself and the Pholtans until the PCs return. Once the PCs are gone, H'nakaalah attacks mercilessly, killing Terrick in two rounds and sacrificing Lahnal to Demogorgon, leaving ample evidence before fleeing into the swamp.

The second camp lies roughly eighteen miles northeast, involving 1-2 days of travel (half speed through trackless swamp, averaging 1.5 miles per hour or 12 miles per day for PCs with a base speed of 30 ft.), including either encounter Three or Four or a stopover in Encounter Five.

Encounter Three: Crocodile Tears

The PCs come to this encounter by believing H'nakaalah's Bluff in Encounter Two and being given false directions to the second Cult campsite, or by requiring that he accompany them. Instead of going to the second camp, they are going into the hunting grounds of a swamp horror that the cultists and most trolls prefer to avoid. The PCs also have the chance to meet the toothless crocodile Gumboots and a strange bag holding the preserved intelligence of former Cult-leader Malerix Moorcol.

H'nakaalah is counting on the PCs being killed here; to that end (and because he hates Aodhan), he does not bother warning the second camp that the PCs survived the first trap. Thus, should the PCs live through this encounter, they have a chance to surprise the second camp and catch its inhabitants unawares. If H'nakaalah was "persuaded" to accompany the PCs to the second site, he dutifully leads them on the correct trail, pointing out natural landmarks, and clearly demonstrating that he is indeed a druid and not leading them astray.

At APL4 the "ferocious denizen" is in fact a small pack of particularly filthy dire rats led by Blue, a large alpha male of their species and minor Fens legend who commands respect through sheer brutality. Due to a freak accident of his birth, Blue was blessed with one incandescent blue eye; those few fortunate souls who have survived his rat-pack assaults speak in whispered tones about the unblinking blue eye that haunts their dreams (a DC 20 Knowledge [local—Nyrond and Her Environs] or DC 18 Bardic Knowledge check confirms this information). Trolls who have passed through this area and lived to tell the tale speak of a vast horde of rats, yards deep, which attack *en masse*; rumor has spread among segments of the troll populace that the area should be avoided if possible and that only their regenerative powers can prevent certain death. In truth, there are many hundreds of rats hereabouts, but only a few will attack the PCs.

At APLs 6-10 the "ferocious denizen" is a single chuul (APL 6) or a mated pair (APLs 8 and 10). They are far more intelligent than the dire rats and have been hunting here for much longer. The trolls fear them to some extent and subsequently avoid this area; though the chuuls prefer to attack humanoids, they have eaten rubbery troll-flesh many times. Due to their canny intellect, the chuuls recognize both Prelatal Army insignia and the holy symbol of Pholtus; PCs displaying either are attacked first.

Once the PCs are halfway across the levee (see Map #3) between the submerged areas of the swamp, the creatures attack. Although the ubiquitous marsh mist still clings to the ground here, PCs have a chance to avoid being surprised by the predators.

Allow the PCs a Spot check at this point to notice not only the local predators, but also the crocodile Gumboots (DC 27+distance modifier; see below). At APL4 the PCs may spot the dire rats moving toward them through the water. At higher APLs, the PCs have a chance to Spot some rats moving away, as they sense the chuuls and are afraid of them. Success on the Spot check here allows the PCs an action in the surprise round as the chuuls (or the rats), lurking just below the surface, move to attack.

Ahead lies a large, mist-shrouded pond. An overgrown levee cuts through the middle of it. Halfway across the levee stands a man or some other bipedal creature. Off to the left, a small island peeks out of the mist. In the distance and off to both sides, the willow trees hang with sullen futility. All is quiet...

The "bipedal creature" is a dead half-troll, killed by the chuuls and erected here as bait for their prey. The Cultists in Encounter Six are responsible for the troll breeding experiments mentioned in the Adventure Summary, and while the products of this experimentation serve a purpose to the Cult, occasionally one is intentionally "loosed" into the Fens to monitor its effect on the ecology. These experiments are no match for the chuuls or the rats; invariably, when they wander this far away from the second camp, these half-trolls are slain and some are placed as bait like this one has been.

Gumboots the Crocodile

PCs may have believed H'nakaalah's lie about a missing crocodile companion; the "companion" part is a hoax but the crocodile is real. This croc, a mature male, was the animal companion of a local druid who moved to the Fens in solidarity with the Druids, exiled in PAL4S-02 *Unnatural Law*. Though he lived in relative harmony with nature for 18 months after the trials, things changed when the cultists arrived eight months ago and sought to establish a base (their second camp, site of Encounter Six, sits in the druid's old territory).

The cultists were merciless: the druid was immediately overwhelmed and sacrificed to Demogorgon, but the croc earned special attention. Fiercely loyal to his benevolent master, the croc fought back, killing two cultists before being subdued.

The Cult at this time was being reorganized at the behest of its Abyssal benefactors; Aodhan had just been promoted to second-in-command of the second camp (Encounter Six), where the troll-breeding experiments took place. The leader of the Fens cult at the time was a priest named Malerix Moorcol (see below), who was also the senior breeding engineer. Aodhan was jealous of Malerix's efficiency and ability to manage the camp despite spending so much time breeding troll-hybrids (like Aodhan). Disgruntled over the lack of recognition for his own talents and for not being given full control of the camp's operations, Aodhan took his frustration out on Gumboots.

The crocodile was beaten, starved, and psychologically tormented until his animal senses had been frayed to ragged threads. He was then partially skinned to make a pair of boots, which have since disappeared, before having all of his teeth yanked out, all without any kind of anesthetic. Broken, bleeding and in mourning for his dead master, the croc was taken out into the swamp and left for dead.

However, he didn't die but survived by hiding and honing his animal hunting skills to a keen edge. Willow the Swamp Witch (Encounter Five) found the injured crocodile one night and did what she could to mend his grievous wounds. Noticing the missing skin and teeth, she pitied the poor creature and affectionately nicknamed him Gumboots. Though the croc had no name to begin with, he seemed to respond to this compassionate stranger.

He eventually found his way to where the chuuls hunt. Originally content to scavenge the remains of their kills, Gumboots soon realized he could sneak into their lair while they ambushed prey at their baited traps. In their lair, he found something more precious than fresh meat: chuul eggs.

Gumboots has been preying on chuul eggs for nearly six months and the irate chuuls have not yet caught him. Just before the chuuls or rats attack the party, Gumboots carefully hid on the pond's far bank (on the chuul side), with only his eyes above the waterline. If any PC made an exceptional Spot check (DC 27+distance modifier) to notice the rats or chuuls, they also notice Gumboots (taking 10, +7 Hide, +10 cover from the water) stealthily extricate himself from the muck and slip below the surface, though the PCs will be in melee by this time and have to forego further investigation for the moment. Success on this Spot check also tells the PC that the crocodile is not advancing toward the chuul(s) or the PCs, but has gone below the surface for some reason.

APL 4 (EL 5)

🦡 **Blue (Advanced Dire Rat Pack Leader):** hp 28; Appendix 1.

🦡 **Advanced Dire Rats (2):** hp 11, 11; Appendix 1.

🦡 **Dire Rats (6):** hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 64.

APL 6 (EL 7)

🦡 **Female Chuul:** hp 93; *Monster Manual* 35.

APL 8 (EL 9)

🦡 **Chuuls (2):** hp 93, 93; *Monster Manual* 35.

APL 10 (EL 11)

🦡 **Advanced Chuuls (2):** hp 187, 187; Appendix 1.

Setup/Tactics: Use Map #3 for this encounter. The rats and chuuls have "taken 20" on their Hide checks; have the PCs roll Spot checks to notice the approaching predator(s), then roll initiative.

Any NPCs with the PCs (H'nakaalah, Lahnal, Terrick, or Garble) stand an equal chance of being attacked.

Note that in attempting to steer the PCs toward this area, H'nakaalah expected one chuul; at APLs 8 and 10, he is shocked (and terrified) to learn of the mated pair. He knows nothing about the rat pack, so at APL 4 he should be especially surprised. He attempts to flee only if the PCs seem to be losing; he casts *invisibility* (which should tell the PCs that he is no druid) and retreats into the swamp. If the PCs end up winning, they may try to track him down, but if found he tries to kill himself rather than remain their prisoner. (His suicidal tactics are detailed in Encounter Two.)

At APL4 the dire rats swim from their lair on "rat island" (see Map #3), crawling up out of the water to attack indiscriminately; at APL 6, the single chuul attacks from the right side of the levee; at APLs 8 and 10, the mated chuuls both attack from the right side of the levee, at the front and rear of the party, hoping to trap the PCs between them. At all APLs, the creatures merely move to within striking distance of the PC, then full attack next round.

If a chuul grabs an opponent but fails to paralyze him/her, the chuul drops the opponent rather than engaging in a prolonged (and boring) grapple. Being experienced hunters, they favor thrashing opponents into unconsciousness and then dragging them down to their lair as opposed to grappling for its own sake. However, the chuuls should definitely grapple defensively if they need to (if, for example, a PC summons another creature to grapple the chuuls).

Aftermath

Once the creatures have been dispatched, the PCs are free to explore the area.

At APL4, it is obvious that the rats attacked from Rat Island; a cursory search there yields some treasure. A more involved search is needed to find the chuuls' underwater lair (now empty of chuuls), more treasure, the crocodile Gumboots, and the special bag.

At APLs 6-10, all the treasure is in the chuul lair. PCs may attempt a DC 21 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check to note that chuuls often create underwater lairs where trinkets from past victims are stored; if anyone spotted Gumboots sliding into the pond, the PCs get a +2 bonus on this check.

Chuul tracks are easy to find all around the pond (DC 4) but unless they enter the pond on the right side of the levee, they will not find the lair. The PCs can also find Gumboots's trail (DC 5) if they track in the place where he began this encounter, but the players must specify that this is where they are searching; do not simply give it to them.

The lair can be discovered with a DC 30 Search check; PCs may "take 20" and also assist one another. The DC is high because the chuuls are secretive and clever, but also because the rewards for the PCs are great. If the PCs do not locate the lair, they miss out on all rewards detailed below (except at APL 4, where they get only the coin treasure on top of Rat Island).

The Chuul Lair

The chuul lair is accessed via a 70-foot-long tunnel located 20 feet below the pond's surface, as noted on Map #3. If the PCs find it (or use magic to pinpoint Gumboots) and swim down to it (or access it via magical transportation), read or paraphrase the following:

Deep beneath the surface of the pond is a small grotto; entering its cool confines, the stench of sulfur and decaying matter immediately assails the nostrils. It is dark and damp, but in the gloom ahead a wet, slithering sound can be heard...

No map is provided for this side encounter. The slithering noise in the darkness is Gumboots, who sneaked down here to feed and is now carefully backing away in defense at the PCs' approach. If they have a light source or can otherwise see him, continue with the following:

Just ahead, backing cautiously away is a crocodile. It clearly does not belong down in this subterranean grotto and appears to be intimidated by your presence. The animal has clearly seen its share of hardship: its leathery hide has been scarred in several places and when it opens its mouth, presumably to bare teeth in defense, not a single one can be seen!

Indeed, Gumboots has seen his share of hardship. He is now trapped in the chuul lair, having come down here to feed on chuul eggs and been interrupted by the arrival of the PCs before he could get to any. He is not brave enough to intimidate the PCs and would rather not have to fight them to get out, so he has chosen to slowly back away and go on total defense. Thus, the PCs are presented with an opportunity. If any PC casts *Speak with Animals* and is not hostile, Gumboots calms down and the PC can learn his sad story, as noted above. Otherwise, a PC will need to succeed at a DC 15 Wild Empathy check to change him from Indifferent to Friendly, in which case he'll cuddle with them like a kitten. If the PCs fail to make him Friendly, even if they fail miserably, he will not attack but will simply keep his distance and let them explore the chuul lair.

The lair contains enough oxygen for the PCs to spend about thirty minutes down here without magical aid; a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check confirms this. The lair has three chambers: a living area, hatchery, and trophy room. The living area contains two partially eaten half-troll carcasses and the skulls and skeletons from a band of Prelatal Army scouts (well over two dozen skulls). Remember, chuuls are intelligent and evil.

The hatchery, however, contains six newly laid chuul eggs and is noticeably warmer than the rest of the grotto, as it is situated over sulfur vents, whose tiny tunnels extend to the surface and allow the area a measure of oxygen. Gumboots has struck four times thus far, with the angry chuuls laying fresh eggs after each visit. When the PCs enter this chamber, Gummy will nervously approach and open his jaws, emitting a low, raspy cawing noise (like a crow). A successful Sense Motive check here (DC 15) clues PCs into the fact that Gumboots is nervous that the PCs are about to destroy the eggs, and that he would like to eat them. If PCs destroy the eggs anyway, Gumboots is forever Unfriendly to them, waiting until they leave and never interacting with them again. However, if they allow him to eat one (or four), his attitude immediately improves to Helpful and he bonds with and follows the PCs; one PC may choose to adopt Gumboots as a permanent animal companion, as noted on the AR. Gumboots uses his powerful, toothless jaws to crush the tough eggs and then gobbles up the contents.

The trophy room contains a staggering collection of shiny trinkets from past kills, along with a smattering of mixed coin and a unique item: a small, grimy black bag.


The Bag, a.k.a. Malerix Moorcol

This leather sack has two coarse, black strings to tie its opening. It is set apart from the rest of the trophies and found only on a DC 25 Search check (if PCs do "take 20" searching, they exhaust their oxygen supply and must immediately contend with suffocation after

finding the bag). The bag radiates moderate Necromancy and Divination (DC 19 Spellcraft with *detect magic*).

The bag is an intelligent item housing the surviving essence of Malerix Moorcol, former high priest of the Fens Cult who foresaw his own betrayal and prepared this contingency to enact revenge. The aforementioned Cult reorganization enraged Aodhan, who had been patiently biding his time and expected to be promoted as Malerix's equal, running the daily operations of the camp while Malerix focused on his troll experiments. Jealous and bitter after being disciplined by his quasit-superior (in PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper*), he conspired with H'nakaalah to murder Malerix.

Malerix was a talented seer, however, and quickly divined the plot. Certain it was a test of faith from his dread Lord, he chose not to fight back and instead engineered a contingency. The two assassins killed Malerix one night and dumped his corpse in the swamp. They then divided control of the Fens cult between them, ceased development on his breeding experiments and promptly put Malerix behind them. But on Malerix's person was a small bag, into which the former high priest channeled his formidable essence at the moment of death. A swamp predator soon ate his corpse and the bag but was in turn slain and eaten by the chuuls. Malerix has waited patiently for someone to come along, open the bag and set his vengeance in motion.

 **Malerix Moorcol (deceased):** CE male human Clr13 of Demogorgon (with powers granted by Karontor, god of fomorians and hatred).

When a PC enters the trophy room, Malerix quickly utilizes his powers to detect Chaos, Good and Law (in that order). He does not immediately contact anyone (via telepathy), as he is scanning for a suitable host alignment (PCs will feel a swift and gentle probing of their thoughts but will suffer no ill effects); Chaotic Neutral is his preferred choice, followed by Neutral. He will not make contact with a PC who is Lawful and/or Good, or especially one who bears the Mark of Demogorgon. Malerix's goal is to slay his betrayers, H'nakaalah and Aodhan. If a suitable PC is found, and if the PC has no mental protections, such as a *ring of mind shielding*, Malerix makes telepathic contact as noted in the Preparation section. Now is the time to slip a note to a qualifying Chaotic Neutral or Neutral PC; the note should be brief, offering unspecified insight into Cult activity in exchange for removing the bag from this place.

Malerix suppresses his normally malign instincts toward heroic PCs, since he needs their help. If the initial PC refuses, Malerix chooses the next most compatibly-aligned PC; if no one accepts possession, he does not try to dominate them and instead waits here in fury for someone else to find him. Attempting to

destroy the bag using magic requires nothing less than a *wish* or *miracle* spell. One PC may also attempt to physically destroy the bag by turning it inside out. This requires a Will save (DC 30) to go through with the action, followed by a Strength check (DC 25) to perform it; if both are successful, the bag is permanently destroyed and Malerix's soul loses its link to the Material Plane.

If a PC accepts possession of Malerix and dutifully removes him from the chuul lair, he is grateful, revealing his identity and first goal: to journey to the second Cult camp. Due to his divinatory power, Malerix immediately knows whether H'nakaalah is alive; if he is alive and with the party, Malerix tells the PC everything there is to know about H'nakaalah and urges the PC to slay this vile deceiver. This could result in a brief combat; H'nakaalah should be very surprised that the PCs suddenly know who and what he is; his suicidal combat tactics are detailed in Encounter Two.

Though his immediate goals (killing Cult leaders) may mirror those of the PCs, some PCs may not be comfortable traveling with his evil essence. It is up to the host-PC whether to reveal the discovery (and nature) of Malerix to the rest of the party, but you should do everything possible to avoid player-vs.-player conflicts, as this encounter is not supposed to pit players against each other.

Malerix functions only when the bag strings are loosened; the command word to do so is Abyssal for "Two Snakes" (in homage to Demogorgon). When the command word is spoken, the two black strings undulate like snakes and either open or seal the mouth of the bag tightly. On the way to Encounter Five or Six, Malerix provides the command word to the host-PC and instructs him or her to untie the bag; upon doing so, Malerix reveals that the next task is to visit the troll breeding pens at the second Cult camp and slay his nemesis, Aodhan.

The interior of the bag is pitch black and lined with filthy, jagged teeth (Malerix's actual teeth); if the PCs seem tolerant, from this point forward Malerix stops using his telepathy and speaks to the party; his voice is a commanding rasp loaded with urgency. Successfully interacting with Malerix may prove useful against the dangers that lie ahead; he offers the following if PCs are cooperative:

- The cultists in the second camp include humans, orcs, and trolls. H'nakaalah led the first camp while Aodhan leads the second. There are prisoners at the second camp.
- Malerix was the High Priest and Breeding Supervisor at the second camp, developing particularly hostile and resilient half-trolls for use against the Pale and even against the Troll King.

- Abyssal servants of Demogorgon rule the Fens cultists; their regular liaison is a ruthlessly efficient quasit cleric.
- The Cult is searching for an artifact of some power; he is unwilling to divulge any further information at this time but promises to do so once Aodhan is slain. His quasit-superior also knows pertinent details about the search.

Treasure:

Gems and coins on Rat Island.

👑 **APL 4 only:** Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 0 gp.

Contents of the chuul lair.

👑 **APL 4:** Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 92 gp—mithral chain shirt (92 gp each).

👑 **APL 6:** Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 440 gp—mithral chain shirt (92 gp each), +1 heavy steel shield of bashing (348 gp each).

👑 **APL 8:** Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 440 gp—mithral chain shirt (92 gp each), +1 heavy steel shield of bashing (348 gp each).

👑 **APL 10:** Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 1133 gp—mithral chain shirt (92 gp each), +1 heavy steel shield of bashing (348 gp each), +1 merciful heavy mace (693 gp each).

Detect Magic Results: Mithral chain shirt (nonmagical), +1 heavy steel shield of bashing (faint abjuration and moderate transmutation), +1 merciful heavy mace (faint transmutation and faint conjuration), Malerix Moorcol's bag (moderate necromancy and moderate divination).

Development: Once the PCs have searched the area to their satisfaction and are preparing to find the trail to the second Cult campsite and move along, allow them to search but inform them that no tracks whatsoever can be found. This should lead them to one of two conclusions: either a druid masked the trail or there is no trail to mask. The latter conclusion is true, as they have been sent into a trap. The PCs are now helplessly lost in the swamp. Once they seem frustrated or poised to give up, go to Encounter Five. The PC who takes possession of Malerix gains access to the Grimy Black Bag entry as noted on the Adventure Record.

Encounter Four: Headlong

The PCs arrive at this encounter by seeing through H'nakaalah's Bluff during Encounter Two and confronting him. They fight another swamp creature, but do not get the rewards (xp, gp, items, and favors) available in Encounter Three—the price of attacking rashly.

If they killed him they will likely have no idea where to search for the second Cult campsite and will have been tracking for roughly six hours when the creature below strikes. A faint trail does exist between the two campsites but H'nakaalah's lizardfolk ranger-minions regularly mask the trail using *pass without trace* when the journey to the second camp to deliver messages. Allow PCs to roam the swamp making inconsequential Track/Survival checks.

For those who are NOT making or assisting in this check, allow a Spot check to notice the hydra rising up out of the muck to attack, knowing that Cultists ("food") frequent this area in their travels. Read or paraphrase the following, modifying as necessary based on H'nakaalah's presence, then initiate the aforementioned Track/Spot procedure:

This part of the Fens is an open, untamed morass of sparse, high-branched trees and small earthen islands, where icy tiaras crown nature's hardiest shrubbery amid shallow, brackish slush-water and fetid muck. If a trail exists through this bleak area, it is well concealed by snow and known only to a few.

APL 4 (EL 5)

👁️ **Six-Headed Hydra:** hp 66; *Monster Manual* 156.

APL 6 (EL 7)

👁️ **Eight-Headed Hydra:** hp 87; *Monster Manual* 157.

APL 8 (EL 9)

👁️ **Ten-Headed Hydra:** hp 108; *Monster Manual* 157.

APL 10 (EL 11)

👁️ **Twelve-Headed Hydra:** hp 129; *Monster Manual* 157.

Setup: No movement restrictions are imposed in this combat due to the half-frozen, mucky swamp water; it is only 8-10 inches deep and somewhat yielding to body weight.

Roll a Hide check for the hydra (Hide -7, but add 4 since it is 40 feet away). Those who Spot it may act in the surprise round. It will execute a partial run toward the PCs.

Tactics: The hydra knows that Cultists never pass through without one of them searching the ground ahead of them (for the faint trail); it thus attacks any PC engaged in the Track check, hoping to disorient the party and eat them as they flee, flailing through the undergrowth.

Though not the most intelligent creature in the Fens, the Hydra is an efficient predator. It focuses all of

its attacks on the PC whom it initially attacks until that PC is downed before switching targets.

One exception to its tactics concerns the use of summoned creatures. It has encountered spellcasters before and they escaped the hydra by distracting it with summoned creatures. If a “monster” appears out of thin air and attacks, the hydra will split its attacks: half on the initial PC and half on the summoned creature monster. Once the initial PC is downed, the hydra mixes up its attacks among multiple PCs and/or summoned creatures.

IMPORTANT!: The *Monster Manual's* wording on how a hydra takes attacks of opportunity (AoO) is ambiguous: when someone provokes an AoO, does every head bite (up to twice because it has Combat Reflexes and a Dexterity of 12)? Or does only one head bite with a maximum per round equal to its number of heads rather than based on its Dex bonus? You are to run the hydra using the second option: ***only one bite per AoO***. If all heads can bite on each AoO, the hydra is too dangerous for its supposed CR.

Treasure:

Gems and other valuable indigestible objects in the hydra's innards.

👑 **APL 4:** Loot: ogp; Coin: 150gp; Magic: ogp.

👑 **APL 6:** Loot: ogp; Coin: 200gp; Magic: ogp.

👑 **APL 8:** Loot: ogp; Coin: 300gp; Magic: ogp.

👑 **APL 10:** Loot: ogp; Coin: 500gp; Magic: ogp.

Development: The PCs are free to flee from this fight, but gain no xp for doing so. Once the hydra is slain, the PCs may move on. When the PCs seem frustrated, go to Encounter Five.

Encounter Five: A Thorn in Your Side

This encounter rescues the PCs from frustration at the end of Encounter Three or Four. Read or paraphrase the following:

A low slithering noise soon infiltrates the silence of the pond. Emerging from the undergrowth and moist leaves is a mass of writhing snakes. They approach to within hissing distance but instead of attacking, they spread out and form a message in Common, which reads: “sankzre.”

The snakes (vipers) are being scried upon by their Mistress, the Swamp Witch, in an effort to contact the PCs; by killing the creature(s) in Encounter Three or Four, the PCs have unknowingly done her and the Fens a great service. She now seeks to reward them, knowing that they must be tired, injured and lost after a day in the swamp. The vipers function as a hive mind

and can spell any word or combination of words to a maximum of seven characters, though their intelligence affects the clarity of their messages (their initial attempt is “sanctuary”, sank-2-R-E); try to be creative and enigmatic by using simple messages such as “follow I” or “to safe”. The vipers can also form simple shapes, like an arrow pointing in the direction the Swamp Witch wants them to go. The vipers act as guides to her compound, should the PCs choose to follow. They will wait for one minute, holding position, and then slowly slither northeast. They do not detect as evil or magic; they are simply trained. If the PCs follow them, proceed to “Willow, the Swamp Witch”, below; if they do not, proceed to Encounter 5A. This closing scene should happen near sundown.

Willow, the Swamp Witch

The vipers dutifully lead the PCs to the abode of the Swamp Witch, Willow. What follows is intended as a role-playing encounter during which PCs are allowed to spend the night at her compound and recover from the day's combats; the PCs are not obligated to do so, however, and may choose to leave once they learn to whom the snakes belong. If this is the case, go to Encounter Five-A. If they stay, the PCs may interact with Willow, potentially gaining insight into Cult activities through her divinations in exchange for a test of their skills. If the PCs display hostility at any time, she wild shapes into a bat and flies away, at which time the PCs are immediately shunted into Encounter Five-A.

Willow's Compound

Map #4 shows the layout of the compound, including the route for the tests of skill (see “Fleurs du Mal” below).

The thriving, muddy compound is overrun with poisonous reptiles, amphibians, insects, and especially arachnids. Three small buildings nestle beside a very large pond overhung with tall, lush willow trees and laced with dense fog. Behind her small hut is an impressive herb and flower garden; a large snake pit lies just to the north of it. Thanks to a curse brought down upon her years ago (for slaying a paladin of Pelor), the entire area is cursed and bathed in perpetual twilight; light-based spells still function but the plants here have transcended photosynthesis. Additionally, due to her intense bond with the Fens, the creatures hereabouts that would normally be hibernating during the winter need not do so, as her compound is kept warm and temperate at all times. Druid PCs will easily realize that powerful natural magic is at work.

Who She Is

Willow is a green hag. She is a powerful (and untiered) NPC renowned throughout the Fens. However, unlike the Troll King, whose infamy spreads by deed, hers is a subtler sort of fame: she is the most accomplished

potion brewer and poisoncrafter in the Northern Flanaess, and these are not distinctions earned without a potent mixture of respect and discretion. She also breeds vipers and nourishes poisonous plants. She is evil, and radiates such (moderate), along with faint Illusion. (She suffers a rare vanity among hags and disguises her appearance as well as her secret pregnancy, as noted under “Baby Universal” below.)

🐉 **Willow:** NE female green hag Drd9/Sor3/Divine Oracle3; hp 99.

🐉 **Thorn:** advanced Huge viper companion; hp 45.

(The Divine Oracle prestige class appears in *Complete Divine* but is not reprinted here. Suffice it to say that the class adds *divination* to Willow’s spell list as a 4th-level spell.)

Description: Willow is young for a hag, the junior of three sisters who long ago controlled a respectable portion of the Fens. Her eyes are moss green; her long hair is pitch black and hangs damply against her face, obscuring the left half of it so that only her right eye is visible. Spiders can be seen spinning tiny webs and crawling through her hair while she addresses the PCs. Her hands are cracked and dirty; her fingernails resemble scarab beetles, bluish-green and shiny and sharp. She wears a short, patchwork dress made of leaves and swamp grass; she strolls barefoot through her compound. A small viper is coiled around her neck at all times. Her body is slender. All hags are deformed and Willow is no exception: her visible deformity is a limp (her left knee is weak). Her other physical deformity, perhaps less obvious, is that she is exceedingly thin. Though she is older than the Pale, she appears youthful. Her voice is mellifluous but sibilant.

Personality: Willow is best described as playfully aloof; she is powerful and does not necessarily fear the PCs, but she has lived here undetected for generations and does not seek to spoil it by starting a fight. Besides, she needs their help for her errand and shares a common enemy in the Cult, so she toys with their preconceptions about hags. She is not truly benevolent but neither is she out to kill the PCs. However, her alignment could prove to be a huge hurdle for PCs, especially paladins and Pholtan clerics who may be sincerely interested in what she has to offer (see below).

Motivation: By slaying the swamp denizen(s) in Encounter Three or Four, the PCs have unwittingly done Willow a huge favor: the territory of the creature(s) was located near a rare patch of sassone leaf, which she harvests for her poisoncraft. In gratitude for dealing with the aforementioned denizens (or out of pity if the PCs lost), Willow offers two rewards: to cure any damage they may have sustained (via foul-tasting yet effective potions served in grimy vials, of course), and also a place to safely spend the night. (“Safe” is a

relative term. Even if healing is not required, directions likely are, which should provide a suitable means of peaceful interaction.)

If the PCs will not associate with her yet stop short of attacking her, she calmly directs them to the second Cult campsite and lets them depart (proceed to Encounter Five-A). The PCs gain none of the benefits from Encounter Five.

What She Knows

Willow knows much about current Cult activities; if the PCs are not hostile, she offers the following information freely, especially if they convince her that their goal is to defeat the Cult:

- The Troll King is aware of the Cult, though he is not their sponsor; he considers them a suitable distraction for his own machinations and not a threat to his plans, so he allows them to function within the Fens.
- The Cult has existed in the Fens for hundreds of years but fractured into two camps about 8 months ago. Their activities include kidnapping, sacrifice, torture, and genetic experimentation. They have not bothered her thus far, but she laments that snakes, her favorite creature, figure prominently in their ideology and worship.
- (Omit this if the PCs visited Encounter Four or if the crocodile from Encounter Three is not present) The injured crocodile found during Encounter Three is named “Gumboots.” His master was a druid from the Pale who was tortured and killed by the Cult some months ago; shortly after his death, Willow found the crocodile and tended his grievous wounds. Because his teeth had been removed and parts of his hide torn off, likely for footwear (always at a premium in the Fens), she gave him the affectionate nickname and released him into the swamp. He has not seen him since then. If he is with the PCs, she notes that crocodiles make loyal animal companions.

What She Offers

In addition to her potion-brewing prowess, Willow is a skilled seer (hence her observation of the PCs during Encounter Three or Four) and offers to perform a divination into the Cult’s activity in the Fens in exchange for a small errand (see “Fleurs du Mal” below). She is technically an “evil druid” but she is not an exiled one; she has always lived in the Fens. Still, she knows that the Theocracy bears her kind ill will; though a hag, she cares more for nature and her environment than any racial hatred toward humanoids or their petty deities and governments. Furthermore, if the PCs promise not to betray her location (or existence) to Palish authorities, she volunteers to lead them to the second Cult campsite. This newly active

Cult is disruptive at best and conspicuous at worst, in all regards a threat to the natural ecology.

Fleurs du Mal (The Errand)

If the PCs are still curious as to the Cult's activities, she offers to perform a divination for them in exchange for a small favor: to take fresh flowers to her sisters' graves, on the island in the fetid pond on the north end of her compound. The island has recently been overrun by stirges. She explains that the flowers are an important part of her mourning and that, while she can physically make the short trek herself and also destroy the stirges with magic, there are more effective methods of dealing with the creatures (best accomplished by more than one person) and also that powerful magic (like *fireball*) would destroy many precious plants on the island.

The errand is not mandatory; PCs not wishing to participate may instead help her pick herbs from her nearby garden, easily within earshot of other PCs; or they may do neither, instead remaining vigilant in this creepy garden. However, she adds that the errand is somewhat complex and that perhaps more PCs participating would aid in its success. (Simply put, try not to allow the players to misinterpret that only one of them may help with the errand; all PCs may try it at the same time.)

Willow picks flowers for the PCs from her garden and explains what they must do.

The errand is accomplished in four stages, each of which tests the PCs' skills, which Willow prizes above magical aptitude. If the PCs use magic to circumvent the physical challenges (by using *dimension door*, for example), they will not earn her favor (see below). Try to be subtle about conveying this point. Willow does not tell the PCs not to use magic, but if they ask whether using magic counts as cheating, she answers with a weary yes, as if the PCs should already know that.

Participation in this errand awards points based on success; once the task is complete, the party's aggregate score determines the potency of Willow's divination (she has a "clearer vision" based on PC enthusiasm and competence).

If Gumboots is with the party, he nestles himself in the ever-present muck and watches contentedly.

The four stages of the task are as follows:

- 1. The Tree: Climb (DC 15) 50 feet up a large willow tree to a sturdy branch; the island is 70 feet across water from the tree. Willow advises them not to use rope, as ropes and grappling hooks are likely to disturb the venomous spiders nesting in the branches high overhead. Based on PC Climb speeds, 2 or 3 checks should be required. Award 3 points for each PC who reaches the branch

without falling ("no progress" checks of DC 11-14 are OK). Subtract 2 points for each 10 feet any PC falls. Willow stresses that as soon as the PCs reach the branch, they should begin making loud croaking noises, like toads. This initiates the second stage.

- 2. The Croaking: Perform (sing) check, untrained if necessary. Monstrous spiders start moving to attack anyone on the high branch—any PC still climbing the tree will see the spiders descending on silk threads—but the Perform check is what's important here. The stirges, which have been preying on the toad colony on the far side of the island, are fooled by croaking PCs and unwittingly fly into spiderwebs hanging from the higher branches. The spiders ignore the PCs and move to feed on the trapped stirges. In gratitude for this feast, the larger spiders (size Huge) will spin several lengths of silk for the PCs and deposit them on the branch in neat coils, as they have often done for Willow. Points are awarded for each PC's Perform check as follows: less than DC 10 (-4 points, but still fools the stirges); 10-14 (1 point); 15-19 (2 points); 20-24 (3 points); 25+ (4 points).
- 3. Spidersilk: As the smaller spiders wrap literally dozens of stirges, the third stage of the errand should present itself: use the spidersilk rope to swing to a large tree on the island. (A Diminutive monstrous spider demonstrates if the PCs seem scared or confused.) Each PC makes a Use Rope check to fling a length of spidersilk rope and attach it to the large tree on the island. As with the croaking, success here is technically automatic, but this check determines how far a PC swings before the silk snaps and drops the PC into the murky pond. Ideally, the PC tosses the strand into the high branches (the sticky silk is its own grappling hook), swings out over the pond, and lets go in time to be flung onto the island. Award 2 points for each PC who makes DC 20 with Use Rope (this counts as a stressful situation and only one chance is allowed, so most PCs may not take 10 or 20). For every 5 points below 20, the PC lands in the pond 10 feet from the shore and loses a point (i.e.: -1 point for DCs 15-19, -2 points for DCs 10-14, etc); PCs in danger of falling into the pond should be allowed a Jump check to cover the distance; swinging from the spidersilk counts as a running head start. The pond itself is not deep; the worst effect of landing in it is the filth and stench of the water.
- 4. Thorn: On the island, PCs may safely locate the graves of Willow's sisters (also green hags, of course) and place the fresh flowers. The entire island radiates faint evil and a general eeriness. Once the PCs have placed the flowers, Willow's

huge viper companion Thorn will swim to the island and offer PCs a ride back. This involves a Balance check at DC 12. Award 2 points for each PC who manages to remain balanced on Thorn's slippery and undulating back. The PCs may also swim back or lie down and cling to Thorn for the ride, but these methods will not demonstrate any skill to Willow and thus award no points.

- Magic Forfeits: PCs who employed magic to circumvent a skill check receive no points for their efforts, and each use of PC magic gives them a false reading in the divination. If the magic employed affected all PCs (such as a *mass fly* to the island), then no points are awarded at all. Again, Willow doesn't warn them about this unless directly asked in advance.
- Calculation: Tally the points awarded and lost; add 5 points for each PC who did not fall into the pond at all. Additionally, give a handicap if there are fewer than six PCs: find the average of the PCs' scores and add this average once (for 5-PC tables) or twice (for four-PC tables). The maximum total score is 96 points (3+4+2+2+5=16 per PC). The PC with the highest individual score earns *Someone to Watch Over Me* as noted on the Adventure Record.

When PCs reach the shore, Willow offers thanks and invites them into her shack. She cooks a hearty vegetarian dinner while snakes slither around everywhere, and then she prepares the *divination*. This involves her hag's cauldron, a filthy, black, encrusted affair from which pungent vapors issue forth with an ominous bubbling.

After perhaps 30 minutes of stirring in new ingredients—including two of her beetle-wing fingernails, which she unceremoniously flicks into the pot—Willow announces that she is ready and draws forth more dirty vials, filling each from the cauldron and offering them to you.

PCs succeeding on a Craft (alchemy) check (DC 20) or casting *detect poison* confirm that they are being offered poison. Willow makes no secret of this and affirms (truthfully) that it is a necessary component of the *divination*. PCs will suffer a slight lightheadedness but remain otherwise unharmed.

If all PCs refuse to participate for fear of being poisoned/murdered in their sleep, Willow reluctantly (and somewhat sadly) relents; she continues the *divination* anyway and the PCs receive the "automatic" *divination* noted below; all other insight into the Cult is blocked.

If at least one PC wishes to continue, have them drink the liquid in the vial. It is indeed poison: a potent, modified form of *mugwort*, an herb traditionally used for visions and healing (DC 15 Knowledge

[nature] or Profession [herbalist] check to know of that use).

✦ **Mugwort poison:** Fort DC 30, primary unconsciousness for 1 minute, secondary unconsciousness for 8 hours.

Any PCs immune to poison (such as under a *heroes' feast*) are immune, so Willow suggests that the PCs dispel poison-blocking magic or wait for the spell to wear off. Unconsciousness sets in immediately; for those who make the save and suspect treachery, Willow extends her hands and surrenders peacefully, quickly explaining that the unconscious PCs are simply asleep and sharing a vision. This is true. Additionally, if at least one PC puts aside his or her fear of hags and willingly volunteers to submit to the *divination*, AND if the party defeated the rats or chuuls in Encounter Three, then the entire party earns an additional favor, *Vigilance of the Third Eye*, as noted on the Adventure Record.

PCs who succeed on the save and wish to negate the effect for other PCs may do so with a DC 30 Heal check (per PC), *neutralize poison*, or *limited wish*.

Those who fail the save are made susceptible to the other active ingredient in Willow's brew, which allows them, while unconscious, to "share" the visions she is divining as if they were actually in them. PCs who witness a sacrifice, for example, do so as if concealed in the undergrowth nearby.

Consult Appendix 3 for a list of the results of the *divination*.

Failing the save has another benefit: it allows the victim, if a spellcaster, to recover/prepare spells in the morning as if he or she had actually spent time doing so. Even if PCs would have wished to change their spell preparation based on the visions, their subconscious does it for them. This is a one-time effect.

The PCs sleep the entire night in safety and are woken at dawn, rested and not fatigued in the slightest, but with Thorn draped lazily over them and the fire crackling.

PCs who participate in both the errand (or the herb gathering) and the *divination* (and only those PCs) are granted access to some of her less lethal concoctions, as noted on the Adventure Record. PCs should be reminded that Willow *is* evil; among her regular crimes are seduction and murder, and it should be no secret now that the assassins of Greyhawk profit from her expertise. This awareness could make some PCs reconsider accepting her gifts.

Baby Universal

Willow is able to so accurately mark the date of the Cult's arrival in the Fens at 8 months ago because she is secretly pregnant (the Illusion magic that she radiates also disguises her abdomen). The identity (and

willingness) of the father plays no direct role in this scenario, but in the event that she flees the compound and PCs conduct an extensive search, they find a shallow bog in which are no less than one dozen human skeletons, some of which still bear the armor and heraldry of the Theocracy. Willow wants a midwife for her child and she might ask one of the PCs to serve in this role. DMs should take note of any female PCs who are neither Good nor Lawful in alignment, and who have gained her favor, then forward this information to eteignoir@yahoo.com.

Development: As noted, if combat seems imminent due to her evil nature, she wild shapes into a vulture (eagle stats) and flies away until the PCs are gone. PCs will then have the run of her compound, but the only thing of value they find is her potion-making apparatus.

Encounter Five–A: Stranded

The PCs come to this encounter by refusing to follow the snakes of the Swamp Witch; they may also arrive here unknowingly by attacking the Swamp Witch and driving her away from her lair; finally, they could conceivably arrive here by negotiating a non-violent truce with her. PCs gain no experience or benefits from Encounter Five. As they are now literally lost in the wilderness, they may choose to press on or sleep for the evening.

Encounter Six: The Song Remains the Same

The PCs come to this encounter either from Encounter Five or Five-A. If from Five-A, they will have no warning of what the cultists are doing; initiative will likely be immediate as the PCs stumble into the encounter. If from Five, the PCs may have been forewarned to be stealthy. In either case the PCs will likely be traveling on foot, moving north-by-northeast.

The second campsite lies fourteen miles away from the site of Encounter Three, fifteen miles away from Encounter Four and roughly six miles away from Willow's compound (note that the PCs can essentially choose what time they arrive here, still moving at half speed through the swamp, but the combat that follows presumes PC arrival toward sundown or early evening). It is located on the southern shore of a large lake, where two mushroom-shaped promontories jut out (resembling the two heads of Demogorgon). The first (westerly) one is the site of the Troll Breeding Pens; the second is the Cult's sacrificial area. The actual combat involves some acolyte cultists and hired mercenaries, but to get to them the PCs probably pass the Breeding Pens, moving east. Once they leave the Pens, they enter a large maze of hedgerows. Aodhan's ruthless harpy mercenaries prowl overhead, looking

for intruders while camouflaged in the thick willow trees. As PCs approach the Pens promontory, read or paraphrase the following:

Ahead is a deserted area; large, flat stone slabs, huge, ruined iron cages, and patches of scorched earth testify to something violent having happened here recently.

If PCs move closer, continue with the following:

This deserted area was clearly a research station of some sort. Those cages still partially intact show evidence of forced escape via bent cage bars; large and medium-sized tracks cover the area, leading both back the way you have come and also into the murky swamp water. Fragments of partially burned parchment cling listlessly to the thin grass at the water's edge, held in place by blood and clumps of thick mud.

This is the site of the Troll Breeding Pens, about which PCs may have heard much or perhaps guessed at if they have previously encountered the half-troll Aodhan. If a PC is carrying Malerix Moorcol from Encounter Three, he will deduce for the PC what has happened if the PC describes the area (and be furious at the destruction of his research; have the bag shake violently to convey this, possibly forcing the PC to "act casually"). If Malerix is not here, the PCs will have to deduce for themselves what happened.

The parchment fragments contain Malerix's research notes (in Abyssal, and now months old); he can confirm (or the PCs can decode) that trolls were bred with hill giants, a young adult black dragon, a succubus (who actually volunteered), and other more mundane and unwilling creatures. Based on the current condition of the Pens, he suspects these creatures are now on the loose.

The second promontory is roughly 500 yards away; a Track check (DC 20 = firm ground base DC 15 +4 days -1 Large creatures -1 for three creatures +3 fog) locates the footpath along the shoreline between the two promontories, although it shows signs of disuse. The entire area east of the Pens is cloaked in a thick mist, which obscures all vision; hearing, however, is another matter. PCs will be able to detect a multitude of unpleasant sounds through the mist, including shrill hooting, ominous splashing in the nearby swamp water, occasional faraway growls and, faintly, screaming (one of the prisoners; see below). If Malerix is here, he impatiently urges them on, possibly causing a conflict with PCs who wish to proceed cautiously. The PCs approach without incident, as they have the element of surprise (for now). Refer to Map #5.

The trail leads to the entrance of a large hedgerow maze, cultivated to impede progress to the altar area and to be the setting for an initiation ritual where blindfolded candidates must get past other cultists and natural pit traps but still find the exit in the time

allotted. The walls of the maze are 15 feet high and 2 feet thick. The pit traps have been covered, as there is no initiation tonight, but the brittle twigs and reeds will make loud snapping noises if the PCs fail to spot them and recognize the danger (Spot DC 20 or Search DC 15, and a PC with 5 ranks in Knowledge [nature] gets +2 to this check). The mist does not penetrate the maze enough to obscure vision now.

Most importantly (for the PCs), Aodhan, always keen to raids on the camp by natural swamp denizens, has hired harpy mercenaries to bolster the camp defenses. At APL 10, a harpy bard has placed an audible *alarm* spell at the southern entrance of the maze.

A dense canopy of trees hangs over the maze to a height of 30 feet, prohibiting the PCs from flying over the maze unless the PCs are gaseous or incorporeal or have the Woodland Stride special ability.

If PCs are employing magic to aid in their stealth, modify the following accordingly; otherwise, use their pre-rolled Hide and Move Silently checks (opposed by the Listen/Spot of the harpies and acolyte cultists). The two cultists are busy resetting a pit trap at the north entrance of the maze and make Listen checks each round; the harpies fly over making Listen and Spot checks every other round. If the PCs are noticed, if they set off the *alarm*, have everyone roll initiative and let the cultists and harpies start preparing.

If the PCs reach the end of the maze undetected, read the following when PCs exit the north end of the maze. Adapt this text if the PCs reach the end under different circumstances.

A sickly-sweet odor hangs in the air as the maze ends at an open expanse, where a large bonfire illuminates the second Cult campsite. Around the outer edge of the mushroom-shaped land mass are several iron cages of varying sizes, each raised on stilts, with many containing ragged humanoids chained to face the swamp; the prisoners' sporadic shrieks of terror bespeak their dismal fate. Beyond the bonfire, some fifteen feet high, stands another wooden cross bearing an unmoving, gaunt humanoid. At the base of the cross is a massive, dark stone altar bedecked with an elaborate black-and-red tapestry and covered with dozens of burning candles. Around the bonfire are two semicircles of wooden posts topped with large skulls; even at this distance, the two closest skulls show clear evidence of scratch marks, as if something were using these grim relics as a perch. At the northern exit to the maze, two figures, clad in black, look up at your approach and sound the call to attack. Nearby, the flapping of leathery wings signals that they are not alone.

As noted, the prisoners are chained to face away from land (another component of their torture), so they cannot betray the PCs' position or approach. However,

once the PCs reach the northern exit to the maze, the two acolytes automatically spot them (barring exceptional stealth or magic); have everyone roll initiative.

A Knowledge (nature) check of DC 15 identifies the skulls as belonging to trolls, which may come as a surprise if the PCs know that Aodhan is a half-troll; the skulls are indeed perches for the harpy mercenaries.

The harpies and acolyte cultists are the intended fight here. PCs succeeding on a DC 15 Sense Motive check note the curious lack of Cult resistance; indeed, the presence of only two acolytes and some hired mercenaries should make PCs wonder what has become of the rest of the camp's defenses, most notably the trolls (hinted at by Malerix or perhaps expected by PCs). PCs may be able to obtain an explanation from their defeated opponents via Intimidation (see below).

The expanse between the north end of the maze and the bonfire is filled with natural hazards such as shallow bogs, quicksand, wide hedgerows, and covered insect pits; consult pages 88-89 of the DMG for details on these natural hazards. The insect pits are noticed with a DC 15 Spot check; they are each 8 feet deep and do not cause damage but are full of non-venomous centipedes and earwigs and require a full-round action to climb out of them. The bogs impede movement; the hedgerows, while shorter than the maze, are still considered "wide," and both impede movement and provide cover. The large patch of quicksand is noticed with a DC 8 Survival check ONLY by a PC approaching it; running or charging PCs, even those making active Spot checks, will not notice the quicksand in time. The cultists know where each of these are, and also know the safe, snake-shaped paths through the area. Tall, thick willow trees that provide concealment also shroud the entire promontory and extend over the top of the maze.

➤ **Insect Pit Trap:** CR 0; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 8 ft. deep; Atk n/a; irritation; Spot DC 15; Disable Device n/a; Market value n/a.

➤ **Hedge Maze:** 2 ft. thick; hardness 5; hp 15 (per 5-ft. square); AC 5; Break DC 18. Axes do normal damage and bypass hardness; other slashing weapons do normal damage; bludgeoning weapons do half damage; piercing weapons do no damage. The hedges are fifteen feet high and can be climbed with a DC 15 Climb check, but the dense willow canopy covers with the top of the maze.

APL 4 (EL 7, including +1 for terrain)

➤ **Harpy:** hp 31; *Monster Manual* 150.

➤ **Acolyte Cultist (Melee):** half-orc Bbn2; hp 23; Appendix 1.

☛ **Acolyte Cultist (Arcane):** half-elf Wiz(Tra)2; hp 9; Appendix 1.

APL 6 (EL 9, including +1 for terrain)

☛ **Fiendish Harpies (2):** hp 31; Appendix 1.

☛ **Acolyte Cultist (Melee):** half-orc Bbn2/Rog1; hp 29; Appendix 1.

☛ **Acolyte Cultist (Arcane):** half-elf Wiz(Tra)3; hp 13; Appendix 1.

APL 8 (EL 11, including +1 for terrain)

☛ **Harpy Sharpshooter Ftr4:** hp 55; Appendix 1.

☛ **Harpies (2):** hp 31 each; *Monster Manual* 150.

☛ **Acolyte Cultist (Melee):** half-orc Bbn2/Rog3; hp 41; Appendix 1.

☛ **Acolyte Cultist (Arcane):** half-elf Wiz(Tra)5; hp 21; Appendix 1.

APL 10 (EL 13, including +1 for terrain)

☛ **Talitha'Ceri (Half-Fiend Harpy Brd3):** hp 67; Appendix 1.

☛ **Fiendish Harpy Ftr2 (archer):** hp 63; Appendix 1.

☛ **Fiendish Harpy Ftr2 (duelist):** hp 63; Appendix 1.

☛ **Acolyte Cultist (Melee):** half-orc Bbn2/Rog3/Rgr1; hp 50; Appendix 1.

☛ **Acolyte Cultist (Arcane):** half-elf Wiz(Tra)6; hp 25; Appendix 1.

Tactics: At all APLs the cultists have been specifically instructed by Aodhan: the wizard is to delay and/or incapacitate as many intruders as possible while the half-orc attacks anyone able to resist the wizard's spells. Both acolytes understand that they are the support team: the hired harpy mercenaries are the real killers here (with one exception at APL 10; see below).

If the PCs are spotted/heard and the alarm sounded, the wizard spends the first (surprise) round casting a buff spell (*cat's grace*, *expeditious retreat*, etc) and both cultists hide in a convenient place, while the harpies fly to a position beside the exit of the maze.

Both cultists have already been subjected to the harpies' Captivating Songs earlier today, so they do not have to save if the harpies sing during combat.

At APL 4, the wizard leads off with *sleep* (or *color spray* if elves are in the party). The half-orc charges and Power Attacks any affected PCs. The harpy utilizes her song, hoping to lure one or more PCs into the swamp to drown.

At APL 6, *glitterdust* is the first choice, since the barbarian can sneak attack blinded PCs. *Tasha's hideous laughter* is next, then the wizard moves back into hazardous terrain, hoping to lure a charging PC into the quicksand. The fiendish harpies work in tandem: one uses her Captivating Song (as above) to lure a PC or PCs toward the swamp, while the other one uses Flyby Attack to harass remaining PCs.

At APL8 the wizard tries to cast *haste* first, hoping to get some of the harpies along with the half-orc. Otherwise, he backs up and readies to cast *web*, hoping to pin as many PCs as possible to the north wall of the maze. This is followed by *stinking cloud* (with cabbage leaves grown locally). The two normal harpies behave as the fiendish ones at APL6. The half-orc tries to take advantage of incapacitated PCs. The harpy sharpshooter targets one PC at a time. Spellcasters and especially other archers are the primary targets.

At APL10 the tactics are nearly identical to those at APL8; if the wizard has a surprise round, see *invisibility* in the first spell cast while the barbarian quaffs his *potion of invisibility*; in this way the wizard can keep track of his ally without accidentally targeting him with a spell. The barbarian attacks elves before all other targets, even if this means sidestepping closer foes and tumbling into position. The harpy archer behaves as the sharpshooter at APL 8; the harpy duelist uses her *guisarme's reach* both to trip foes and to provide flanks for the half-orc.

Finally, and only at APL10, the PCs meet a minor celebrity, a spy sent by Aodhan's quasit superior (from PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper*) suspicious of Aodhan's activities. This spy is the half-fiend bard Talitha'Ceri ("TAL-i-tha SEER-ee"); a DC 20 Knowledge (the planes) or DC 25 bardic knowledge check identifies her as a plane-hopping minstrel-mercenary who sometimes negotiates with foes to expand her bardic repertoire. Talitha'Ceri uses *mirror image* from a wand when the PCs are first heard. She leads off with her bardic *inspire courage* and then uses *unholy blight* on as many PCs as possible. Her subsequent actions respond to the PCs; if one PC becomes isolated, she swoops in to deliver a Flyby Attack *poison*, *contagion*, or smite-good bite attack. She relies heavily on her bow and rarely engages in direct melee.

As the fight progresses, the two acolytes move back into the hazardous terrain; from here the barbarian (at all APLs) may try to bull rush a PC into the quicksand while the harpies continue their singing and bowfire, doing what they can to keep the PCs from fighting on a unified front (forcing one PC to waste precious rounds helping another from the quicksand or insect pits, etc). One glaring weakness in their strategy is that no one has a *dispel magic*, which allows the PCs to cast spells with impunity.

Interrogation

If the PCs defeat the cultists without killing all of them, they might learn something of Aodhan's whereabouts with a successful Intimidate check or enchantment magic.

You could also have the cultists or harpies mention the name of Aodhan ("OW-dan") as banter during the fight. The PCs may have seen this villain (in PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper*) but might not yet know his name. It will be good for them to attach a name to their enemy.

The Cultists: Successful interrogation at APLs 4-8 gets a surviving acolyte to admit that their master Aodhan took all of the trolls, orcs, half-trolls and other human cultists and left camp two weeks ago without specifying a return date. He seemed very excited and in a conspicuously good mood, leaving instructions that the body on the cross remain alive until his return.

The Harpies: Aside from the bard at APL 10, the harpies know nothing useful.

The Harpy Bard (APL 10): No Intimidate check or magic is necessary if Talitha'Ceri is still alive; in fact, if PCs are winning the fight, she offers to withdraw and tell the PCs what she knows about Aodhan's mysterious activities in exchange for her freedom. She is being sincere, despite being evil—a dead bard is a useless bard. She is a mercenary, not a disciple of Demogorgon. If the PCs doubt her, she Bluffs that she has a planar fork and can easily escape, but wouldn't the PCs rather have the knowledge? (She does have a nonfunctioning planar fork, but she travelled to this plane by the quasit cleric's magic.) If the PCs refuse her offer, she tries to fly away. If they accept her offer, she makes good and tells them everything listed above for APLs 4-8, further adding the truth about her role as a spy for the Cult's higher echelon and their suspicion at Aodhan's recent activities. She further adds that Aodhan took a large amount of coin with him and headed south-by-southeast, toward the Rakers, if that means anything to the PCs. When the PCs are satisfied, she flees with any harpies that survived, leaving the acolyte cultists to the PCs as prisoners.

Treasure:

👑 **APL 4:** Loot: 84 gp; Coin: 10 gp; Magic: 129 gp—4 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *potion of barkskin +2* (25 gp each), 2 *scrolls of magic missile* (CL 1st) (2 gp each per scroll).

👑 **APL 6:** Loot: 190 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 279 gp—4 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *potion of invisibility* (25 gp each), *potion of barkskin +2* (25 gp each), *potion of remove blindness/deafness* (63 gp each), 2 *scrolls of magic missile* (CL 1st) (2 gp each per scroll).

👑 **APL 8:** Loot: 203 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 951 gp—+1 *halfling bane composite longbow* (+1 Str bonus) (708 gp each), 10 *adamantine arrows* (5 gp each per arrow), 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *potion of invisibility* (25 gp each), *potion of barkskin +2* (25 gp each), *potion of remove blindness/deafness* (63 gp each), 2 *scrolls of magic missile* (CL 1st) (2 gp each per scroll).

👑 **APL 10:** Loot: 267 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 1890 gp—+1 *halfling bane composite longbow* (+1 Str bonus) (708 gp each), 10 *adamantine arrows* (5 gp each per arrow), *wand of mirror image* (375 gp each), *brooch of shielding* (125 gp each), 2 *cloaks of resistance +1* (83 gp each per cloak), 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *potion of invisibility* (25 gp each), *potion of barkskin +2* (25 gp each), 3 *potions of remove blindness/deafness* (63 gp each per potion), 2 *scrolls of magic missile* (CL 1st) (2 gp each per scroll).

Detect Magic Results: +1 *halfling bane composite longbow* (faint transmutation and moderate conjuration), *adamantine arrows* (nonmagical), *wand of mirror image* (faint illusion), *brooch of shielding* (faint abjuration), *cloak of resistance +1* (faint abjuration), *potion of cure moderate wounds* (faint conjuration), *potion of invisibility* (faint illusion), *potion of barkskin +2* (faint transmutation), *potion of remove blindness/deafness* (faint conjuration), *scroll of magic missile* (faint evocation).

Development: Once the harpies and cultists are dealt with, the PCs may explore the camp.

There are five living prisoners (four in cages, one on the cross); in the cages are two humans (male Com1, female Com1), one orc (LE male Rgr1, Int 9, willing to cooperate with the PCs in exchange for saving his life) and a badly burned male half-troll/half-gnoll (alignment CE but overall a piteous creature) whom Aodhan kept alive for an impending sacrifice.

If PCs are able to communicate with the half-troll/half-gnoll, it reveals the details of Aodhan's current psychosis and his fixation on being the ONLY half-troll. It adds that Aodhan and H'nakaalah murdered the camp's previous leader, Malerix Moorcol (corroborating Malerix's story if the PCs have him), and that Aodhan personally sacrificed three of the Troll King's envoys and two other half-troll variants (Malerix's handiwork) in a violent ceremony that resulted in the Pens population revolting and staging a mass escape; this half-troll was one of the escapees but was soon captured and has been a prisoner since then (2 months). He radiates evil and understands any PC hostility toward him; still, living in a cage is no way to exist and would prefer a quick death to slow rot.

The figure on the cross is a woman named Dantalle, a paladin of Pholtus whose entire party was ambushed and sacrificed over a month ago. If the PCs

delayed in getting to the campsite (for instance, by resting a day between Encounters Two and Three or Four, but not if they rested at Willow's place), then Dantalle has died from starvation.

Finally, when PCs move to examine the cross, the supernatural energies surrounding the Mark of Demogorgon are drawn to the proximity of the curse-bearer(s) and the curse undergoes a mutation. Paraphrase the following:

Bearers of the Mark of Demogorgon feel excruciating pain on their faces. The rest of you note a curious thing as previously invisible scars manifest on the faces of the curse-bearer(s) and begin violently bleeding.

This effect lasts for perhaps thirty seconds before the scars seal themselves and again fade away, but the damage has been done: the marks remain as before but the curse has mutated. Details on the new effects of the curse can be found in Appendix 2 and on the AR.

The nails used in Dantalle's torment hold the key to removing the Mark of Demogorgon from the PCs (or NPC) bearing it. There are enough nails present to distribute if multiple PCs have the Mark, but it is important to allow PCs to declare on their own that they recover the nails; do not prompt them to do so.

Conclusion

With the second Cult camp in disarray, the prisoners rescued and the nails necessary to the study of the curse successfully located, the PCs may journey back to Griffwatch Castle (and from there to Wintershiven or Rakervale) and report their success (or limited success) and turn in any prisoners. If the PCs recovered the nails and deliver them to the Church of the One True Path, the priests of Pholtus still cannot produce a viable cure, though the mutated form probably seems a boon to afflicted PCs. Cursed PCs are advised to retain the nails and keep in contact with the Church, pending further study. Finally, PCs must contend with the disturbing fact that their expedition was betrayed from the outset. The unsettling knowledge that it was Sir Andros of Tobinsford who organized and financed the mission may leave many PCs wondering who, if anyone, they can trust...

The End

Critical Events Summary

Please provide the following information to the author at eteignoir@yahoo.com. If you have other comments about the scenario, you may email them to the author or to the Pale Triad (poc@theocracyofthepale.com).

1. Did cell leader H'nakaalah escape?

2. Did PCs successfully interact with Gumboots and let him eat a chuul egg?
3. Did a PC accept possession of the bag containing Malerix Moorcol?
4. Did the PCs successfully interact with Willow, the Swamp Witch, and would any PC be suitable as a midwife?
5. How many PCs had the curse? Did they recover the nails in Encounter Six?
6. Did the PCs (at APL 10) accept Talitha'Ceri's offer and let her escape?

Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter One

Defeat the Cultists

APL4	150 xp
APL6	210 xp
APL8	270 xp
APL10	330 xp

Encounter Three OR Four

Defeat the Swamp Denizen(s)

APL4	150 xp
APL6	210 xp
APL8	270 xp
APL10	330 xp

Encounter Five

Successfully interacting with Willow

All APLs	60 xp
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Encounter Six

Navigating the Maze/Natural Hazards

All APLs	30 xp
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AND

Defeating the Cultists and Bodyguards

APL4	180 xp
APL6	240 xp
APL8	300 xp
APL10	360 xp

Story Award

Successfully interacting with Gumboots (not available for PCs that faced Encounter Four)

All APLs 30 xp

Recovering the nails

APL2 45 xp

APL4 90 xp

APL6 135 xp

APL8 180 xp

Discretionary roleplaying award

All APLs 30 xp

Total possible experience:

APL4 675 xp

APL6 900 xp

APL8 1,125 xp

APL10 1,350 xp

Treasure Summary

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a “treasure” section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter’s treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast

identify, analyze dweomer or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate.

Loot = Looted gear from enemy; Coin = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; Magic = Magic Items.

Encounter One: Cross Your Heart...

APL 4: Loot: 37 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 104 gp – 4 *potions of cure light wounds* (4 gp each per potion), *potion of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each), *wand of magic missile* (1st; 63 gp each).

APL 6: Loot: 39 gp; Coin: 17 gp; Magic: 150 gp – 3 *potions of cure light wounds* (4 gp each per potion), *wand of magic missile* (1st; 63 gp each), 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion).

APL 8: Loot: 34 gp; Coin: 17 gp; Magic: 317 gp – 3 *potions of cure light wounds* (4 gp each per potion), 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *wand of magic missile* (1st; 63 gp each), 2 *cloaks of resistance +1* (83 gp each per cloak).

APL 10: Loot: 9 gp; Coin: 17 gp; Magic: 642 gp – *potion of cure light wounds* (4 gp each), 4 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *potion of cure serious wounds* (63 gp each), *wand of magic missile* (1st; 63 gp each), *cloak of resistance +1* (83 gp each), *necklace of fireballs* (type I; 138 gp each), +1 *greatclub* (192 gp each).

Encounter Three: Crocodile Tears

APL 4: Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 92 gp – *mithral chain shirt* (92 gp each).

APL 6: Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 439 gp – *mithral chain shirt* (92 gp each), +1 *heavy steel shield of bashing* (348 gp each).

APL 8: Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 200 gp; Magic: 439 gp – *mithral chain shirt* (92 gp each), +1 *heavy steel shield of bashing* (348 gp each).

APL 10: Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 1,132 gp – *mithral chain shirt* (92 gp each), +1 *heavy steel shield of bashing* (348 gp each), +1 *merciful heavy mace* (692 gp each).

OR

Encounter Four: Headlong

APL 4: Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 150gp; Magic: 0 gp.

APL 6: Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 200gp; Magic: 0 gp.

APL 8: Loot: 0 gp; Coin: 300gp; Magic: 0 gp.

APL 10: Loot: 0gp; Coin: 500gp; Magic: 0gp.

Encounter Six: The Song Remains...

APL 4: Loot: 84 gp; Coin: 10 gp; Magic: 129 gp – 4 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *potion of barkskin +2* (25 gp each), 2 *scrolls of magic missile* (2 gp each per scroll).

APL 6: Loot: 190 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 279 gp – 4 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *potion of barkskin +2* (25 gp each), *potion of invisibility* (25 gp each), 2 *potions of remove blindness/deafness* (63 gp each per potion), 2 *scrolls of magic missile* (2 gp each per scroll).

APL 8: Loot: 203 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 951 gp— +1 *halfling bane composite longbow* (+1 Str bonus) (708 gp each), 10 *adamantine arrows* (5 gp each per arrow), 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *potion of invisibility* (25 gp each), *potion of barkskin +2* (25 gp each), *potion of remove blindness/deafness* (63 gp each), 2 *scrolls of magic missile* (CL 1st) (2 gp each per scroll).

APL 10: Loot: 267 gp; Coin: 0 gp; Magic: 1890 gp— +1 *halfling bane composite longbow* (+1 Str bonus) (708 gp each), 10 *adamantine arrows* (5 gp each per arrow), *wand of mirror image* (375 gp each), *brooch of shielding* (125 gp each), 2 *cloaks of resistance +1* (83 gp each per cloak), 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds* (25 gp each per potion), *potion of invisibility* (25 gp each), *potion of barkskin +2* (25 gp each), 3 *potions of remove blindness/deafness* (63 gp each per potion), 2 *scrolls of magic missile* (CL 1st) (2 gp each per scroll).

Total Possible Treasure

APL 4: Loot: 123 gp; Coin: 210 gp; Magic: 325 gp; Total: 658 gp (capped at 650 gp)

APL 6: Loot: 229 gp; Coin: 17 gp; Magic: 868 gp; Total: 1,114 gp (capped at 900 gp)

APL 8: Loot: 237 gp; Coin: 217 gp; Magic: 1707 gp; Total: 2,160 gp (capped at 1,300 gp)

APL 10: Loot: 275 gp; Coin: 17 gp; Magic: 3664 gp; Total: 3,956 gp (capped at 2,300 gp)

Items for the Adventure Record

Mark of Demogorgon, Phase II: The curse undergoes a mutation. The PC bearing this Mark no longer treats natural 20 attack rolls as natural 1s. Natural 20s are treated normally, but now all natural 2 attack rolls are treated as natural 1s and automatically

miss. This curse cannot be removed by any means yet known. If this PC does not have the curse now but gets it later, then it immediately changes and behaves as described here. Also, if you do not play later parts of this series, check the Pale website (www.theocracyofthepale.com) in January 2008 for an update.

Favor of the Wintershiven Carpenter's Guild: If you returned his wife's body from the Troll Fens, or even news of her demise, Lene's husband Keral offers to craft one mundane item or a simple or martial weapon (not armor or shields) out of darkwood. You must pay the full price of the item.

Grimy Black Bag: This PC (one per table maximum) took possession of a filth-encrusted leather sack found in the chuul lair. Details on the bag will be disclosed in a future scenario.

Befriended Gumboots: This PC has chosen to adopt the abused crocodile Gumboots as an animal companion. Though he has lost his Improved Grab ability and his bite is weaker, Gumboots has improved his tail-slap attack. Otherwise, his advancement as an animal companion follows the standard rules. If he receives a *regenerate* spell, his base bite damage is restored to 1d8 points but he does not regain Improved Grab.

Gumboots: male crocodile (maimed); CR 2; Medium Animal; HD 3d8+9; hp 22; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +6; Atk or Full Atk +6 melee (1d2+6, bite) or +6 melee (3d6+6, tail slap); SA —; SQ hold breath, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Hide +7, Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +12; Alertness, Skill Focus (Hide)

High-Protein Diet: If Gumboots ate a chuul egg during the adventure, he develops an addiction to these costly delicacies. The PC must buy eggs before each scenario (20 gp x PC's level) or else suffer a -6 penalty to Handle Animal checks on him during the scenario; Gumboots also refuses to use his tail slap, relying on his weak bite.

Vigilance of the Third Eye: If the PCs defeated either the dire rats (APL 4) or the chuuls (APLs 6-10) and if at least one PC participated in her divination, Willow grants Regional access to an *incandescent blue sphere ioun stone* (DMG), as a reward to boost Survival and other Wisdom-based skills. The stone has a dark spot and looks eerily like the eye of a very large rat.

Cultist Spellbook I: *animate rope, color spray, expeditious retreat, magic missile, sleep, true strike*. Price: 300 gp.

Cultist Spellbook II: *cat's grace, glitterdust, see invisibility, Tasha's hideous laughter, web*. Price: 500 gp.

Cultist Spellbook III: *deep slumber, haste, stinking cloud, slow*. Price: 600 gp.

Item Access

APL 4:

- *Wand of magic missile* (Adventure; CL 1st; DMG; 750 gp)
- *Mithral shirt (chain shirt)* (Adventure; DMG; 1,100 gp)
- *Cultist Spellbook I* (Adventure; see above; 300 gp)
- *Malys root paste (poison)*** (Adventure; DMG; 500 gp; limit 3 per PC)
- *Terinav root (poison)*** (Adventure; DMG; 750 gp; limit 3 per PC)
- *Medium spider venom (poison)*** (Adventure; DMG; 150 gp; limit 3 per PC)

APL 6 (all of APL 4 plus the following):

- *+1 heavy steel shield of bashing* (Adventure; DMG; 4,170 gp)
- *Cultist Spellbook II* (Adventure; see above; 500 gp)

APL 8 (all of APLs 4-6 plus the following):

- *Cultist Spellbook III* (Adventure; see above; 600 gp)
- *+1 halfling bane composite longbow (+1 Str bonus)* (Adventure; DMG; 8,500 gp)
- *Adamantine arrows* (Adventure; DMG; 61 gp each; limit 10 per PC)

APL 10 (all of APLs 4-8 plus the following):

- *+1 merciful heavy mace* (Adventure; DMG; 8,312 gp)
- *Wand of mirror image* (Adventure; DMG; 4,500 gp)
- *Brooch of shielding* (Adventure; DMG; 1,500 gp)
- *Necklace of fireballs, Type I* (Adventure; DMG; 1,650 gp)

** These items are available only if at least one PC participated in Willow's divination and helped her perform her errand.

Appendix I – All APLs

H'nakaalah: male human (Flan) Rog5/Sor4/Asn1; CR 10; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 5d6+4d4+1d6+10; hp 58 (currently 29); Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 13 [+3 Dex]; Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk or Full Atk +5 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed strike); SA death attack (DC 13), sneak attack +4d6, spells; SQ evasion, poison use, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge, viper familiar; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +6 (+8 on ceramic items), Balance +9, Bluff +20, Concentration +4, Craft (ceramics/holy symbols) +7, Decipher Script +3, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +11 (+13 from rope bonds), Gather Information +6, Hide +12, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (local—Nyron and Her Environs) +7, Knowledge (nature) +4, Knowledge (the planes) +3, Knowledge (religion) +4, Move Silently +12, Sense Motive +4, Sleight of Hand +9, Spellcraft +6, Spot +1, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +7, Use Rope +9 (+11 to bind someone); Alertness^B (when familiar is within arm's reach), Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Persuasive, Silent Spell.

Languages: Common, Flan, Abyssal, Draconic, Giant.

Viper Familiar: Tiny Magical Beast; hp 29.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/4 per day; 6/6/4 remaining today): 0—*dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, message, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue* (DC 12); 1st—*endure elements, magic missile, true strike*; 2nd—*invisibility*.

Assassin Spells Known (1 per day): 1st—*disguise self, obscuring mist*.

Possessions: H'nakaalah stashed his gear in a waterproof bag and hidden it in the swamp; the absence of possessions is designed to aid his ruse of being a Cult victim. +2 *slick studded leather armor*, +2 *frost shortsword*, +1 *keen kukri*, *ring of protection* +2, *vest of resistance* +2, disguise kit, silk rope, artisan's kit.

Personality and Physical Description: H'nakaalah is evil incarnate, an unscrupulous menace so vile he's willing to pose as a Flan druid and give his own people a bad name; a foe so full of insane confidence he's determined to face armed adventurers without a shred of his own gear; a fanatic so focused he's prepared to die in Demogorgon's name rather than let anyone probe his mind for Cult secrets. He is in his early thirties and has led the lizardfolk cell since the split eight months ago, weathering even Aodhan's promotion and the murder of Malerix Moorcol with

detached verve. As a leader, he is ideally positioned to carry out the Cult's bidding; the lizardfolk follow him blindly, and his quasit superior/liaison trusts him implicitly. He has left Aodhan to his own machinations, knowing the fiends who rule the Cult will eventually learn of it and reward H'nakaalah for being the more obedient disciple. The genius of his cell is that he knows virtually nothing about religion or planar activity and has essentially Bluffed the dull-witted lizardfolk into believing his own brand of Cult dogma; this tactic has fooled everyone except the shaman, Vekk, who is having doubts about the rogue.

H'nakaalah has long, matted and unkempt brown hair and brown eyes; his current appearance is his true one, though in the past he has often traveled the Pale in disguise gathering information on ways to undermine the Church. All spies within the Church of the One True Path were placed there by H'nakaalah.

Appendix 1 – APL 4

Encounter One

Cult Sorcerer: Male lizardfolk Sor2; CR 2; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+2d4+4; hp 20; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (21 with *mage armor*), touch 12, flat-footed 15 (19) [+2 Dex, +5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +2; Grp +2; Atk +2 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) or +2 melee (1d4, claw) or +4 ranged (1d4/19-20, thrown dagger) or +4 ranged (1d4, dart); Full Atk +2/+2 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and -3 melee (1d6, bite) or +2 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) and -3 melee (1d6, bite); SA spells; SQ hold breath; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Balance +10, Concentration +3, Jump +6, Spellcraft +2, Swim +8; Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (ray).

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/5 per day, 6/2 remaining today; +5 ranged touch): 0—*acid splash, dancing lights, daze* (DC 13), *read magic, ray of frost*; 1st—*mage armor, ray of enfeeblement*.

Possessions: Dagger, 6 darts, 5 flasks of alchemist's fire, *potion of cure light wounds, wand of magic missile* (1st), spell component pouch.

Cult Savage: Male lizardfolk Bbn1; CR 2; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+1d12+9; hp 26; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (20 with *mage armor*), touch 11, flat-footed 15 (19) [+1 Dex, +5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk +6 melee (1d10+4, masterwork greatclub) or +5 melee (1d4+3, claw); Full Atk +6 melee (1d10+4, masterwork greatclub) and +0 melee (1d6+1, bite); SA —; SQ fast movement, hold breath, rage 1/day; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +9, Climb +4, Jump +12, Listen +1, Survival +1, Swim +9; Combat Reflexes, Power Attack.

Languages: Draconic.

Rage Suite: hp 32; AC 14 (18 with *mage armor*), touch 9, flat-footed 13 (17); Grp +7; Atk +8 melee (1d10+7, masterwork greatclub) or +7 melee (1d4+5, claw); Full Atk +8 melee (1d10+7, masterwork greatclub) and +2 melee (1d6+2, bite); SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 21, Con 20.

Possessions: Masterwork greatclub, *potion of cure light wounds*.

Vekk (Cult Shaman): Male lizardfolk Clr1; CR 2; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+1d8+6; hp 21; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (19 with *mage armor*), touch

10, flat-footed 15 (19) [+5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (1d6, club) or +1 melee (1d4, claw); Full Atk +1 melee (1d6, club) and -1 melee (1d6, bite) or +1/+1 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and -1 melee (1d6, bite); SA —; SQ hold breath, rebuke undead 4/day; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Balance +8, Concentration +3, Craft (alchemy) +2, Jump +7, Knowledge (religion) +3, Swim +8; Improved Initiative, Multiattack.

Languages: Common, Flan, Draconic, Orc, Abyssal.

Cleric Spells Prepared (3/2+1): 0—*cure minor wounds, guidance, resistance*; 1st—*bless, doom* (DC 13), *enlarge person**.

*Domain spell. *Deity:* Demogorgon (Vaprak). *Domains:* Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength once per day, free action, +1 enhancement bonus to Str for 1 round).

Possessions: Club, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, tanglefoot bag, unholy symbol of Demogorgon/Vaprak.

Encounter Three

Blue (Advanced Dire Rat Pack Leader): CR 4; Medium Animal; HD 4d8+8; hp 28; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11 [+3 Dex, +1 natural]; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk or Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+3 plus disease, bite); SA disease; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Climb +13, Hide +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Swim +14; Alertness, Power Attack, Weapon Finesse.

Disease (Ex): Filth fever—bite, Fortitude DC 14, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.

Advanced Dire Rats: CR 1; Small Animal; HD 2d8+2; hp 12; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 12 [+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural]; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk or Full Atk +5 melee (1d4 plus disease, bite); SA disease; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Hide +9, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Swim +11; Alertness, Weapon Finesse (bite).

Disease (Ex): Filth fever—bite, Fortitude DC 12, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.

Encounter Six

Acolyte Cultist (melee): Male half-orc Bbn2; CR 2; Medium Humanoid (orc); HD 2d12+4; hp 23; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (uncanny dodge) [+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt]; Base Atk +2; Grp +6; Atk or Full Atk +7 melee (2d4+6/18-20, masterwork falchion); SA —; SQ darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, rage 1/day, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Craft (trapmaking) +4, Jump+11, Listen +6, Survival +6; Power Attack.

Languages: Common, Orc, Elven .

Rage Suite: hp 27; AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13; Grp +8; Atk or Full Atk +9 melee (2d4+9/18-20, masterwork falchion); SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 22, Con 18.

Possessions: Chain shirt, masterwork falchion, 2 daggers, trapmaking kit, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, 60 gp.

Acolyte Cultist (arcane): Male half-elf Wiz(Tra)2; CR 2; Medium Humanoid (elf); HD 2d4+2; hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 [+2 Dex, +2 leather]; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk or Full Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) or +3 ranged (1d4/19-20, thrown dagger); SA spells; SQ low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +5, Diplomacy +1 Gather Information +1 Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (nature) +5 Knowledge (the planes) +5, Knowledge (local—Nyron and Her Environs) +5, Listen +2 Search +4 , Spellcraft +10, Spot +2 ; Scribe Scroll (B) , Spell Focus (illusion).

Languages: Common, Elven, Abyssal, Giant, Draconic .

Wizard Spells Prepared (Transmutation Specialist; Abjuration and Necromancy prohibited) (4/3+1): 0—*acid splash* (+3 ranged touch), *dancing lights*, *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*; 1st—*color spray* (DC 15), *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *sleep* (DC 14). Arcane spell failure: 10% (leather armor).

Possessions: Leather armor, dagger, *everburning torch*, *potion of barkskin* +2, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, 2 *scrolls of magic missile*, spell component pouch, spellbook, vial of antitoxin. *Spellbook:* 0—all except Abj and Nec spells; 1st—*animate rope*, *color spray*, *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *sleep*, *true strike*.

Appendix 1 – APL 6

Encounter One

Cult Sorcerer: Male lizardfolk Sor4; CR 4; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+4d4+6; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (21 with *mage armor*), touch 12, flat-footed 15 (19) [+2 Dex, +5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk +3 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) or +3 melee (1d4, claw) or +5 ranged (1d4/19-20, thrown dagger) or +5 ranged (1d4, dart); Full Atk +3/+3 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and -2 melee (1d6, bite) or +3 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) and -2 melee (1d6, bite); SA spells; SQ hold breath, lizard familiar; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Balance +10, Climb +3, Concentration +4, Jump +6, Knowledge (arcana) +1, Spellcraft +4 +8; Alertness^B (when familiar is within arm's reach), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (ray).

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/4 per day, 6/4/4 remaining today; +6 ranged touch): 0—*acid splash, dancing lights, daze* (DC 13), *detect magic, read magic, ray of frost*; 1st—*mage armor, ray of enfeeblement, shocking grasp*; 2nd—*scorching ray*.

Possessions: Dagger, 6 darts, 5 flasks of alchemist's fire, *potion of cure light wounds, wand of magic missile* (1st), spell component pouch, platinum ring worth 50 gp for *shield other*.

Cult Savage: Male lizardfolk Bbn3; CR 4; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+3d12+15; hp 46; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (20 with *mage armor*), touch 11, flat-footed 16 (20) (uncanny dodge) [+1 Dex, +5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +4; Grp +8; Atk +9 melee (1d10+6, masterwork greatclub) or +8 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +9 melee (1d10+6, masterwork greatclub) and +3 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA —; SQ fast movement, hold breath, rage 1/day, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +9, Climb +6, Jump +19, Listen +7, Survival +2 +10; Combat Reflexes, Power Attack.

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Rage Suite: hp 56; AC 14 (18 with *mage armor*), touch 9, flat-footed 14 (18); Grp +10; Atk +11 melee (1d10+9, masterwork greatclub) or +10 melee (1d4+6, claw); Full Atk +11 melee (1d10+9, masterwork greatclub) and +5 melee (1d6+3, bite); SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 22, Con 20.

Possessions: Masterwork greatclub, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*.

Vekk (Cult Shaman): Male lizardfolk Clr3; CR 4; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+3d8+10; hp 35; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (19 with *mage armor*), touch 10, flat-footed 15 (19) [+5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk +3 melee (1d6, club) or +3 melee (1d4, claw); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6, club) and +1 melee (1d6, bite) or +3/+3 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and +1 melee (1d6, bite); SA —; SQ hold breath, rebuke undead 4/day; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Balance +8, Concentration +4, Craft (alchemy) +3, Jump +7, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Knowledge (the planes) +2, Knowledge (religion) +5, +8; Improved Initiative, Multiattack.

Languages: Common, Flan, Draconic, Orc, Abyssal.

Cleric Spells Prepared (4/3+1/2+1): 0—*cure minor wounds* (x2), *guidance, resistance*; 1st—*bless, cure light wounds, doom* (DC 14), *enlarge person**; 2nd—*bull's strength**, *shield other, sound burst* (DC 15).

*Domain spell. Deity: Demogorgon (Vaprak). *Domains:* Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength once per day, free action, +3 enhancement bonus to Str for 1 round).

Possessions: Club, 2 *potions of cure light wounds, potion of cure moderate wounds, tanglefoot bag, unholy symbol of Demogorgon/Vaprak, platinum ring worth 50 gp for shield other*.

Encounter Six

Fiendish Harpies: CR 5; Medium Monstrous Humanoid; HD 7d8; hp 31; Init +6; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 [+2 Dex, +1 natural, +2 armor]; Base Atk +7; Grp +7; Atk +7 melee (1d6, club); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6, club) and +2/+2 melee (1d3, 2 claws); SA *captivating song, smite good* (1/day, +7 damage); SQ *darkvision* 60 ft., DR 5/magic, cold resistance 5, fire resistance 5, SR 12; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Intimidate +7, Listen +7, Perform (oratory) +5, Spot +3; Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative.

Languages: Common.

Captivating Song (Su): as the ability in the *Monster Manual*, page 150.

Possessions: Leather armor, club, masterwork dagger, *potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of remove blindness/deafness*.

Acolyte Cultist (melee): Male half-orc Bbn2/Rog1; CR 3; Medium Humanoid (orc); HD 2d12+1d6+6; hp 29; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (uncanny dodge) [+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt]; Base Atk +2; Grp +6; Atk or Full Atk +7 melee (2d4+6/18-20, masterwork falchion); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, rage 1/day, trapfinding, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Craft (trapmaking) +5, Hide +1, +13, Listen +7, Move Silently +1, Sense Motive +2, Spot +2, Survival +6, Tumble +1; Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Languages: Common, Orc, Elven.

Rage Suite: hp 35; AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13; Grp +8; Atk or Full Atk +9 melee (2d4+9/18-20, masterwork falchion); SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 22, Con 18.

Possessions: Masterwork chain shirt, masterwork falchion, dagger, trapmaking kit, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of invisibility*.

Acolyte Cultist (arcane): Male half-elf Wiz(Tra)3; CR 3; Medium Humanoid (elf); HD 3d4+3; hp 13; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 [+2 Dex, +2 leather]; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk or Full Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) or +3 ranged (1d4/19-20, thrown dagger); SA spells; SQ low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +6, Diplomacy +1, Gather Information +1, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (nature) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Knowledge (local—Nyron and Her Environs) +6, Listen +2, Search +4, Spellcraft +11, Spot +2; Scribe Scroll (B), Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Focus (illusion).

Languages: Common, Elven, Abyssal, Giant, Draconic.

Wizard Spells Prepared (Transmutation Specialist; Abjuration and Necromancy prohibited) (4/3+1/2+1): 0—*acid splash* (+3 ranged touch), *dancing lights*, *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*; 1st—*color spray* (DC 15), *expeditious retreat*, *grease* (DC 15), *magic missile*; 2nd—*cat's grace*, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 15). Arcane spell failure: 10% (leather armor).

Possessions: Leather armor, dagger, *everburning torch*, *potion of barkskin* +2, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, 2 *scrolls of magic missile* (CL 1st), spell component pouch, spellbook, vial of antitoxin. *Spellbook:* 0—all except Abj and Nec spells; 1st—*animate rope*, *color spray*, *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *sleep*, *true strike*; 2nd—*cat's grace*, *glitterdust*, *see invisibility*, *Tasha's hideous laughter*, *web*.

Appendix 1 – APL 8

Encounter One

Cult Sorcerer: Male lizardfolk Sor6; CR 6; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+6d4+8; hp 36; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (21 with *mage armor*), touch 12, flat-footed 15 (19) [+2 Dex, +5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +4; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) or +4 melee (1d4, claw) or +6 ranged (1d4/19-20, thrown dagger) or +6 ranged (1d4, dart); Full Atk +4/+4 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and -1 melee (1d6, bite) or +4 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) and -1 melee (1d6, bite); SA spells; SQ hold breath, lizard familiar; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Balance +10, Climb +3, Concentration +6, Jump +6, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Spellcraft +5 +8; Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (ray).

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/6/4 per day, 6/4/6/4 remaining today; +7 ranged touch): 0—*acid splash, dancing lights, daze* (DC 13), *detect magic, read magic, ray of frost, touch of fatigue* (DC 13); 1st—*mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement* (+7 ranged touch), *shocking grasp*; 2nd—*scorching ray, touch of idiocy* (DC 15); 3rd—*ray of exhaustion* (DC 16).

Possessions: Dagger, 6 darts, 2 flasks of alchemist's fire, *potion of cure light wounds, wand of magic missile* (1st), spell component pouch, *cloak of resistance +1*, platinum ring worth 50 gp for *shield other*.

Cult Savage: Male lizardfolk Bbn5; CR 6; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+5d12+21; hp 66; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (20 with *mage armor*), touch 11, flat-footed 16 (20) (uncanny dodge) [+1 Dex, +5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +6; Grp +10; Atk +12 melee (1d10+6, masterwork greatclub) or +10 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d10+6, masterwork greatclub) and +5 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA —; SQ fast movement, hold breath, improved uncanny dodge (can't be flanked except by Rog9), rage 2/day, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +9, Climb +6, Jump +21, Listen +9, Survival +4, Swim +10; Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Rage Suite: HD 2d8+5d12+35; hp 80; AC 14 (18 with *mage armor*), touch 9, flat-footed 14 (18); Grp +12; Atk +14 melee (1d10+9, masterwork greatclub) or +12 melee (1d4+6, claw); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+9,

masterwork greatclub) and +7 melee (1d6+3, bite); SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 22, Con 20.

Possessions: Masterwork greatclub, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds, cloak of resistance +1*.

Vekk (Cult Shaman): Male lizardfolk Clr5; CR 6; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+5d8+14; hp 49; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (19 with *mage armor*), touch 10, flat-footed 15 (19) [+5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +4; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d6, club) or +4 melee (1d4, claw); Full Atk +4 melee (1d6, club) and +2 melee (1d6, bite) or +4/+4 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and +2 melee (1d6, bite); SA —; SQ hold breath, rebuke undead 4/day; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Balance +8, Concentration +6 (+10 defensively), Craft (alchemy) +4, Jump +7, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (the planes) +3, Knowledge (religion) +5, Swim +8; Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Multiattack.

Languages: Common, Flan, Draconic, Orc, Abyssal.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/4+1/3+1/2+1): 0—*cure minor wounds* (x2), *guidance, light, resistance*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (x2), *doom, enlarge person**, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bull's strength**, *calm emotions* (DC 15), *shield other, sound burst* (DC 15); 3rd—*dispel magic, magic circle against good**, *prayer*.

*Domain spell. Deity: Demogorgon (Vaprak). Domains: Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength once per day, free action, +5 enhancement bonus to Str for 1 round).

Possessions: Club, 2 *potions of cure light wounds, potion of cure moderate wounds, tanglefoot bag, unholy symbol of Demogorgon/Vaprak, platinum ring worth 50 gp for shield other*

Encounter Six

Harpy Sharpshooter Ftr4: CR 8; Medium Monstrous Humanoid; HD 7d8+4d10; hp 55; Init +9; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14 [+5 Dex, +1 natural, +3 studded leather]; Base Atk +11; Grp +12; Atk +17 ranged (1d8+2/19-20/x3, +1 *halfling bane composite longbow* [+1 Str bonus]) or +12 melee (1d6+1, club); Full Atk +17/+12/+7 ranged (1d8+2/19-20/x3, +1 *halfling bane composite longbow* [+1 Str bonus]) or +11/+6/+1 (1d6+1, club) and +11 melee (1d3, 2 claws); SA Captivating song; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 19.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +10, Intimidate +10, Listen +6, Perform (oratory) +6, Spot +2; Dodge, Improved

Critical (longbow) , Improved Initiative, Mobility, Point Blank Shot , Precise Shot , Shot on the Run .

Languages: Common.

Captivating Song (Su): as the ability in the *Monster Manual*, page 150, but DC 17.

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather, +1 halfling bane composite longbow (+1 Str bonus), 20 normal arrows, 10 adamantine arrows, club, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of remove blindness/deafness*.

Acolyte Cultist (melee): Male half-orc Bbn2/Rog3; CR 5; Medium Humanoid (orc); HD 2d12+3d6+10; hp 41; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 15 [+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt]; Base Atk +4; Grp +8; Atk or Full Atk +9 melee (2d4+6/18-20, masterwork falchion); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, fast movement, rage 1/day, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Craft (trapmaking) +5, Escape Artist +2, Hide +3, Intimidate +0, +13, Listen +9, Move Silently +3, Sense Motive +2, Spot +4, Survival +6, Swim +4, Tumble +3; Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Languages: Common, Orc, Elven .

Rage Suite: hp 51; AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13; Grp +10; Atk or Full Atk +11 melee (2d4+9/18-20, masterwork falchion); SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 22, Con 18.

Possessions: Masterwork chain shirt, masterwork falchion, dagger, trapmaking kit, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of invisibility*.

Acolyte Cultist (arcane): Male half-elf Wiz(Tra)5; CR 5; Medium Humanoid (elf); HD 5d4+5; hp 21; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 [+2 Dex, +2 leather]; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk or Full Atk +3 melee (1d4+1/19-20, dagger) or +4 ranged (1d4/19-20, thrown dagger); SA spells; SQ low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +8, Diplomacy +1, Gather Information +3, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (nature) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Knowledge (local—Nyron and Her Environs) +8, Listen +2, Search +4, Spellcraft +13, Spot +2, Survival +3; Scribe Scroll (B) , Silent Spell, Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Focus (illusion).

Languages: Common, Elven, Abyssal, Giant, Draconic.

Wizard Spells Prepared (Transmutation Specialist; Abjuration and Necromancy prohibited) (4/4+1/3+1/2+1): 0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st—*animate rope*, *color spray* (DC 15), *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *true strike*; 2nd—*cat's*

grace, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 15), *web* (DC 16); 3rd—*deep slumber* (DC 16), *haste*, *stinking cloud* (DC 17). Arcane spell failure: 10% (leather armor).

Possessions: Leather armor, 2 daggers, *everburning torch*, *potion of barkskin* +2, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, 2 scrolls of magic missile (CL 1st), spell component pouch, spellbook, vial of antitoxin. **Spellbook:** 0—all except Abj and Nec spells; 1st—*animate rope*, *color spray*, *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *sleep*, *true strike*; 2nd—*cat's grace*, *glitterdust*, see *invisibility*, *Tasha's hideous laughter*, *web*; 3rd—*deep slumber*, *haste*, *stinking cloud*, *slow*.

Appendix 1 – APL 10

Encounter One

Cult Sorcerer: Male lizardfolk Sor8; CR 8; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+8d4+10; hp 44; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (21 with *mage armor*), touch 12, flat-footed 15 (19) [+2 Dex, +5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) or +5 melee (1d4, claw) or +7 ranged (1d4/19-20, thrown dagger) or +7 ranged (1d4, dart); Full Atk +5/+5 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and +0 melee (1d6, bite) or +5 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) and +0 melee (1d6, bite); SA spells; SQ hold breath, lizard familiar; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Balance +10, Climb +3, Concentration +8, Jump +6, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Spellcraft +6 +8, Alertness^B (when familiar is within arm's reach), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (ray).

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/6/3 per day, 6/4/4/6/3 remaining today; +8 ranged touch): 0—*acid splash, dancing lights, daze* (DC 13), *detect magic, read magic, ray of frost, resistance, touch of fatigue* (DC 13); 1st—*mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, shocking grasp, true strike*; 2nd—*resist energy, scorching ray, touch of idiocy* (DC 15); 3rd—*haste, ray of exhaustion* (DC 16); 4th—*enervation*.

Possessions: Dagger, 6 darts, 2 flasks of alchemist's fire, *potion of cure light wounds, wand of magic missile* (1st), spell component pouch, *cloak of resistance +1, necklace of fireballs* (type I), platinum ring worth 50 gp for *shield other*.

Cult Savage: Male lizardfolk Bbn7; CR 8; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+7d12+27; hp 86; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 17 (21 with *mage armor*), touch 12, flat-footed 17 (21) (uncanny dodge) [+2 Dex, +5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +8; Grp +12; Atk +14 melee (1d10+7/19-20, +1 *greatclub*) or +12 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+7/19-20, +1 *greatclub*) and +7 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA —; SQ DR 1/-, fast movement, hold breath, improved uncanny dodge (can't be flanked except by Rog11), rage 2/day, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +10, Climb +8, Jump +23, Listen +11, Survival +6, Swim +10; Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (*greatclub*), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*greatclub*).

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Rage Suite: hp 104; AC 15 (19 with *mage armor*), touch 10, flat-footed 15 (19); Grp +14; Atk +16 melee (1d10+10/19-20, +1 *greatclub*) or +14 melee (1d4+6, claw); Full Atk +16/+11 melee (1d10+10/19-20, +1 *greatclub*) and +9 melee (1d6+3, bite); SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 22, Con 20.

Possessions: +1 *greatclub, potion of cure moderate wounds*

Vekk (Cult Shaman): Male lizardfolk Clr7; CR 8; Medium Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+7d8+18; hp 63; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (19 with *mage armor*), touch 10, flat-footed 15 (19) [+5 natural, +4 *mage armor*]; Base Atk +6; Grp +6; Atk +6 melee (1d6, club) or +6 melee (1d4, claw); Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d6, club) and +4 melee (1d6, bite) or +6/+6 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and +4 melee (1d6, bite); SA—; SQ hold breath, rebuke undead 5/day; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Balance +8, Concentration +8 (+12 defensively), Craft (alchemy) +4, Jump +7, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Knowledge (religion) +6, Spellcraft +5, Swim +8; Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack.

Languages: Common, Flan, Draconic, Orc, Abyssal.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/1+1): 0—*cure minor wounds* (x2), *detect magic, guidance, light, resistance*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (x2), *detect law, doom* (DC 14), *enlarge person**, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bull's strength**, *calm emotions* (DC 15), ~~*shield other*~~, *sound burst* (DC 15), *spiritual weapon* (+9/+4 attack, 1d8+2 damage); 3rd—*dispel magic, invisibility purge, magic circle against good**, *prayer*; 4th—*chaos hammer** (DC 17), *divine power*.

*Domain spell. Deity: Demogorgon (Vaprak). *Domains:* Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength once per day, free action, +7 enhancement bonus to Str for 1 round).

Possessions: Club, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds, potion of cure serious wounds, tanglefoot bag, unholy symbol of Demogorgon/Vaprak, platinum ring worth 50 gp for shield other*.

Encounter Three

Advanced Chuuls: CR 9; Huge Aberration; HD 17d8+102; hp 187; Init +6; Spd 30 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 10, flat-footed 21 [+2 Dex, -2 size, +13 natural]; Base Atk +12; Grp +30; Atk +22 melee (4d6+10/19-20, claw); Full Atk +22/+22 melee (4d6+10/19-20, 2 claws); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA constrict 4d6+10, improved grab, paralytic tentacles; SQ amphibious, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to poison;

AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +12; Str 30, Dex 14, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 5.

Skills and Feats: Hide +14, Listen +14, Spot +14, Swim +18; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw).

Languages: Common.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a chuul deals 4d6+10 points of damage.

Paralytic Tentacles (Su): A chuul can transfer grabbed victims from a claw to its tentacles as a move action. The tentacles grapple with the same strength as the claw but deal no damage. However, they exude a paralytic secretion. Anyone held in the tentacles must succeed on a DC 24 Fortitude save each round on the chuul's turn or be paralyzed for 6 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based. While held in the tentacles, paralyzed or not, a victim automatically takes 2d6+5 points of damage each round from its mandibles.

Encounter Six

Fiendish Harpy Ftr2 (archer): CR 8; Medium Monstrous Humanoid; HD 7d8+2d10+18; hp 65; Init +9; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 13 [+5 Dex, +1 natural, +2 leather]; Base Atk +9; Grp +10; Atk +16 ranged (1d8+2/x3, +1 halfling bane composite longbow [+1 Str bonus]) or +10 melee (1d6+1, club) or +10 melee (1d3+1, claw); Full Atk +16/+11 ranged (1d8+2/x3, +1 halfling bane composite longbow [+1 Str bonus]) or +10/+5 melee (1d6+1, club) and +5 melee (1d3, claw); SA captivating song, smite good (1/day, +9 damage); SQ darkvision 60 ft., DR 5/magic, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 19.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +10, Intimidate +8, Listen +6, Perform (oratory) +6, Spot +2; Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Languages: Common.

Captivating Song (Su): as the ability in the *Monster Manual*, page 150, but DC 17.

Possessions: Leather armor, +1 halfling bane composite longbow (+1 Str bonus), 35 normal arrows, 5 adamantite arrows, club, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of remove blindness/deafness*.

Fiendish Harpy Ftr2 (duelist): CR 8; Medium Monstrous Humanoid; HD 7d8+2d10+18; hp 65; Init +8; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13 [+4 Dex, +2 leather, +1 natural]; Base Atk +9; Grp +11; Atk +13 melee (2d4+3/19-20/x3, masterwork guisarme) or +11 melee (1d6+2, club) or +11 melee (1d3+1, claw); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (2d4+3/19-20/x3,

masterwork guisarme) or +11/+6 melee (1d6+2, club) and +6/+6 melee (1d3+1, 2 claws); SA captivating song, smite good; SQ darkvision 60 ft., DR 5/magic, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 19.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +10, Intimidate +8, Listen +7, Perform (oratory) +6, Spot +3; Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (guisarme), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (guisarme).

Languages: Common.

Captivating Song (Su): as the ability in the *Monster Manual*, page 150, but DC 17.

Possessions: Leather armor, masterwork guisarme, club, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of remove blindness/deafness*.

Talitha'Ceri (Half-Fiend Harpy Brd3): CR 9; Medium Outsider (Native); HD 7d8+3d6+20; hp 67; Init +10; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 17 [+6 Dex, +4 studded leather, +1 natural]; Base Atk +9; Grp +12; Atk +12 melee (1d6+3, sickle) or +16 ranged (1d6+3/x3, masterwork composite shortbow [+3 Str bonus]) or +12 melee (1d4+1, claw) or +12 melee (1d8+1, bite); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d6+3, sickle) and +6 melee (1d8+1, bite) or +12 melee (1d4+3, 2 claws) and +7 melee (1d8+1, bite) or +13/+8 ranged (1d6+3/x3, masterwork composite shortbow [+3 Str bonus]); SA captivating song, smite good (1/day, +10 damage), spells, spell-like abilities; SQ bardic knowledge, bardic music 3/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage +1, inspire competence), darkvision 60 ft., DR 5/magic, immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, SR 20; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +14, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 23, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 24.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +19, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (the planes) +3, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +10, Perform (act/mime) +17, Perform (oratory) +17, Perform (percussion/chimes) 17, Perform (sing) +17, Sense Motive +5, Spot +10; Flyby Attack, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Initiative, Persuasive.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Giant.

Captivating Song (Su): as the ability in the *Players Handbook*, page 150, but DC 20.

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness*, *poison* (DC 21), 1/day—*desecrate*, *unholy blight* (DC 21), *contagion* (DC 20). Caster level 10th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Bard Spells Known (3/2 per day): 0—*detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 15), *know direction*, *message*, *resistance*, *summon instrument*; 1st—*alarm*, *comprehend languages*, *grease* (DC 16).

Possessions: +1 studded leather, masterwork composite shortbow (+3 Str bonus), 35 normal arrows, 5 adamantine arrows, sickle, spell component pouch, planar fork (damaged and unusable), wand of mirror image, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of remove blindness/deafness.

Physical Description: Talitha'Ceri has jet black hair streaked with rivulets of fiery orange; her hair hangs to her waist, is immaculately brushed and is tied near the bottom with two strips of cured human flesh. Her eyes are bright crimson and her claw and toenails are painted to match. Her small bat wings are pierced with a dazzling array of tiny gemstones and silver hoops. She is typically clothed in a loose, black leather cloak that hangs open at the front. Her voice is the equivalent of a high-pitched ethereal shriek that is surprisingly melodic.

Acolyte Cultist (melee): Male half-orc Bbn2/Rog3/Rgr1; CR 6; Medium Humanoid (orc); HD 2d12+3d6+1d8+12; hp 50; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 15 [+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt]; Base Atk +5; Grp +9; Atk or Full Atk +10 melee (2d4+6/18-20, masterwork falchion); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, fast movement, favored enemy elves +2, rage 1/day, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Craft (trapmaking) +5, Escape Artist +2, Hide +3, Intimidate +0, +13, Knowledge (geography) +1, Knowledge (nature) +1, Listen +10, Move Silently +3, Sense Motive +2, Spot +5, Survival +7, Swim +5, Tumble +3; Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Track (B).

Languages: Common, Orc, Elven.

Rage Suite: hp 62; AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13; Grp +11; Atk or Full Atk +12 melee (2d4+9/18-20, masterwork falchion); SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 22, Con 18.

Possessions: Masterwork chain shirt, masterwork falchion, trapmaking kit, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of invisibility, cloak of resistance +1.

Acolyte Cultist (arcane): Male half-elf Wiz(Tra)6; CR 6; Medium Humanoid (elf); HD 6d4+6; hp 25; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 [+2 Dex, +2 leather]; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk or Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+1/19-20, dagger) or +5 ranged (1d4+1/19-20, thrown dagger); SA spells; SQ low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +9, Diplomacy +1, Gather Information +3, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nature) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Knowledge (local—Nyrond and Her Environs) +8, Listen +2, Search +4, Spellcraft +14, Spot +2, Survival +3; Scribe Scroll (B), Silent Spell, Spell Focus

(conjunction), Spell Focus (illusion), Spell Focus (transmutation).

Languages: Common, Elven, Orc, Abyssal, Giant, Draconic.

Wizard Spells Prepared (Transmutation Specialist; Abjuration and Necromancy prohibited) (4/4+1/3+1/2+1): 0—dancing lights, detect magic, read magic, touch of fatigue; 1st—animate rope, expeditious retreat, magic missile (x2), true strike; 2nd—cat's grace, glitterdust (DC 16), see invisibility, Tasha's hideous laughter (DC 16), web (DC 16); 3rd—deep slumber (DC 16), haste, stinking cloud (DC 17), slow (DC 17). Arcane spell failure: 10% (leather armor).

Possessions: Leather armor, 2 daggers, everburning torch, potion of barkskin +2, potion of cure moderate wounds, 2 scrolls of magic missile (CL 1st), brooch of shielding, cloak of resistance +1, spell component pouch, spellbook, vial of antitoxin. **Spellbook:** 0—all except Abj and Nec spells; 1st—animate rope, color spray, expeditious retreat, magic missile, sleep, true strike; 2nd—cat's grace, glitterdust, see invisibility, Tasha's hideous laughter, web; 3rd—deep slumber, haste, stinking cloud, slow.

Appendix 2: The Mark of Demogorgon

In PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper*, one PC was cursed by the dying necropolitan druid Bran Mac Colm; this terrible curse is known as the Mark of Demogorgon.

The curse has two effects. First, the face of the curse-bearer bears violent lashes that are normally invisible and revealed only with appropriate magic, but certain members of the Cult of Demogorgon (such as the Flan rogue H'nakaalah and the half-troll Aodhan), can see the lashes naturally, and it is through this Cult ability that the curse-bearer is continually monitored by spies on the Material Plane. Second, all natural "20" attack rolls made by the curse-bearer are treated as natural "1's" from the end of PAL5-06 through the end of this scenario. At this time the curse, never a stable thing to begin with, mutates.

The Mutation: When the curse-bearer comes near Aodhan's cross and altar during Encounter Six, the Mark of Demogorgon mutates, as this is where Bran Mac Colm underwent the suicidal Ritual of Crucimigration. All natural "20" attack rolls are now treated normally for the PC, but natural "2" attack rolls are treated as natural "1's." Thus, PCs with the curse still have a 10% chance on any attack roll of rolling an automatic failure but regain the chance of an automatic success. This is explained on the Adventure Record.

Due to the nature of the RPGA mustering system, more than one PC at a table of PAL6-04 *Tooth and Nail* could bear the Mark of Demogorgon (from each player playing at a different table of PAL5-06). To account for the range of possibilities, the following dynamics have been established:

a. No PC has the Mark ("Diamond in the Rough"): The party is joined by a male gnome gemcutter (Exp7) from the Flinty Hills, named Garble Pealwhisper Shinsnicker, whose curiosity led him somewhere he shouldn't have gone on his own. To prevent spoiling (for players) events in PAL5-06 *My Brother's Keeper*, Garble states only that he is suffering under a curse brought down by allies of the evildoers that the PCs now seek. He has no proof of this curse unless they can see the marks on his face through *see invisibility*, but has been counseled by Sir Andros to accompany this expedition in search of clues to its origin and possible cure. Andros has advised him not to risk his safety, as he is the only surviving link to the perpetrators in the Fens. In an effort to preserve himself, Garble goes on total defense throughout any combat. If the PCs desperately need his aid and succeed on a DC 15 rushed Diplomacy check, Garble defensively attacks to aid another (+2 melee, gnome hooked-hammer). Garble derives his namesake from the high anxiety he suffers: normally an eloquent speaker, he gets very nervous during tense situations, such as combat, and then mumbles as if he has marbles stuffed in his mouth.

b. One PC has the Mark ("Chosen One"): No new rules apply; the curse functions normally during most of this scenario but mutates during encounter Six.

c. Multiple PCs have the Mark ("Deuce"): The curse will mutate at the end of the scenario, but one PC "really" has the Mark (and is designated the Alpha carrier) while the rest (the Betas) have a different level of severity. The penalties of the original curse still apply to all curse-bearers, but the Alpha is also affected by the mutated version of the Mark upon setting foot in the Fens, in game terms, this means that the Alpha suffers the effects of BOTH the original curse ("20 becomes 1") AND the mutation rules ("2 becomes 1") for the entire duration of this scenario. Once Encounter Six has been completed, the effects of the original curse from PAL5-06 fade away and only the mutation rules apply, for all curse-bearers.

Determining the Alpha: The lowest-level PC at a table of multiple curse-bearers is automatically the Alpha; Bran Mac Colm wanted his victims to suffer as long as possible. If there is a tie for the lowest level, apply the following tie-breaker parameters (in order): most levels in any class or combination of classes granting divine spells (for Aodhan's betrayal of him in PAL5-06), possession of an animal companion (and then the weakest animal, by Hit Dice, is the trump; Bran loved torturing small animals), highest Charisma (since Bran resented his popular brother and authority in general).

Appendix 3: Divinations and Rumors

The following are revealed as the result of a powerful Divination by the Swamp Witch, Willow. Divinations are listed in ascending order of importance; a higher aggregate score yields more truths, which should be given in the order listed; false truths, for magic use, follow the actual truths.

* (0-6 points) Removing the Mark of Demogorgon: as the curse of Bran Mac Colm was tied to his rebirth from the Ritual of Crucimigration, the curse can only be removed by undoing the necromantic magic involved. To accomplish this, the curse-bearer must acquire the nails used in Bran's Ritual. If these were not found at the first campsite, Willow speculates that they are likely either at the second site or in the possession of the one who performed the ritual.

(to 16 points) The Cult is definitely searching for something, apparently using most of their resources to do so. However, they are not alone in searching for this thing. Moreover, despite the number of hands that search for it, only one set of hands can be laid upon it successfully. Contention for this thing could ultimately be the Cult's undoing.

(to 26 points) The number "2" is somehow significant in the Cult's machinations and hierarchy. She warns against its manifestation and further divines (cryptically) that "3" follows "2."

(to 36 points) The Cult is not acting on its own but is currently being manipulated by a much more powerful entity; this situation bears an uncanny relevance to the item for which they search.

(to 46 points) Like the fractured psyche of its patron, the Fens Cult is splintering due to the inability of its leaders to cooperate with one another; you might exploit this weakness.

(to 56 points) The remaining cultists at the second site are currently occupied. Though they are vulnerable to a frontal assault, stealth and observation will prove more valuable.

(to 66 points) The defeat of the Fens Cult could engender the wrath of a more potent force.

(to 76 points) A long shadow moves from the West, covering the Fens as it stretches to the Rakers.

(to 86 points) The shadow from the West is merely penumbral: the true darkness spreads from the South.

(to 96 points) The PCs witness a vision of a brilliant fortress hidden high in the mountains.

False rumors (select randomly and include one for each instance in which a PC used magic to circumvent a skill check during Willow's errand):

- The Cultists are trying to summon a powerful demon to unleash upon the Theocracy, taking advantage of the Pale's preoccupation with the Troll King.
- One of the Prelates has been dominated by an extraplanar being and is now a puppet of the Cult, waiting for the moment and the command to strike.
- Druids exiled during the trials are conspiring to overthrow the Theocracy using nature's most deadly creatures as their instruments and allies.
- The Valorous League of Blindness seeks to acquire the thing for which the Cult currently searches; while it could be a potent weapon in the hands of the VLB, the divination appears ominous as to the League's eventual intentions with it.
- Removing the item from its current location would trigger a cataclysmic chain of events that would devastate the eastern half of the Theocracy; chaos would reign, unchallenged and invincible.
- The Cult has resurrected and enhanced the Stonehold champion, Dehzbah the Man-Ripper, and intends to arm her with the artifact and unleash her upon its foes; so armed, she would be nearly invincible.

DM Aid 1: Special Rules for the Pale

Non-Pholtan Holy Symbols

It is illegal for adventurers to display a human holy symbol other than that of Pholtus in the Pale.

The intent of this rule is to properly depict the flavor of the Pale as a single religion theocracy ruled over by the Church of the One True Path and not to create player-vs.-player conflict. It is meant to enhance the role-playing of living under a religious government that does not allow freedom of religion.

PCs displaying the holy symbol of any human deity other than that of Pholtus should be fined and their holy symbol should be confiscated for destruction by the Palish authorities. The amount of the fine varies by APL: APL 2—90gp; APL 4—130gp; APL 6—180gp; APL 8—260gp; APL 10—460gp; APL 12—660gp. The confiscation and fine should take place as soon as any Palish authorities notice the holy symbol. This may leave a non-Pholtan cleric without his holy symbol for the adventure, as non-Pholtan holy symbols may not be purchased in the Pale without taking special actions. Non-human PCs are exempt from this law when displaying their racial deities' holy symbol(s). Non-humans are heathens who cannot even recognize the glory of Pholtus due to their beliefs in their own racial deities. If they can be brought to the light of Pholtus, this is good and perhaps they can be redeemed, but if they do not, it is of no consequence. Non-humans wearing the holy symbols of a human deity are treated the same as a human wearing a non-Pholtan holy symbol as they have shown that their souls have chosen to acknowledge human beliefs and culture, and they should, therefore, be brought to the truth of Pholtus.

Some deities require special adjudication for this rule due to their positions within non-human cultures as well as within human cultures.

- Bleredd – Considered a human deity due to his origins as an Oeridian deity and continued worship by Oeridians.
- Ehlonna – Considered an elven deity when worn as a holy symbol by elves only. This is due to special dispensation and negotiations with the Phostaldaron to allow for continued use of the Treaty Road through the Phostwood and into Tenh for the liberation and relief efforts in that region. All non-elves will be penalized as if violating the law even if they are not human as Ehlonna is considered to be a human deity.
- Fortubo – Considered a dwarven deity as he has withdrawn his support from the Suel, where his origins lie, in favor of fighting against the derro and their evil deity.
- Jascar – Considered a human deity, his origins are Suel and his primary worshippers still include many Suel.
- Nazarn – Considered a half-orc deity, since even though his origin is Suel, he was a half-orc himself and is venerated primarily by half-orcs
- Ulaa – Considered a human deity due to her position as the wife of the Oeridian god, Bleredd, and her worship by humans

Deities with Special Consideration due to their status:

- St. Cuthbert – Clergy loyal to St. Cuthbert were found to be working with clergy loyal to an infernal deity in the past. Displaying the holy symbol of St. Cuthbert is as offensive as displaying the holy symbol of a force of Chaos. See the next entry for worshippers of Chaotic deities.
- Chaotic Deities – Worshippers of Chaotic deities are fined double the usual fine, for being Agents of Chaos.
- Evil Deities – If a PC is found to be carrying the unholy symbol of an evil deity, all normal actions will be taken, and a *geas/quest* is cast on the PC to keep him from touching the unholy symbols of evil deities in the future. (The above assumes that the PC is not actually a cleric of the evil deity, since that is prohibited in the Living Greyhawk Campaign.)

No PC may enforce this rule through combat or offensive physical actions. Player-vs.-player conflict will be adjudicated as a violation of the RPGA General Rules, as always. If one PC chooses to report another PC to the authorities for a violation of this law, he will also be questioned and detained as to why he was associating with such a heathen, but will not be penalized.

For fair adjudication of this rule in the Theocracy of the Pale, some in-game rules are required for skills like Bluff and the hiding of non-Pholtan holy symbols:

1. To locate a non-Pholtan holy symbol in the Pale requires a DC 25 Gather Information check and the holy symbol will cost twice the standard price listed in the *Player's Handbook* price.
2. To craft a new wooden holy symbol requires a DC 15 Craft (jewelrymaking) or (woodcarving) check.

3. Seeing a holy symbol in its normal location around the neck as a necklace unless engaged in conversation or within a normal conversational distance from someone is a DC 10 (the average Pale legal authority has an average Spot skill of +2). Holy symbols worn as other pieces of jewelry are not readily recognized as holy symbols at this time and require a DC 20 Spot check to notice followed by a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check to identify the holy symbol since it is a non-standard holy symbol; it is the same Spot check even if engaged in conversation as most people look to the neck to notice holy symbols.
4. It is a Bluff check or Sleight of Hand check (player's choice) opposed by Spot checks may be used to cast a spell using a holy symbol without the other person being able to see the holy symbol being used to cast the spell. The person attempting this has a -5 circumstance penalty due to the requirement of forceful presentation of holy symbols to cast spells where they are required as the divine focus.
5. It is a DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check to identify the holy symbol of most deities. Some more obscure deities require a DC 15 and some extremely obscure deities may require a higher check to identify their holy symbols. Judges should use their best judgement on this, but a simple guide is if the deity is listed in the *Player's Handbook* or is a greater deity according to the LG deities' document, it is probably only a DC 10 check. If you haven't heard of the deity before, the deity is probably obscure.

Arcane Registration by Arcane Spellcasters

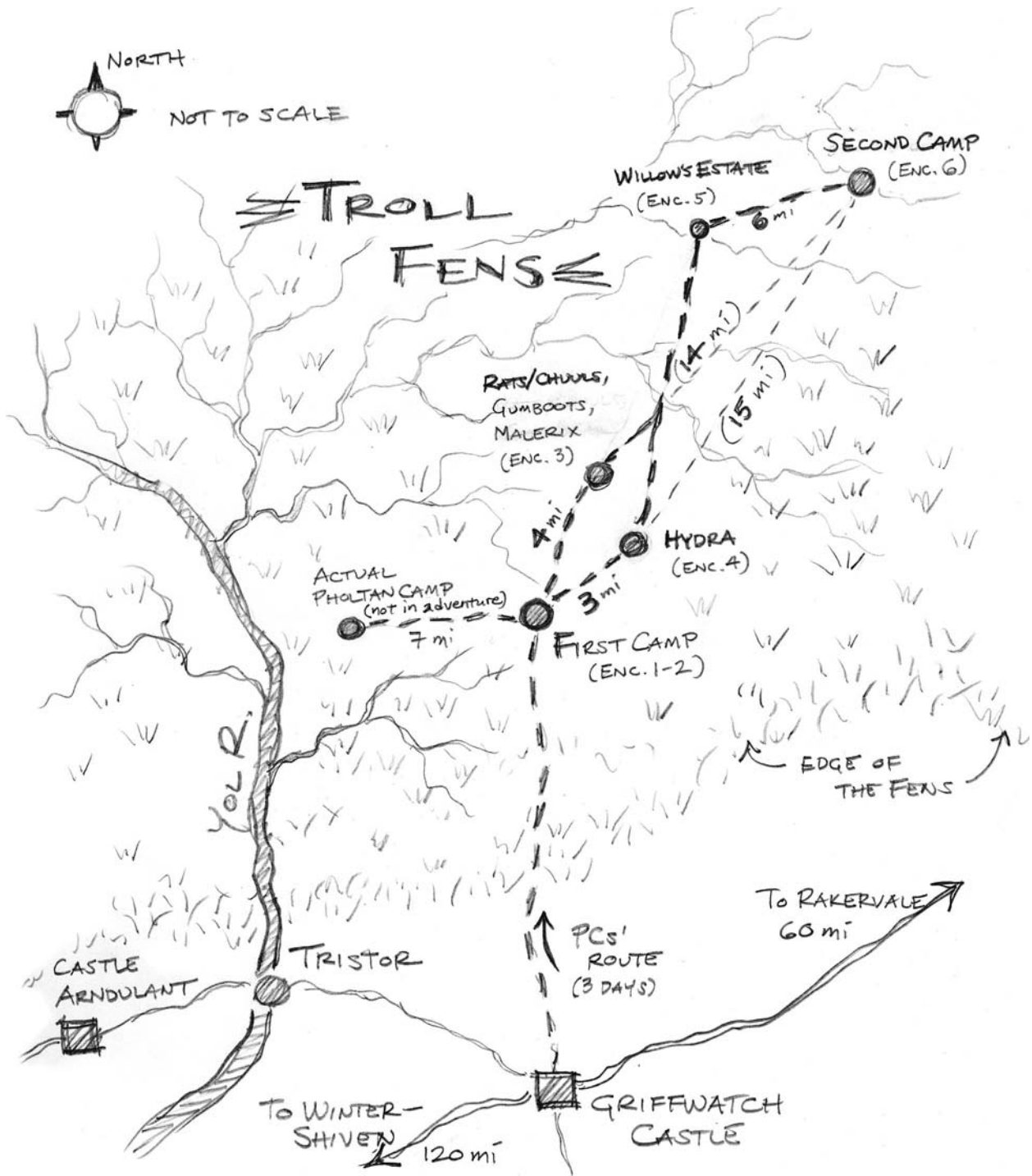
Arcane magic is distrusted in the Theocracy of the Pale. Thus, the law requires all arcane spellcasters to register with the government. (Registry with the government is not the same as membership in the Arcanist Guild, which is a meta-game organization.) The Church is very diligent about informing foreigners of this law, so most traveling spellcasters are promptly registered as well.

Any PC who is found not to be registered as an arcane spellcaster within the Pale will be arrested and confined to service within a New Dawn Camp for a period of 4 TU (one month in game terms). The arcanist will immediately be registered as such in the Pale as a part of his arrest.

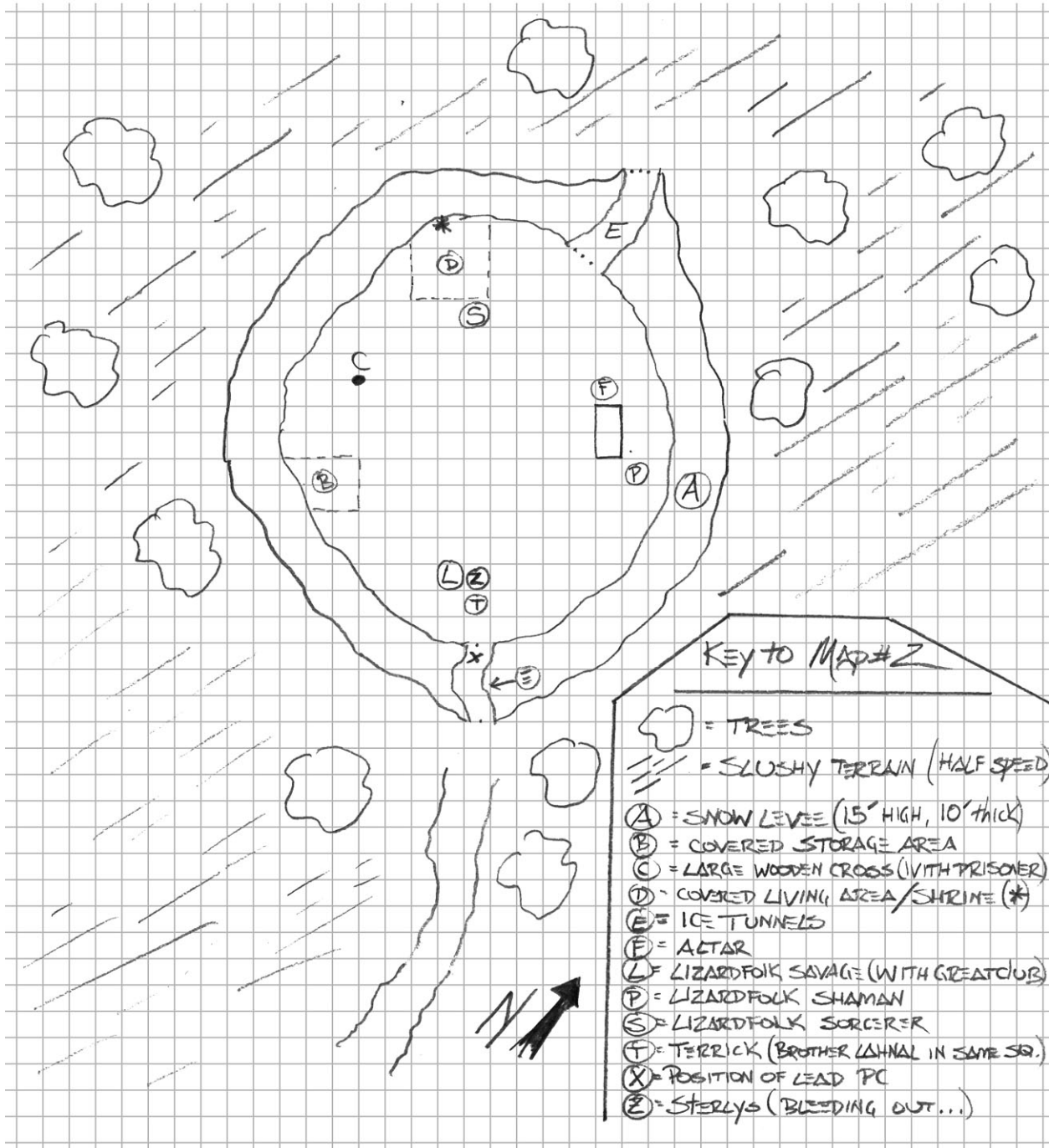
In Pale Regional scenarios, city guards or other officials may ask any known arcane casters to show proof of registration. As the player of an arcane caster, you may download and print the Arcane Registration Certificate from the Pale regional website (http://www.theocracyofthepale.com/downloads/arcane_registration.pdf). If you are judging a scenario, you might want to print some certificates, in case any players with arcanist PCs have not done so for themselves. Just because a player has failed to print this certificate for his character is not a reason to punish his PC; if the player just did not have the opportunity or means to print a certificate, you may assume he is registered if he says he is though you may wish to document this on his AR. Once an arcanist has been arrested, he is registered in the Pale and this should be documented on his AR. It does not matter if he destroys his certificate or not as the Pale keeps diligent records of the registered arcanists and this information is transcribed to the registration books throughout the Pale once a month.

Arcane spellcaster characters may attempt to utilize forged documents if they so choose. It requires a Bluff check opposed by the Sense Motive check of the authorities attempting to verify the PCs registration paperwork to succeed at this ruse. Failure results in arrest for not being registered and an additional 500 gp fine for forging official Pale documents. (If the PC has the ability to forge documents, this check may be used in lieu of his Bluff check).

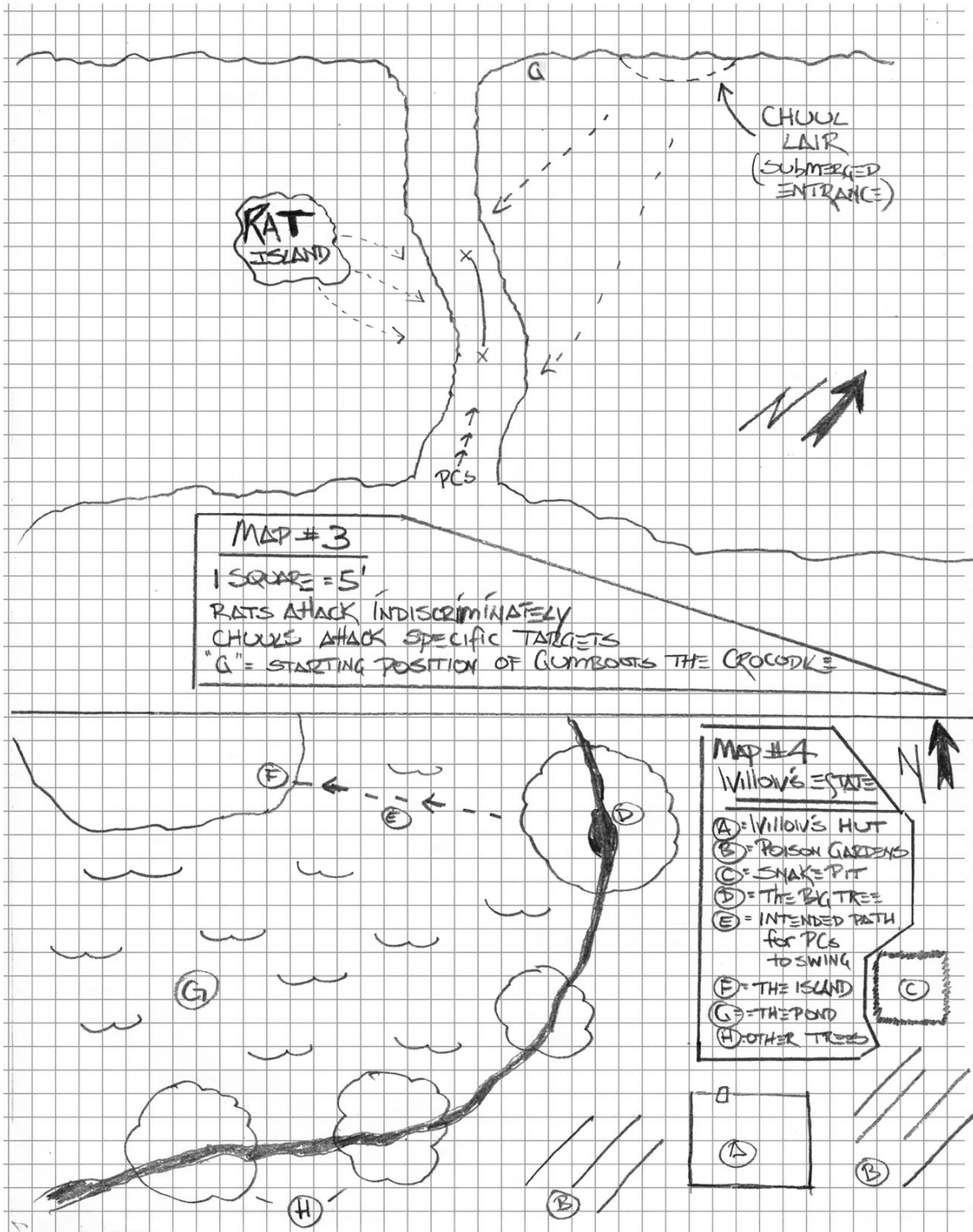
Map #1: The Troll Fens and Location of Encounters



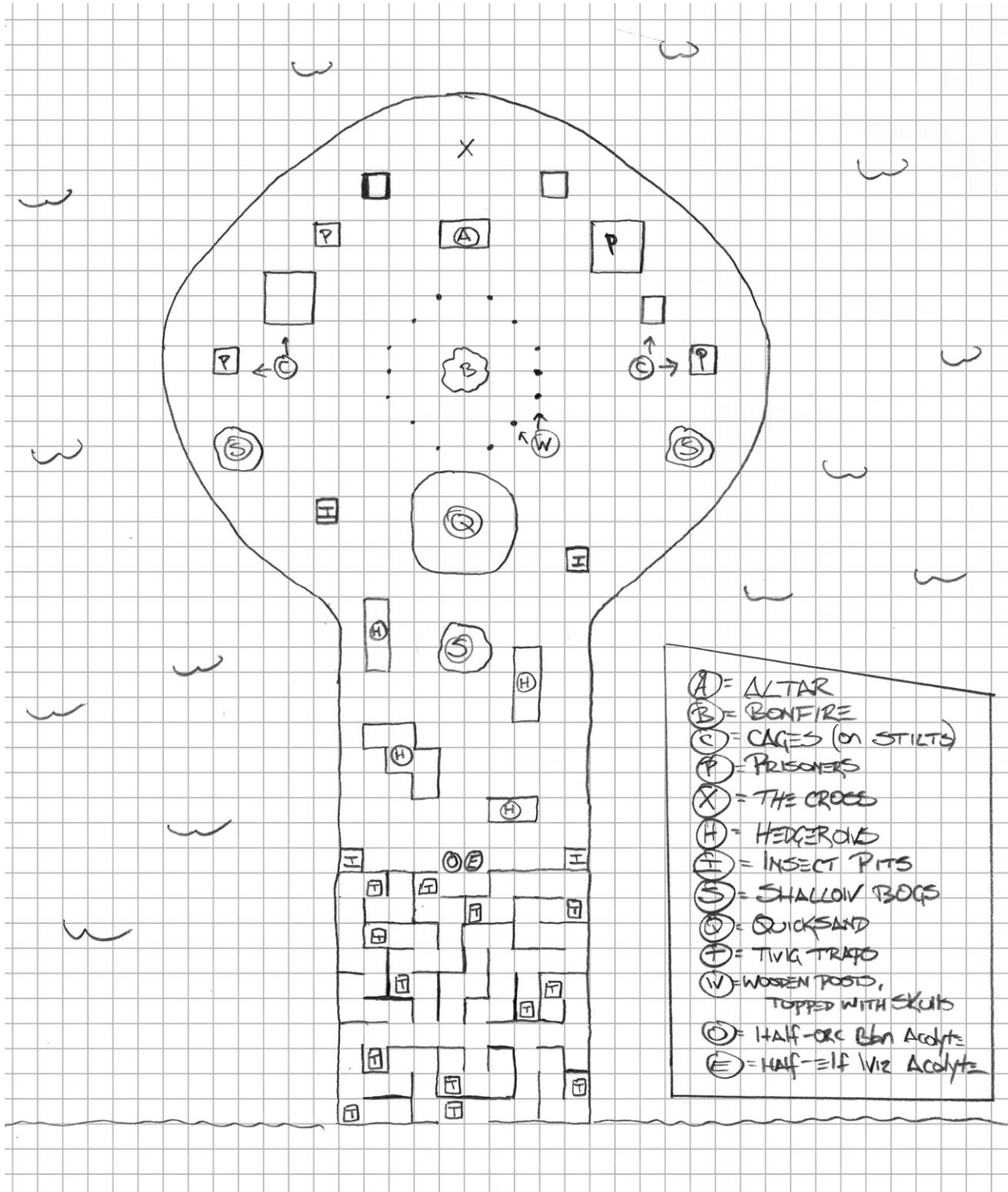
Map #2: The First Camp



Map #3: Swamp Lair and Map #4: Willow's Estate



Map #5: The Second Camp



- (A) = ALTAR
- (B) = BONFIRE
- (C) = CAGES (ON STILTS)
- (P) = PRISONERS
- (X) = THE CROSS
- (H) = HEDGEROVS
- (I) = INSECT PITS
- (S) = SHALLOW BOGS
- (Q) = QUICKSAND
- (T) = TIVIG TRAPS
- (V) = WOODEN POST, TOPPED WITH SKULLS
- (O) = HALF-ORC Blm Acolyte
- (E) = HALF-ELF Viz Acolyte