

The dramatic sequel to the best-selling D&D 5E adventure - Minotaur's Bargain

MINOTAUR'S

BETRAYAL

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Avenge the minotaur & overthrow the orc menace in this adventure for the world's greatest roleplaying game



MINOTAUR'S BETRAYAL

THE MINOTAUR TROLOGY - PART 2

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

Minotaur's Betrayal is a Dungeons & Dragons 5e adventure designed to be completed in about 3-5 hours of play.

Almost every combat encounter, unless noted, has been calculated to present a tough challenge (upper end of Hard) for four characters of 6th level – that is, APL (average party level) is 6.

To assist the DM in finding references to creatures and resources, an **Appendix Reference Page (ARP)** has been included at the end of the adventure. Any creature or resource within the adventure with a reference will be marked **(ARP)** to point you to the **Appendix Reference Page**.

Not every loose end is tied up in the following text, nor every possible reaction accounted for. Be ready to improvise, and do so with confidence! Unless stated otherwise, assume NPCs have the stats of a **Commoner (ARP)**.

This adventure is a continuation of the first in the *Minotaur Trilogy*; *Minotaur's Bargain*. However, this adventure can still be played without having played through part 1. If this is the situation for you and your group, try using the suggestions given in the **Adventure Synopsis** to kick-off your quest to retrieve the lauded Banner of Gruumsh.

Minotaur's Betrayal is split into three Chapters; Chapter 1, this chapter, is the **Introduction**. Chapter 2: **The Heroes' Journey** focuses on the heroes' return to the town with their minotaur cohort ready to defend the town from the orc menace threatening their peaceful way of life. Chapter 3: **The Assault on Varg-Kala** covers the main dungeon crawl for this adventure. Finally Chapter 4: **Resolutions** brings everything to a tidy finish.

To run this adventure you will need; The Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition Players Handbook, the Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition Monster Manual and the content supplied within this adventure. In addition, for some of the monster stat blocks, you will also need a copy of Volo's Guide to Monsters (VGtM).

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT AND MILESTONE LEVELING

This adventure is designed to use the milestone leveling system. It is expected that characters start the adventure at level 6 to 8. There are the following two milestones and upon reaching each, the heroes should gain a level.

1. On leaving the Minotaur Settlement at the conclusion of Chapter 2 (and before reaching Varg-Kala in Chapter 3).
2. Completion of Chapter 3, and thus completing this adventure.

This is only a suggestion, however, and you, as the DM, are in no way forced to use this method. This adventure will run perfectly fine with Experience Points based leveling, and you are encouraged to use XP if it is a better fit for you and your playing group.

BOXED TEXT

This adventure includes boxed text to assist those Dungeon Masters who like to have a description of a scene or location. The use of boxed text is by no means required; many great Dungeon Masters avoid the use of boxed text and instead feel more comfortable describing the action in their own words. You should consider what works best for you and your group. If you choose not to read aloud any of the text provided, you should at least paraphrase the information to keep the players aware of their environment.

SETTING AND LOCATION

Minotaur's Betrayal is designed to be a drop and play adventure that can fit into any setting and any campaign.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

After completing a daunting run through the Minotaur arena, the party has managed to earn the trust and respect of the Minotaur and made a deal that a detachment of Minotaur warriors will accompany them back to the town where a warband of orcs sits on the horizon, waiting to strike. With the Minotaur in tow, the town militia should have enough force to repel the Orcs, but only if the party arrive with the allies in time.

If you have not played through *Minotaur's Bargain* (an adventure by the same authors within the *Dungeon Masters Guild*), then you can start the adventure with the alliance already in place between the townsfolk and the Minotaur. The Minotaur arrive just in time to help repel the orc horde, but something is clearly not right, and the Minotaur ask for the party's assistance as repayment for their help. If this is the case for your group, pick up the story at '**Diversion Tactics**'.

Little do the heroes know, but the orc horde they intend to fight has Minotaur traitors on the inside. One sect of the Minotaur, previously snubbed by Astarte, the current Minotaur ruler, and led by the brutish Theron, has agreed to help the orcs. They plan to steal an ancient Orcish banner from the Minotaur settlement and hand it over to the orcs. In return, the orcs will assault the Minotaur settlement, kill Astarte, and in state Theron as their ruler. Meanwhile, a smaller group of Orcs will run a distraction attack upon the town of the heroes. The orc war chief is named **Guthma One Eye (Appendix B)**; he is allied with a **Troll** chieftain named **Fleshrend (Appendix B)** who leads the distraction attack against the town.

CHAPTER 2: THE HEROES' JOURNEY

After beating the gauntlet of the arena in an honorable and courageous fashion, the party is welcomed back to Astarte's yurt as minor heroes. Never has a group of non-minotaur bested the arena, and the party has proven themselves worthy allies. Astarte introduces the party to **Perseus (Minotaur Veteran (ARP))** with 100 hit points), her second in command, and tells them that he will accompany the party with his band of her best five **Minotaur Veterans**.

Note: For those continuing this adventure on from *Minotaur's Bargain*, if Partheos survived, you may wish to have him join the party in their defense of the town. For those playing this adventure as a one shot, the DM may or may not simply choose to add an extra **Minotaur Veteran** to the group to counter the fact that Partheos may or may not have been included.

RETURNING TO TOWN

The trek back to town should take several days. Random Encounters appropriate to the environment will help set the scene for the players (**use the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for inspiration**). As well as any Random Encounters you wish to add, the following two encounters (**Orc Assault!** and **Assassins of Shargass**) should occur; the first during the day and the second the following night.

Note: Random Encounters and the 2 events below are present to offer the party a reason to believe that there is more to the situation than the situation is revealing. The DM should present a convincing encounter against the party, but nothing too taxing that they are overwhelmed before they arrive at the town. Dropping small hints to the fact that not all is as it seems is fine, just don't give away the punch line before the battle begins.

ORC ASSAULT!

Whilst the characters are traveling during the day, a detachment of orcs attack and attempt to delay their arrival at the town. Characters with a **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 13** hear hooves from behind before the orcs are visible. After a mere moment, a band of nine **Orcs (ARP)** and one **Orc Blade of Ilneval (ARP)** emerge over the edge of a hill, each is mounted on **Aurochs (ten total) (ARP)**.

The orcs will attempt to kill **Perseus** if possible, immediately recognizing him from a description as the leader of the Minotaur. Their battle tactics are to throw javelins, before allowing their **aurochs** mounts to charge and bowl through the Minotaur. If the **Orc Blade of Ilneval** is killed, the remaining orcs flee.

If any orcs are captured alive, a **DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation) check** is enough to make them yield some information. The orcs were sent to attack the minotaur and delay their arrival at the town so the orc force can assault undeterred. If the **check succeeds by 6 or more**, the orc tells a more truthful version of the story, that a '**... unknown**

SIDEBAR: ROLEPLAYING PERSEUS

Perseus is a talented military leader who is held in high regard among the Minotaur society. Second in command, Perseus is an avid believer in the Minotaur's deep and honorable culture. Proud and courageous, he prefers to meet foes face-to-face before sneaking about for an added, dishonorable, advantage.

Roll on the following table once per day during overland travel to decide what piece of Minotaur lore or culture Perseus reveals to the party.

d4	Minotaur Lore & Cultural Information
1	Once, long ago there was a divide within the Minotaur society, between those who wished to remain maze dwelling lair monsters, and those who sought to ascend to civilization. Many of their kind chose the depths, whilst a small few decided to settle in these lands, and live lives of honor and glory.
2	Legend tells of a great battle between two demigods, one of good, Minos, the Father of All Minotaur, and one of evil, Theghlit, the prince of orcs. They battled for days, with Minos eventually winning with honor and glory. This is what drives the Minotaur culture towards honor and courage, and their ever-present feuding with the orcish tribes.
3	The current Minotaur leader, Astarte, won her rightful position by defeating the savage Minotaur warrior, Theron, in the great arena. She spared his life when he was truly beaten and helpless, showing mercy in a moment of pure honor, gaining the favor of the tribe. Shortly after, Astarte was crowned the leader.
4	Minotaur value honor and courage above all else, even if it means their life may be at stake. The general belief is that a Minotaur of their tribe would rather die before reverting to the monsters known for lurking deep within dank mazes.

group ...' has betrayed the Minotaur, and that **Perseus** stands in the way of their plan for some reason. This should be enough of a hint that **Perseus** is a focal point within the adventure and an NPC that the party need to guard. The orcs are **not** aware of the attack that will happen against the Minotaur settlement.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Remove 1 Auroch and 1 Orc

APL 7: Add 1 Auroch and 1 Orc

APL 8: Add 1 Auroch and 1 Orc

ASSASSINS OF SHARGAAS

Should the previous encounter fail (a well worded and well-timed casting of an Augury spell (ARP)), **Guthma One Eye**, the orc war chief, will send some assassins to succeed where the last group failed. Eight **Orc Red Fang of Shargaas (ARP)** mounted on **Giant Bats (ARP)** fly to the party's camp during the dead of night and attempt to kill **Perseus** in his sleep. They will wait until **Perseus** is slumbering before attacking. Characters on watch with a **passive Wisdom (Perception) check of 15** notice the bat-riding assassins before they attack.

The assassins attempt to pick up the sleeping **Perseus** and drop him from a great height, before swooping down to finish him off with their blades. If **Perseus** is killed, or if it seems impossible for the orcs to reach him for some reason, they will fly off into the night.

None of the orcs in the attack know why they have been sent, only that they are there to kill **Perseus**.

Note: If any Minotaur is taken by the orcs, it will come into play in Area **V12b** of **Varg-Kala**.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Remove 1 Red Fang and 1 Giant Bat

APL 7: Add 1 Red Fang and 1 Giant Bat

APL 8: Add 2 Red Fang and 2 Giant Bat

DIVERSION TACTICS

When the party and **Minotaur Veterans** end up at the town, they are briefed by the town militia on the state of affairs.

So far as the militia know:

- The orcs plan to attack the next day with their full force.
- The war chief named **Gutha One Eye** is notorious for his lack of mercy.
- The town is grateful for any help it can get.
- It has a small militia of twenty **Guards (ARP)** and one **Knight (ARP)** who leads the militia called **Lady Therafen**.

Note: The town guard doesn't know that the orcs are not, in fact, going to send their full force to assault the town. Most of the orc warriors will be sent to the Minotaur settlement, to assist the traitor **Theron** and his men kill **Astarte** in return for the **Banner of Gruumsh (Appendix A)**.

As expected, the orc war band emerges from the craggy, boulder-strewn valley the next day. Town scouts return with news of the orc movement but claim that the horde does not appear to be all there. **Lady Therafen** takes this as a good sign, claiming that the orc cowards must have fled at the sight of the Minotaur reinforcements.

As the day passes, the orcs can be seen from town. There are nine **orcs**, one **Orc Hand of Yurtrus (ARP)**, one **Orc Nurtured Ones of Yurtrus (ARP)** and **Fleshrend** with his one **Orog bodyguard (ARP)**. If **Perseus** is still alive, he mentions to the characters that he believes something is wrong.

The Minotaur's know:

- That with these numbers the orcs could not assault the town effectively.
- It is unheard of for a troll to lead an orc warband.

Nevertheless, the Minotaur have agreed to defend the town and it would be dishonorable in their eyes to abandon it to chase a gut feeling. Characters can gather that something is wrong with a successful **DC 16 Intelligence check**. This can be made with **advantage** if they have prior 'knowledge' from the orcs during the previous encounters.

The **Lady Therafen** briefs the party that she has been giving the coming battle some thought and has devised a plan (see sidebar: **Lady Therafen's Plan**).

Read or paraphrase the following:

The orcs line up a few hundred feet away from the town gates. Standing in their center is a lumbering troll. This foul creature has shards of metal sticking out of its torn flesh and carries a vicious flail. To his side stand two beefy orogs.

The orc warband has a single battering ram, hung with humanoid skulls and covered by a leather sheet of the same origin.

Behind the front ranks stand a handful of hideous, bloated orcs, covered with boils and tumors, tended by a slight orc carrying a staff. As they form up, they begin a war chant that sends shivers down your spines.

At this point, just before the attack begins, have the party make a **DC 10 Intelligence (History) check** or a **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check**. On success, they realize that the orc war wagon is missing, but are unsure why. If they **succeed by 5 or more**, they realize that the wagon would never be missing unless this was not a full-blown orc raid.

The orcs start by sending forth their battering ram to smash in the main gate. They follow this up with the **Orc Nurtured Ones of Yurtrus**, led by the **Orc Hand of Yurtrus**, who try to head further into town to assault the populace. **Fleshrend** hangs back until the gate is open, then charges forth, but never enters the town himself. Any party member observing **Fleshrend** and his **orog** bodyguards can attempt a **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check**, on success they see that his **orog** bodyguards seem distracted, constantly looking to the horizon. A further **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals that they are looking in the direction of the Minotaur settlement. If **Fleshrend** is slain, the remaining orcs and orog quickly disperse and head back to the **Varg-Kala** stronghold.

After 4 rounds of combat, a large pillar of smoke can be faintly seen on the horizon from the direction of the Minotaur settlement. Upon seeing this, the **orog** bodyguards or **Fleshrend** himself call out in Orcish '**The signal, fall back, fall back!**' and the orcs begin to do so.

HOOK

If the party are with the **Minotaur Veterans**, it is immediately obvious to them that the smoke is coming from the direction of their settlement. If not, the players must succeed on a **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check** to understand its significance. The Minotaur, now understanding the meaning behind the orc attack on the town, will beseech the party to return to their settlement with them.

Note: Take note whether **Fleshrend** and his **orog** bodyguards are killed during this attack or not; it will be important later in **Area V7** of **Varg-Kala**.

Note: The journey back to the Minotaur settlement will be encounter free, but due to the cracking pace set by the Minotaur's themselves, the party and Minotaur's will automatically suffer **2 levels of Exhaustion (ARP)** by the time they arrive. The party can choose to negate the exhaustion by choosing to fall behind but the Minotaur's will see this as a dishonorable. Remind the players it is in their best interest to keep up.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Remove 1 Orc

APL 7: Add 1 Orc Nurtured

APL 8: Remove 1 Orc, add 1 Orc Nurtured and 1 Orog Bodyguard

SIDEBAR: LADY THERAFEN'S PLAN

The townsfolk will be hidden away in the militia barracks and town hall.

Six of the **Guards** are to be with the populace, and the remaining fourteen, plus the **Knight Lady Therafen**, will begin the battle behind the town's main gate.

The **Minotaur Veterans** will begin at a smaller side-gate, hoping to charge forth as the orcs attack, and disrupt them.

A successful **DC 10 Intelligence check** will tell any party member that the devised plan is sound and should work.

THE TRAITOR THERON

Whilst **Perseus**, the party and the **Minotaur Veterans** were away defending the town, Theron and his crew staged a coup in the Minotaur settlement with the help of **Guthma One Eye** and most of the orc warband. In a bloody battle, Astarte and those loyal to her were defeated, their bodies left to rot on the streets as a morbid reminder that Theron is now in charge. Astarte alone still breathes, though only barely. She has been strung up, her horns brutally removed, and she is bleeding, close to death. In return for the orc attack, **Theron** gave **Guthma One Eye** the **Banner of Gruumsh**, an ancient standard rumored to have been made by Gruumsh's divine hand.

Read or paraphrase the following:

As you reach the edge of the Minotaur settlement, you notice that the smell of death hangs heavy in the air. A highly noticeable large plume of smoke billows into the sky from somewhere near the center of the camp. Although the camp is deathly quiet, the signs of battle are clear. The earth around is churned from the plating of foot and hoof and patches of ground are stained with blood. You also notice the visible signs of wagon wheels.

If characters enter the settlement, read or paraphrase the following:

The minotaur settlement is an awful sight. In the center of the settlement, the arena is up in flames, and the bodies of orcs and Minotaur have been thrown inside for cremation. Strung up before the arena is the body of Astarte. She hangs from a thick wooden bar, head bowed. Her horns have been crudely chopped and filed down to stumps. She looks up to see you approaching, as Perseus realizes the gravity of the scene before rushing to his leader, and mentor's aide. He and his Minotaur warriors desperately attempt to lower her to the ground. She bows her head again and speaks through broken gasps of air.
"Th-Theron... t-t-traitor... dishonor... protect the...the banner... find in safe place... in my yurt" she gurgles as blood bubbles and drips from her snout.

If the characters attempt to interact with Astarte any further she says one final word, **"Trapdoor"**, before shuddering and dying. If the players attempt to resurrect or revive her, **Perseus** and the other Minotaur warriors insist that the party leave her to die an honorable death and pass through to the afterlife unhindered. There she can achieve true glory on the eternal battlefield for the rest of existence, as the Minotaur culture dictates.

Astarte's yurt is now occupied by **Theron** and his henchmen. Theron is inflated off his recent victory; boastful and brash. He lacks the honor most Minotaur hold so highly. He was defeated by Astarte in the arena years ago, and never got over his defeat. Holding resentment deep within his heart he now exerts his revenge on her and the minotaur community as a whole.

A TOUGH CHOICE

Any Minotaur accompanying the party will voice that they are eager to defeat Theron, whom they consider a base animal due to his lack of honor. The party may wish to act in a different manner. Theron is a **Minotaur Veteran** of some worth and is always accompanied by six more **Minotaur Veterans** followers as body guards. Due to the current state of the Minotaur's and the party from the forced march, this might be a hard fight to win.

It should be clear to the characters that Theron and his cronies now run the Minotaur settlement, and if the party decide they want to retrieve the banner, or learn more information, their best place would be Astarte's yurt.

Any reasonable plan by the party at this point will allow characters to gain entry, especially if they choose to sneak in under the heavy canvas. Otherwise, the character may simply wish to attempt to slaughter Theron and his gang (*see encounter: Confronting Theron*), or perhaps draw them out of the yurt as a distraction. Unless the party is killed, they should eventually be able to acquire the following information:

- If characters wish to eavesdrop on Theron's conversations, they must succeed on a **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check**. His topics of conversation are limited, mostly centering around how thick and weak Astarte was to be so easily tricked and defeated by him. He will also talk about the stupidity of the orcs, who he bought out with nothing more than a scrap of old cloth that Astarte kept hidden in a hole beneath her yurt.

- If the characters enter Astarte's yurt, a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals a concealed trapdoor within the yurt's canvas floor. Accessing the space beneath the yurt allows the characters to find a small, dugout hole in the earth. Inside is a scroll case which contains an inventory. All the items listed below are present, save the **Banner of Gruumsh**:
 - Ancestral Nose-Ring (a thick gold ring set with red jade stones, acts as a **Ring of Protection (ARP)**)
 - The Hammer of Justice (large granite gavel with non-magical runic engravings worth **80gp**)
 - Bag of Gemstones (three carnelians **50gp each**, and five agates **10gp each**)
 - Three **Potions of Healing (APR)**
 - 1,835gp and 350sp
- If the characters search through Astarte's belongings in the yurt, a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** allows them to discover a few pertinent books of information, including a tome named **'The Children of Gruumsh'**, which contains information about the **Banner of Gruumsh** and orcs more generally (**use information from the Monster Manual, Volo's Guide to Monsters and Appendix A**). If characters leaf through the tome, a small note falls out with **'Password is Bleed Eye'** written on it in Orcish. This is the password to **Area V8**.

Note: If any honorable Minotaur witness the characters looting these items they will be extremely unimpressed, even threatening violence should the nose-ring be stolen. A successful **DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check** will allow the three **Potions of Healing** to be removed for later use. A separate **DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check** will convince the Minotaur that **Perseus** could use the nose ring; this check is **an automatic success** if they mention that they believe the deceased Astarte would be honored for **Perseus** to claim it.

CONFRONTING THERON

If the characters do indeed decide to confront Theron and his gang, Perseus insists on being the first to enter the yurt. His plan is to offer Theron the option of surrendering honorably for his crimes. A **DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check** convinces Perseus otherwise.

If the characters are unable to dissuade Perseus, or agree to his plan, read or paraphrase the following:

As Perseus readies himself to enter the yurt of his fallen commander, and confront the disgraced beast Theron, he pauses, as if mulling alternative options through his horned head. Then, snorting through his ringed snout in resolve, Perseus enters the yurt. As honor insists, the huge Minotaur warrior calls out to his enemy, making his presence known before battle.

“Theron, traitor, coward... lay down your weapons, have your cronies do so too and your lives will be spared... for now.”

“Ah! Perseus, the valiant warrior returns! Hah! bow before your new ruler, and it shall be I who spares your life... for now.” Theron mocks.

“Where is your honor, bull?! Do you not have a shred of integrity? At least make use of that intelligence you brag. Surrender and you will be tried fairly and honorably, within the walls of the great arena!”

With this, Theron simply spits at Perseus with a snarl. The honorable warrior grits his teeth in return, wipes the spit from his brow, and readies his weapon in the ancient Minotaur salute to his foe. He charges into battle.

If it is decided that one of the PCs should talk Theron down, instead of Perseus, use the boxed text above as a guide to roleplaying Theron, with all DCs set at 14.

Otherwise combat should start as soon the characters engage aggressively. If the characters succeed on a **Dexterity (Stealth) check** against Theron's **Passive Perception of 17**, they have an opportunity to *surprise* Theron and his group.

CREATURES

1 x **Theron** (Minotaur Veteran with 100 HP)

6 x **Theron's Guards** (Minotaur Veteran)

TACTICS

Theron commands his group of followers to stand between him and the danger imposed by the party at the first opportunity. His plan is simple yet dishonorable; to have his guards soften up the party before taking them on himself.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Remove 1 Minotaur Veteran

APL 7: As per APL 6

APL 8: Add 1 Minotaur Veteran

HOOK

Once characters have discovered that the **Banner of Gruumsh** is missing, they will probably feel inclined to search out the orcs and retrieve it. If they do not, you can incentivize them by having the Minotaur loyal to Astarte ask for their help, suggesting that should they choose to do the honorable thing and help, the Minotaur will be indebted to them after they are successful. They will not elaborate as to how they will be indebted and will look insulted should the party progress down that line of questioning.



CHAPTER 3: THE ASSAULT ON VARG-KALA

Varg-Kala is the stronghold of the orcs in this area. The location of this elaborate cave system is known both by the minotaur and the town militia. A character from the region could recall its location with a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (History) check**. The stronghold itself is comprised of a ruined giant's tower atop an outcrop of mountains which are honeycombed with caves. Those orcs that occupy the ruins have become known as **'The Orcs of Varg-Kala'**.

The journey to Varg-Kala is two days from the town or three from the Minotaur settlement. You can supplement the journey with **Random Encounters** (consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) suited to plains or hills and on the final day mountains. At least one of these encounters should be a band of 10 **orcs** led by an orog mounted on an **aurochs**. They are searching for fresh food, and the party should make a perfect supper.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Remove 1 Orc and 1 Auroch

APL 7: Add 1 Orc and 1 Auroch

APL 8: Add 2 Orc and 2 Auroch

'LET'S TURN THE HEAT UP' MECHANIC OPTIONAL

If you want to give your players an extra challenge during their time in Varg-Kala, you can use the following mechanic:

The first time a player gets a modified roll of 5 or less, place a d20 on your game table with the 1 facing up. Each creature, including the players, in Varg-Kala, may now add the number from the d20 to their attack rolls. For each successive modified roll of 5 or less, turn the d20 up a number. This represents the characters making mistakes and drawing more and more attention to themselves as they try to infiltrate Varg-Kala. Any natural 20s rolled by the party turn down the die, as do any meaningful checks they attempt which succeed by 5 or more.

GIANTSBLOOD RIDGE

This outcrop of mountains is the location of Varg-Kala. The main entrance to the caves is through the ruined tower, but there are several smaller entrances dotted around the mountainside. These smaller entrances can be located with a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check**.

- If characters enter the cave system via the tower, proceed to the **'Ruined Tower'** (see below).
- If the characters locate a concealed side entrance, you should proceed to **'Varg-Kala'** (see below). There are **three** possible side entrances to the lair (shown on the DM's Map in Appendix C), either ask the players which compass direction they wish to enter from and pick the closest or roll a d3 and determine the entrance randomly.

If the players are taking too long to decide whilst waiting to enter the tower or camp, you can have them be ambushed by 10 **orc champions of bahgtru** (Appendix B) led by an **orog**. These younger orc warriors have more bravery than sense and will attempt to fight the biggest or most armored opponent. If any character is knocked unconscious they will continue to attack until the rest of the characters are knocked unconscious. From this point, the DM is free to run the adventure as they see fit, possibly holding them captive until they can work out a way to escape and resume their mission. DM inventiveness and player ingenuity should reign here.

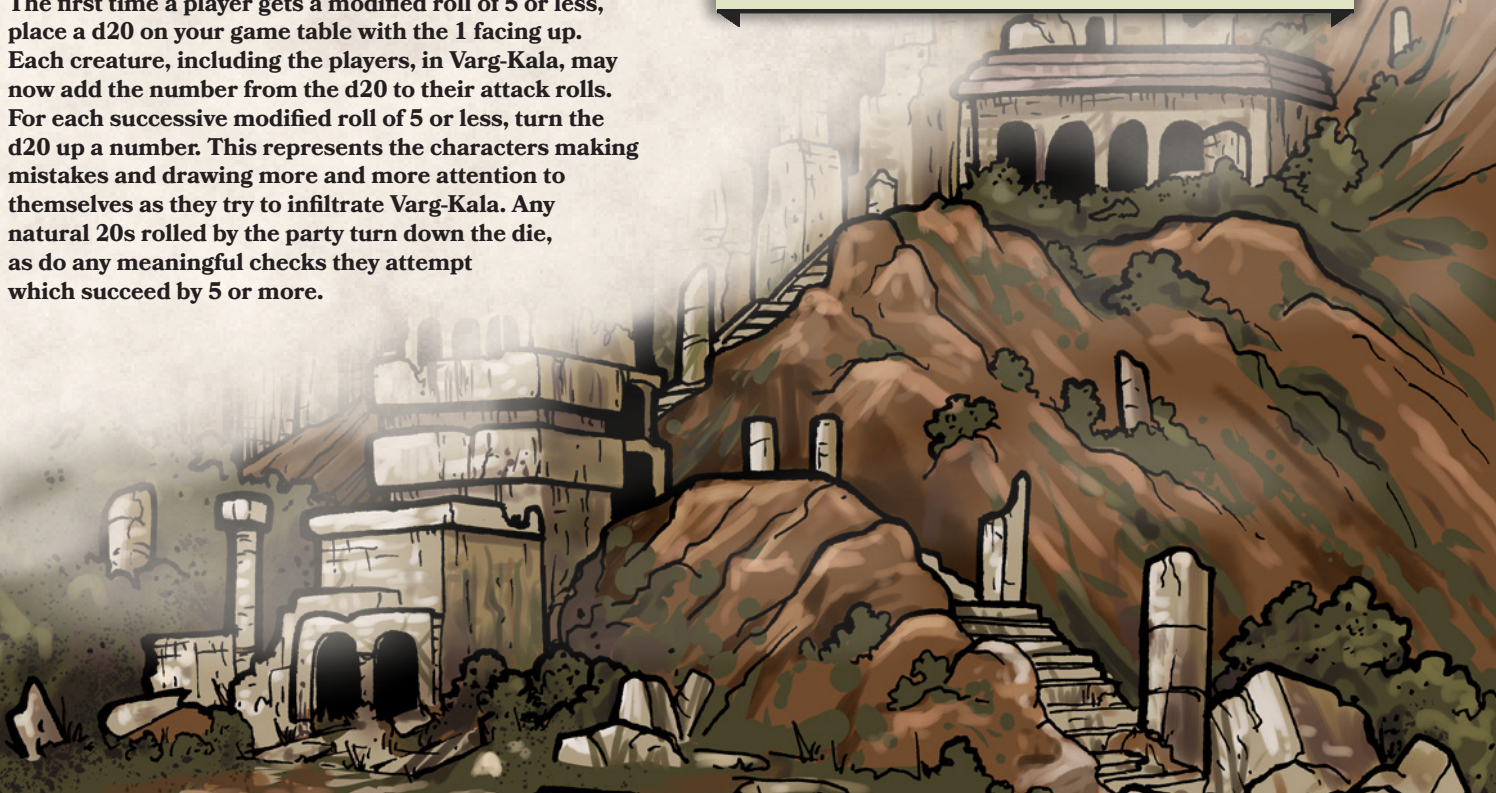
ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Remove the Orog, add 1 Orc Champion

APL 7: Add 1 Orc Champion

APL 8: Add 2 Orc Champions



RUINED TOWER

At the highest point of Giantsblood Ridge is a looming skeleton of a tower. It was built centuries ago by giants but has fallen into disrepair after its inhabitants were slain decades ago. Now it serves as a guardhouse and base of operations for **The Orcs of Varg-Kala**.

At any time, there are five orcs standing watch throughout the tower, under the command of two **orogs**. Characters will be seen unless they can distract the **orcs** or beat their **passive Wisdom (Perception)** scores vs. the character's **Dexterity (Stealth)** check.

T1. GUARDROOM

Read or paraphrase the following:

In the base of the ruined tower burns a hearty fire, eating away at the logs and bones within. Scattered around are great lumps of gray stone; the bricks from which the tower was once made of. Nestled between these boulders are bedrolls, crates and stashed food. Rope ladders hang down from the ruined floors above.

Standing around the fire in this room, leaning on their weapons are two orogs. They crack jokes to each other in Orcish from time to time or shout up to the orcs above, but otherwise remain vigilant of their surroundings. Seated off to one side, in quiet contemplation is an Orc Eye of Gruumsh. He occasionally looks across at the orogs, seemingly not amused with their banter, but does not raise a word to interfere.

Characters who unsuccessfully enter this area via stealth are visible from the platforms above and can be fired at by the orcs.

A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception)** check reveals a cave entrance concealed behind a pile of sheepskins. The entrance is a rough spiral stair which leads straight down into the mountain (**Area V1**).

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: *This room is considered a Trivial encounter.*

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Add 1 Orog

APL 8: Add 2 Orog



T2. STABLES

Around the rear of the ruined tower is a makeshift stable where the orcs keep their aurochs. It is guarded by one orc and contains five **aurochs** in their pens.

Read or paraphrase the following:

A mud-stained hessian cloth stretches down from the edge of the tower to a roughshod shed of wooden planks. The smell of manure and hay emanates from within.

The lone orc is not visible from any other areas of the tower and is using this freedom to take a nap on duty. He sits slumped in the inside corner of the stable entrance, snoring and slobbering in his sleep. An empty wooden tankard sits nestled in his lap.

This orc only has a **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 5** and suffers from the **poisoned condition (ARP)**. If characters noisily walk straight into the stable, he will awaken and grab his axe to attack.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a *Trivial encounter*.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Do nothing

APL 8: Do nothing

T3. PLATFORMS

Read or paraphrase the following:

Connected by rope ladders that lead all the way to the ground are numerous platforms. These destroyed floors cling desperately to the remaining walls of the tower. Perching perilously atop them are a handful of orcs.

There are three platforms, two at a height of thirty feet and one at around sixty feet. The first two platforms have three orcs and the higher platform has two **orcs**. All the orcs have heavy crossbows with a dozen (12) crossbow bolts.

Climbing the rope ladders during combat requires a successful **DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check** or **DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**. A roll of less than 5 on either of these checks results in the character falling to the ground floor. A character falling from a height will sustain 1d6 bludgeoning damage per 10ft fallen and will be prone until the start of their next turn.

Treasure. The **orc** on the highest platform has discovered an ancient giant mithril necklace (**worth 2,500gp**) which he wears under his tunic as a belt.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

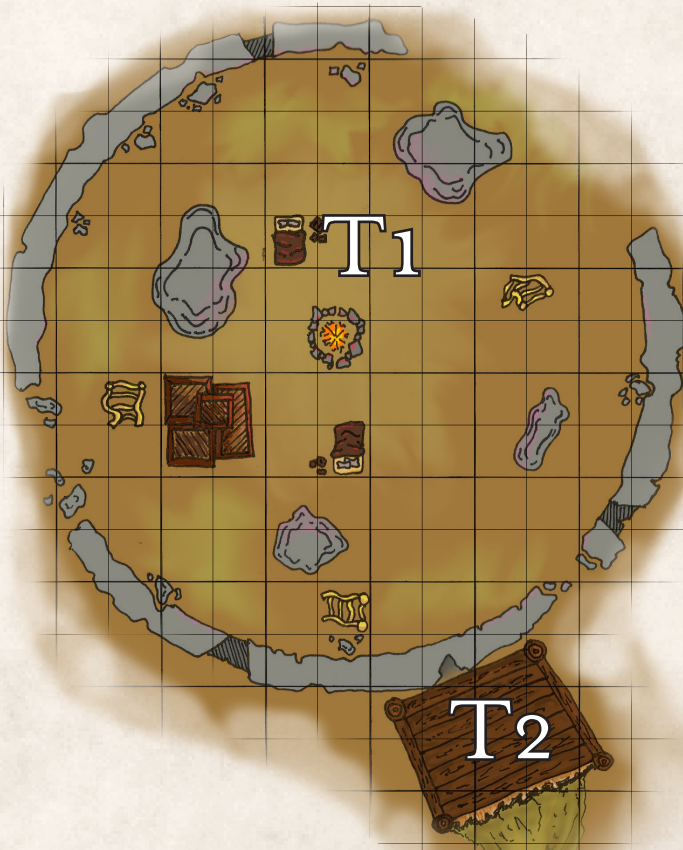
Note: This room is considered a *Trivial encounter*.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Do nothing

APL 8: Do nothing



VARG-KALA

The caves of Varg-Kala are sprawling and complex. They have multiple entrances and exits, chambers for different purposes, with humanoids and traps. It serves as the orcs home, but also their prison, vault, shrine, and fortress.

If the party is entering Varg-Kala **stealthily**, you should roleplay scenes with the Minotaur who believe that such tactics are dishonorable. A successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check** is enough to get them to cooperate. At any time you deem dramatic enough, feel free to have the Minotaur attempt to break stealth and engage in a glorious charge, unless the party again succeed an additional **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. Each time a check is attempted, **add 1 to the difficulty of succeeding** until the party fails. At this point, the Minotaur refuse to listen, calling the party dishonorable. From this point forward, the Minotaur will charge whenever the situation merits it happening, no matter what the party says.

GENERAL FEATURES

The following features apply throughout the caves of Varg-Kala, except where noted otherwise in the text:

Light. The caves and tunnels throughout Varg-Kala are entirely unlit save for chambers with fire pits. These pits shed bright light in a thirty-foot radius and dim light for another thirty feet further.

Orc Treasures. Every orc in the stronghold carries with them their weapons and armor, as well as a handful of trinkets and money. Most often trinkets take the form of severed digits, animal teeth, carved wooden tokens or bones. Each **orc** carries an amount of change equal to **1d10gp in various denominations of coin**.

Trapped Tunnels. Wherever a trap is marked on the map, you can assume it is a **'Hidden Pit Trap'** (ARP).

Huts. Many of the chambers of Varg-Kala have orc huts which house many **orcs**. The interior and exterior of these huts are all very similar; a mud-covered wicker outside with several doors leading to a single room with a small fire pit in the center. The huts are filled with worthless items such as wooden crockery, bedrolls, bones and the like. There is a **25% chance** that a hut will contain **1d4 x 25gp Art Objects (DMG, p134)**.

Ceilings. The ceilings of the tunnels and caverns vary wildly from around 5 feet in smaller tunnels to 30 feet or higher in central chambers.

Walls. The walls of the caves are damp and sharp, but thanks to an abundance of handholds and footholds, they can be climbed with a successful **DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check**.

V1. STRONGHOLD MAIN ENTRANCE

Read or paraphrase the following:

After descending the rope ladder for around sixty feet into darkness, your feet touch solid ground. The space in which you stand is unlit and cold. The only sound is the occasional drip of water from above.

Characters with a **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 18** notice the tiniest slither of light coming from the floor of the tunnel ahead. An active **DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check** also reveals this. The light comes from the secret door which leads to **Area V3**. The secret door itself is cut from the stone and can only be opened by applying pressure in the correct places. A **successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check** allows the characters to locate the correct place to push.

At the end of the tunnel is a stone door, barred from the other side. It requires a successful **DC 14 Strength check** to open. Attempting this check alerts the orcs in **Areas V2 and V3**.

V2. GUARDROOM

This cave may contain eight **orcs** and two **orc champions of bahgtru**. If the characters failed an attempt to knock down to door to **Area V1** then these orcs unbar the door and storm out into the tunnel, trapping the characters between themselves and the orcs from **Area V3**.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The cave before you is damp, despite the fire burning in a central pit. The smell of urine emanates from the alcoves on the rear wall. The benches around the fire have words scratched onto their surface.

Characters who can read the Orcish script can read the curses and insults scratched into the benches by the orcs. Use the following as examples, if the players wish to read the insults and curses:

- 'Largol is a Pig-Towel'
- 'Grizzle looks like a confused goat's anus'
- 'See Gimarg for fun times'

The alcoves on the western wall are clearly being used as latrines by the orcs on guard duty.

Should any **orcs** become pinned in this room and begin losing the fight, they will attempt to flee to **Area V6**, alerting the **orcs** within.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a Trivial encounter. The APL jumps to Easy if **Area V3** joins the encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

- APL 5:** Do nothing
- APL 7:** Do nothing
- APL 8:** Do nothing

V3. AMBUSH GUARDROOM

This room is used by the orcs to pin in any unwanted visitors. The secret tunnel connecting this cavern to **Area V1** allows them to get behind intruders and prevent them from escaping. Unless they have already attempted this maneuver, this cavern holds six **orcs**.

Read or paraphrase the following:

A small fire flickers in the center of this small cavern. On the north wall, a door has been cut into the stone.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: *This room is considered a Trivial encounter.* The APL jumps to Easy if **Area V2** joins the encounter. Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing
APL 7: Do nothing
APL 8: Do nothing

V4. REFUSE PIT

This cave is used by the orcs to dump waste from latrines, leftover food, and dead prisoners. It is disposed of by an **Otyugh (ARP)** which blissfully wallows in the filth.

Read or paraphrase the following:

You open a wooden door which leads down a low, narrow tunnel. Before you've made much progress, an overwhelming stench fills your nostrils making you cough and splutter.

If the characters continue, read or paraphrase the following:

You emerge into a cavern filled with a pool of putrid waste. There are numerous items floating on the surface of the fetid pond; a few flasks, skulls, a bag and a decomposing hand.

Characters bringing light into this chamber are instantly attacked by the **otyugh**. Just before the attack, they are overwhelmed with the feeling that something is angry at them. A successful **DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that the anger is directed at their light source. If the light is instantly extinguished, or if no light is brought into the chamber, characters get a feeling of curiosity and bliss wash over them. These feelings are the result of the **otyugh's Limited Telepathy**.

The pool of offal and waste counts as difficult terrain. The first time any creature enters the pool, and at the start of each of its turns within the waste, it must make a **DC 16 Constitution saving throw** or become **Poisoned (ARP)** for one hour. A creature who succeeds on the saving throw, or is naturally acclimated to such conditions, is immune to the stench.

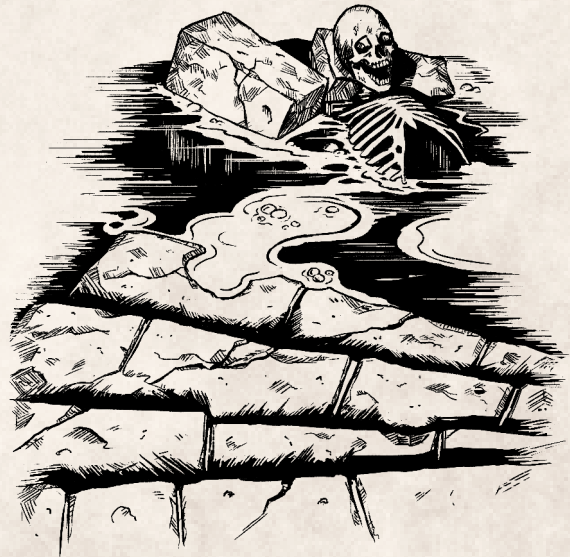
Treasure. Floating in the offal are several items:

- a **Potion of Resistance - Cold (ARP)**
- a **Potion of Greater Healing (ARP)**
- a rotting hand with a ruby ring (**worth 500gp**)
- a bag containing a huge, ivory scroll case covered in giant runes (**worth 750gp**) which holds a **Spell Scroll of Gaseous Form (ARP)**
- a water proof leather pouch (**containing 56gp**)
- a cloud giant mask of silver inlaid with blue topaz (**worth 1,500gp**).

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: *This room is considered a Trivial encounter.* Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing
APL 7: Do nothing
APL 8: Add 1 Otyugh



V5. FOOD STORAGE

There are a number of these small caverns dotted throughout Varg-Kala. Each lies behind a locked wooden door which can be opened with a **DC 14 Strength check** or **DC 10 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) check**.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Before you are mounds of rations; dried meat, wheels of cheese, casks of ale and other stolen goods.

Treasure. Characters can loot **up to fifty rations** from each storage room. Doing so takes one minute to assemble five rations worth.

MAP: VARG-KALA NORTH



V6. MAIN CHAMBER

This huge, central cavern houses most of the **orcs** and provides them with a living space in which to train, eat, sleep, worship and socialize. It is lit by a huge war hearth which pumps out heat and sends shadows dancing throughout the chamber.

At any one time, there are at least twenty **Orcs**, one **Orc Eye of Gruumsh (ARP)** and one **Orc Blade of Ilneval** in this room.

Additions

- There is a 50% chance of an additional 4 **orogs** in the chamber.
- There is a 10% chance of two **Orc Claws of Luthic (ARP)** in the chamber.

Note: This room has the most DM leeway within the adventure. If you need more or fewer orcs to challenge your players, feel free to manipulate the numbers within this chamber.

Due to the great number of orcs in this chamber, and the flickering light of the warm hearth, characters may make a **DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check** to hide in the shadows around the edge of the chamber. Characters disguised as orcs can enter without being noticed.

Every Orc within this area is aware of ‘... **the black danger** ...’ that lurks within **The Valley of Refuse (Area V6e)**. Aside from sewer dumping, every orc steers clear of this area.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Ahead of you light flickers throughout a chamber crowded with orcs. Communal huts of wicker and mud line the walls of the cavern, and in the center, a blazing pyre chucks out heat. Sat around this are tens of orcs eating and chatting. On the far side of the cave, a half dozen more spar in a sandy make-shift arena. There are multiple tunnels leading to and from this room, but they are obscured by the muscular frames of the orcs within.

The **orcs** in this chamber are just getting on with their day to day lives. If they have not been warned by the guards, or **orcs** from other chambers, then they will be surprised if combat breaks out.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: *This room is considered a Medium encounter.* The APL jumps to Hard if either or both the **additions** are added to the encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Do nothing

APL 8: Add 1 Orc War Chief

V6A. PRISONER PEN

Read or paraphrase the following:

Just beyond the crackling war hearth is a wooden pen which holds three prisoners; a male and female dwarf and a female human who stares almost longingly at the fighting pit. The three captives look gaunt and underfed and are watched over by a brutal looking one-eyed orc.

The prisoners are **Ardruk** and **Halwynn Cragghammer** (LG male and female mountain dwarven **archers (ARP)**) and **Yashiera Pashar** (NN female Calishite human **martial arts adept (ARP)**). The **Cragghammer's** are a married couple of big game hunters, who came to Giantsblood Ridge in search of the fabled giant elk that is rumored to live there. They were ambushed by **orcs** whilst camping one night within the area. **Yashiera** is a traveling monk, who came from the southwest in search of new martial techniques. She had located the Minotaur settlement, but was turned away after beating a minotaur in a spar with ‘... **dishonorable fighting techniques** ...’. Although **Yashiera** resents the minotaur, the group are all eager to escape and will fight alongside the party if they can get their gear back.

All the prisoner's gear is locked away (Area V7c).

The second time the party enters **Area V6**, the prisoners have been moved to **Area V10a** through the secret passage by **Area V6c**.

V6B. FIGHTING PIT

Read or paraphrase the following:

Half a dozen orcs are sparring in this sand-filled pit. The sickening crack of a fist on jaw makes you shudder as these brutes smash into each other. Slumped, semi-conscious in one corner of the pit is a half-orc sporting an obviously broken nose.

The half-orc in the corner is named **Grush** (NE half-orc thug **(ARP)**). In his disoriented state, he is unable to distinguish between orcs and non-orcs. This presents an opportunity for the characters to gain some information about the stronghold. If the characters near **Grush**, he'll groan and ask for some ale. If a character stops to provide ale, water or other sustenance, they can ask a handful of questions before the other orcs in the pit notice. **Grush** can point characters to locations, describe the chambers beyond this one or shed light on some aspects of Orcish culture.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: *This room is considered a Trivial encounter.*

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Do nothing

APL 8: Do nothing

MAP: VARG-KALA MAIN CHAMBER



V6C. SHRINE TO ILNEVAL

Read or paraphrase the following:

Mounted on the wall behind an engraved stone altar is a blood-soaked blade. A handful of offerings sit on top of the stone block, and a sinister, beady-eyed orc standing nearby scans the chamber. At either side of the altar are a pair of smashed, giant-sized statues.

This shrine is guarded by an **Orc Blade of Ilneval**, accompanied by four **orcs**. Characters that watch for a period notice that orcs who visit the shrine have a drop of blood wiped on their foreheads from the blade, and then go over to **Area V6b**. A successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check** reveals that this is a shrine to Ilneval.

To one side of the shrine is a secret passage which leads to **Area V10**. A successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals that a rock on the cave wall appears far smoother than in other areas. A successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals the secret door and handle are required to open it. If a character attempts the second check, they must also make an opposed **Dexterity (Stealth) check** to avoid the glare (**passive Perception**) of the blade of ilneval.

Treasure. Whilst most of the offerings on the shrine are worthless, such as elf ears, wooden tokens, and animal claws, there is an ornamented ceremonial dagger (**worth 250gp**) sitting pride of place upon it. A successful **DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check** is enough to swipe the treasure; failure means the offending character is spotted by the **Orc Blade of Ilneval**, who leaps over the altar to attack.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a Easy encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Do nothing

APL 8: Do nothing

V6D. BAHGTRU BONE PIT

Read or paraphrase the following:

This alcove, hidden somewhat from the rest of the chamber, contains a pile of broken femur bones.

There is a 10% chance that this chamber contains a single **Orc Champion of Bahgtru**, leaving an offering of a smashed femur upon the pile in the center of the room. A successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check** reveals that this is a shrine to Bahgtru.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a Trivial encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Do nothing

APL 8: Do nothing

V6E. THE VALLEY OF REFUSE

Twenty feet underground and running the length of the main chamber is a refuse tunnel. The orcs living in the area dispose of their waste, biological and other, down holes within the communal huts, which eventually lead to the refuse tunnel.

Whilst this tunnel may provide a stealthier passage through this area of Varg-Kala, it houses its own dangers and challenges.

As the party begins to delve down into the tunnel read or paraphrase the following:

The air becomes thick with the stench of waste as you make your way down the stone steps. Stretching before you is a long underground cavern filled with yellow mountains of refuse. Between the mountains of waste runs an artificial valley, it seems you have found the orc's sewer. Far across the other side of the area, you can make out similar steps leading up and out of the chasm.

Grizzle Molgath. As the party travels through the valley, they will come to a small alcove in the waste mountains (marked by the letter **X** on the map). Here they will come across a malnourished sewer-dwelling, neutral aligned orc, named Grizzle Molgath, rummaging through the waste and talking to himself about '**... one orc's rubbish is one Grizzle's treasure ...**'. It is very apparent when the party first see Grizzle that his left hand is missing, with only a horrid 'melted' stub in its place. Grizzle had been the runt of his clan which led to him being ridiculed, bullied and eventually exiled. He fled into the sewers many years ago and has been surviving on the filth and scraps that are disposed of from the above main chamber.

Grizzle knows the following information:

- If the party does not talk to him in a nasty way, Grizzle will divulge information about any location, or describe any major NPCs found around Varg-Kala.
- He will also warn of the Black Puddings, which he only refers to as '**the Black Eaters**', that prowl this refuse.
- Over the years, Grizzle has become very adept at dodging '**the Black Eaters**'.

- If the party enquire about his missing hand or the 'melted' stump, Grizzle mentions that a **'Black Eater'** got his hand many sleeps ago and melted away the hand. He's learned to give them a wide berth when at all possible.
- If the party enquire about how many **'Black Eaters'** are down here, Grizzle mentions that there is more than 2 but as they all look the same, there could be more.
- Grizzle doesn't sleep down here as you can't watch against **'the Black Eaters'** if you have both eyes closed (he's smart enough to know he wouldn't last past 1 night if he slept down here)
- Grizzle usually **'... finds a secluded spot up top ...'** after everyone is sleeping and returns to the sewers before they wake up. This accounts for his knowledge of who's who and the Orc settlement's layout.

Random Black Pudding Encounters. Every 50 feet of movement through the valley, the party has a **50% chance** of encountering a group of **4 x Black Puddings (ARP)**. If this happens, read or paraphrase the following:

You begin to notice that there are strange cleared patches of the waste around the edges of the waste valley, only stone bits and pieces have been left behind. You smell them before you see them, as you become aware of a thick black substance oozing out of the piles of garbage. Before long four heavy mounds of thick black sludge move towards the party.

The **Black Puddings** will attempt to devour the party. The Black Puddings instinctively stay within the safety of the sewers and will not chase the party (or anyone else) should they exit the sewer at either end.

Note: If the party make it to the end of the valley without encountering the **Black Puddings**, run this combat just before they reach the stairs.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: Although this area is considered an **Easy encounter**, the tight quarters, and the fact that Black Pudding splits when hit with either lightning or slashing damage, this could turn bad for the party if they don't control the situation quickly. The DM is encouraged to give the party an out should it look like the party is in over their heads.

Due to the complexity and severity of this encounter, there is no adjustments to this encounter:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Do nothing

APL 8: Do nothing



To V6
SOUTHERN MAIN CHAMBER

MAP: THE VALLEY OF REFUSE

V7. WAR CHIEF'S QUARTERS

Depending on events that transpired earlier in the adventure, the current state of this chamber changes between one of the following three options.

1. If **Fleshrend** managed to escape the battle at the town with either or both of his two **orog** bodyguards, he or they will be in **Area V7b** taking *counsel* with **Guthma One Eye**.
2. If **Fleshrend** was killed, the returned **orogs** now guard **Area V7c** whilst **Guthma One Eye** sits in **Area V7b**.
3. If only **Guthma One Eye** remains, he is in **Area V7b**.

Read or paraphrase the following:

You follow a wide tunnel into a decorated chamber. Bear and wolf pelts hang from the stone walls, a haunch of some large animal roasts over a warm fire in a central pit and an enormous pair of antlers rests above the entrance to a mud and wicker hut. Surrounding said hut is a fence of spears, several of which are mounted with heads of various races in various stages of decomposition.

If **Fleshrend** is indeed still alive and the council is taking place, characters will be able to hear muffled voices from within the hut. A **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** allows the characters to make out portions of a conversation in *Orcish*, which roughly translates to:

Guthma:

'Your attack at the town worked. The stupid bull face man gave me our banner. Glory to Gruumsh.'

Fleshrend:

'Where my reward? Me no fight for free.'

Guthma:

'Come now then, through the hidden passage.'

Guthma's voice is that of an orc while **Fleshrend's** is the deeper and phlegmatic voice of a troll. After the conversation ends, movement can be clearly heard within the hut, as it is obvious that they moving to exit. Have the characters attempt a **DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check** to quickly hide somewhere before the warriors emerge.

If a character **fails their stealth check**, then **Fleshrend** pauses halfway to the secret tunnel:

Fleshrend:

'Wait Guthma, me smell man (dwarf/elf/gnome etc.) flesh!'

Fleshrend maneuvers to where the character/s is hidden with **Skinstripper (Appendix A)** in hand. **Combat ensues.**

If the characters **pass their Stealth check** and are not noticed, **Guthma One Eye** (and **Fleshrend**) head to the secret passageway on the north of the cavern. **Guthma One Eye** speaks the words **'Bleeding Eye'** in *Orcish* and the stone of the cave wall grinds aside, revealing a passage to **Area V8**.

If **Fleshrend has been previously killed** during the initial attack against the town, none of this occurs. **Guthma One Eye** is instead admiring the **Banner of Gruumsh** in **Area V7b**.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: If Guthma One Eye, Fleshrend, and the two orog bodyguards are present then this room considered an Easy encounter, otherwise this room is considered a Trivial encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Add 1 Orc Champion

APL 8: Add 1 Orc Champion and 1 Orc

V7A. SHRINE TO GRUUMSH

Read or paraphrase the following:

A crude stone statue of a one-eyed orc glares at you within this chamber, seeming following your every move. At his feet is a marvelously carved wooden altar that is clearly not of *Orcish* origin. The grisly offerings on the altar are a trio of pickled eyes and a barbed spear.

Upon investigation, a **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals that the statue was well crafted by its originator to give the impression that the one eye from the orc is following the parties' movement.

A **DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check** reveals this to be an altar to Gruumsh.

Treasure. The eyes on the altar are worthless, but the barbed spear, though not magical, is of fine craftsmanship (worth 35gp).

MAP: VARG-KALA EAST



V7B. CHIEFTAIN'S HUT

Read or paraphrase the following:

Inside the chieftain hut is just as gory as outside. There are several stuffed animals inside, including a raven, worg and cave bear. Pelts and furs are piled in one corner, forming a comfortable, if pungent bed. A table to one side of the hut has a rack of sixteen Elvish ears upon it, each proudly displayed as a trophy.

If the **Banner of Gruumsh** is still in this area, read or paraphrase the following:

Hanging pride of place of the back wall of the hut is a tattered banner. Embroidered upon the surface, barely visible underneath the years of bloodstains and grime, is a deep red eye. Something about the standard makes the hair on the back of your neck stand up as if you feel as though you're being watched.

If the characters encounter Guthma here:

Admiring the banner with his one good eye is a hideous orc. Muscles ripple below his leathery skin with each slight movement, warping the scars of battle which cover his body. He is muttering to himself in orcish;

'Finally, banner has returned to us orcs, masters of battle. Too long was it gone, now back, ours to keep. Mine to keep. Not be with precious banner for long time is pain! Glory to Gruumsh!'

To safeguard the Banner, Guthma has assigned his personal bodyguard (treat as an **Orc War Chief**) and four **Orc Champions of Bahgtru** to personally guard the newly returned Banner. In honor of their elevated status, these 'guards' will fight to the death in its defense. **They don't, under any circumstances, leave the presence of the Banner, no matter what combat breaks out in adjoining areas.**

Whilst **Guthma One Eye** is not the most adept spellcaster, he has managed to manipulate and further enhance the banners magic to form a protective enchantment, which should deter anyone but him from laying their hands upon it. The **Banner of Gruumsh** has had the Antipathy form of the **Antipathy/Sympathy spell (ARP)** cast upon it; **spell save DC 13**. As well as the magic of **Guthma One Eye**, the Banner of Gruumsh also summons an Avatar of Gruumsh (**as per blackguard (ARP)**) if it is picked up by the naked hands of any who do not worship Gruumsh (**see Appendix A for more details**). Guthma will also activate the Avatar should combat occur.

On Investigation. A successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** in this room will discover a parchment hidden beneath the pelts of furs. It has **'Bleeding Eye for secret door'** written across it in the *orcish* language, and penned with blood.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: Should Fleshrend and his 2 orog bodyguards be somehow still alive and present, this room is considered a Deadly encounter. Should this occur, remove the 4 Orc Champions to bring this area back to a Hard encounter. The following assumes that Fleshrend and his 2 orog bodyguards are not within the area:

APL 5: Remove 1 Orc Champion

APL 7: Add 1 Orc Champion

APL 8: Add 2 Orc Champions



V7c. LOOT PILE

Read or paraphrase the following:

Piled high atop a rockfall are the trophies and loot the orc war band have amassed through years of raiding. Glittering silver and gold are contrasted by more grisly items; the scalp of a dwarf, a necklace of severed fingers, and what could perhaps be the head of a wyrmling.

This pile of loot may be guarded by Fleshrend's **orog** bodyguards provided they did not die earlier in the adventure.

Treasure. The pile contains the following:

- an Elvish jug inlaid with silver (**worth 25gp**)
- a Dwarven crown of bronze, copper, and brass (**150gp**)
- a silver chalice set with moonstones (**150gp**)
- a bag of six obsidian stones (**10gp each**)
- **Potion of Fire Breath (ARP)**
- a **Cloak of the Manta Ray (ARP)**
- a fur and feather trimmed quiver holding 20 Elvish **+1 arrows (ARP)**
- a **Bag of Holding (ARP)** with a fireball swatch sewn onto the side, containing the following:
 - a **Spell Scroll of Firebolt (ARP)**
 - a **Potion of Healing**
 - various coins of differing denominations (**worth 600gp**).

The pile also contains the equipment of the prisoners (**Area V6a**):

- two sets of studded leather armor
- two longbows
- two longswords
- twenty darts
- two explorer's packs
- a scholar's pack
- numerous personal effects.

In addition, the following items belonging to **Ivellio (Area V8)**:

- shortsword
- shortbow
- studded leather armor
- a delicate Elvish made gold spun necklace (**worth 250gp**).

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: *This room is considered a Trivial encounter.*

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing
APL 7: Do nothing
APL 8: Do nothing

V8. GUTHMA'S CELL

This chamber is only accessible through the secret door in **Area V7**. To find the secret door, characters must succeed on a **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. Once the door has been found, the password '**Bleeding Eye**' must be spoken in Orcish for the door to open.

Read or paraphrase the following:

As the stone wall grinds aside, it reveals a craggy tunnel lit from the far end by a dull purple glow. As you press down the tunnel, you begin to see the source of the light; glowing phosphorescent fungi which covers patches of stone like a blanket.

If **Fleshrend** and **Guthma One Eye** have not entered the cave, read or paraphrase the following:

The light barely illuminates a humanoid figure in the cavern beyond. The individual has their hands in manacles, with chains that reach up to the ceiling, leaving their feet just touching the floor. Their head is slumped down over their chest and a defaced lute hangs just above from the chain.

If the characters draw closer, they see that the figure is a male elf. He has had his ears cut off, and one of his eyes is missing. He is clearly on the brink of death. Magical healing or a **DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check** is enough to bring the elf to consciousness.

The elf is named **Ivellios Meliamne** (NG wood elf **bard (ARP)**). Should he survive to do so, in a hoarse whimper, he tells the party that he was captured whilst traveling through the area unaware of the orc stronghold. He saw the tower and thought it would be a good place to camp, but when he arrived it was crawling with orcs. He killed a few but was captured as soon as he arrived. Since then he has been tortured here by **Guthma One Eye**, who is keeping him as a prize for **Fleshrend**. **Ivellios** is desperate to escape but with **four levels of exhaustion**, he realizes his level of usefulness to the party would be limited.

If **Fleshrend** and **Guthma One Eye** have entered the room, **Fleshrend** is torturing the elf. At this point, the elf, without help, will **die within 3 rounds**.

Treasure. To torture the elf further, **Ivellios'** lute is hanging just above him from a chain. It has been defaced, but still works. The rest of **Ivellios'** equipment is in **Area V7c**.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: *At APL 5, this room is considered an Easy encounter; otherwise this room is considered a Trivial encounter.*

APL 5: Do nothing
APL 7: Do nothing
APL 8: Do nothing

V9. LUTHIC DEN

This cavern houses the worshippers of Luthic. Apart from the noncombatant females, it presently contains five **Orc Claws of Luthic** who are resting in their huts. Should combat break out, two of the females makes it their duty to release the boars from their pen to join the combat.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Candles melted onto the central pillars of this room shed flickering light over its inhabitants. The 4 female orcs in this room have lengthy, lacquered claws and white symbols painted on their bodies. From the northern hut, you hear the happy squealing of children, and the pen on the eastern wall houses content looking boars.

The orcs in this chamber are distracted by their resting and have disadvantage on any checks to spot hidden or disguised characters. Their **passive Wisdom (Perception) is counted as 8** whilst not in combat.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: If the boars are added to this encounter, then the room is considered an Easy encounter; otherwise this room is considered a Trivial encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing
APL 7: Do nothing
APL 8: Do nothing



V9A. PIG PEN

Read or paraphrase the following:

Pudgy boars are snuffling around in the muck inside this wooden pen. They seem happy enough, with a trough full of water and a handful of rotting apples stuck in the mud.

The pen contains two **Boars (ARP)**. They are happy and don't fight unless attacked or released from the pen (see female orcs above).

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a Trivial encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing
APL 7: Add 2 boars
APL 8: Add 4 boars

V9B. WHELPING PIT

Sunk into the cavern wall behind this hut is the whelping pit, where the orc worshippers of Luthic care for the war band's offspring. It is filled with six **Orc children (AC 10, 2 hit points, non-combatants)**. These are guarded by four **Orc Claws of Luthic** (in addition to the numbers mentioned from **Area V9**).

Read or paraphrase the following:

Two female clawed orcs are trying to break apart half a dozen scrapping orc whelps. They are patient but tough with the children, who seem to be having a wonderful time.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a Trivial encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing
APL 7: Do nothing
APL 8: Do nothing

MAP: VARG-KALA WEST



V10. PRISON

This area of the slave pens, on the right side of the bars, is occupied by two **Cave Bears (ARP)**. The **Cave Bears** are loyal to the **Orc Claws of Luthic**, and will join in any fights in **Area V9**, or roar to attract the attention of the **Orcs** in **Area V9** should they notice any non-orc intruders.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Two hulking bears with matted coats sit before a barred off a section of the cave. Their fur has been painted with red ochre but has rubbed off in patches. As you watch, one of the bears swats at the bars of the cage, and you hear a stifled whelp of something 'humanoid' from within.

There is a secret passage on the eastern wall of this cave. A successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals that the rock within the cave wall here appears far smoother than in other areas. A successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals the secret door and handle required to open it.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a Trivial encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

- APL 5:** Do nothing
- APL 7:** Add 1 Cave Bear
- APL 8:** Add 2 Cave Bears

V10A. SLAVE PEN

The **Orc Priestess of Luthic** in **Area V11** has the key to the door of this area. Alternatively, it can be picked with a **DC 14 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) check** or smashed open with a **DC 20 Strength check**.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Huddled in an alcove of this damp, smelly cave is a stocky, bald human male. He is covered with muck and sits on a dirty bedroll, picking at his blistered feet whilst whispering to himself. Behind him is a wooden door.

The pen contains **Dalark Everwatch** (LG male Chondathan human **thug**). He was taken from the town a few weeks ago and has been involuntarily working down here in the caves since. Like the other prisoners, he is keen to escape but has no belongings with him apart from a **Ring of Jumping (ARP)** (This item has the *Frail* 'Quirk' DMG p.143 which prevented the orcs from discovering it).

Depending on previous events in the adventure, the prisoners from **Area V6a** may be in here as well.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a Trivial encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

- APL 5:** Do nothing
- APL 7:** Do nothing
- APL 8:** Do nothing

V10B. LATRINE

This area is used by the prisoners kept in Area V10a.

V11. PRIESTESS' QUARTERS

This cavern is home to the **Priestess of Luthic**, a high-ranking role in orc society. It is occupied by an **Orc Priestess of Luthic** who spends most of her time here, practicing magic and preparing healing balms for **Orcs** injured in battle. If some of the **Orcs** from the town were injured but got away, one of those **Orcs** is here, slumped against a rock. Said **Orc** still suffers from four levels of exhaustion, due to harried trip it took for him to return.

Read or paraphrase the following:

A thin white smoke floats around the floor of this room, which is lit by candles set in too small nocks within the walls. From within a mud hut, you can hear a soft, ululating chant. As you look around, you jump with a start in the form of a towering cave bear before realizing that it is merely a crude statue, mouth open in a wicked snarl.

After a few moments, the **Orc Priestess of Luthic** will emerge from the hut with a potent smelling iron pot, which she leaves by the northern entrance to the cave. She then walks over to **Area V11a** to pray.

Treasure. The hut itself contains the following items of interest:

- a component pouch with 7 uses remaining
- 1d4 jars of a healing salve (Keoghtom's Ointment (ARP)).

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a Trivial encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

- APL 5:** Do nothing
- APL 7:** Add 2 Orc Champions as bodyguards
- APL 8:** Add 4 Orc Champions as bodyguards

V11A. SHRINE TO LUTHIC

Read or paraphrase the following:

At the foot of the looming 'bear' statue is an oval polished stone slab. Upon this are numerous herbs and carved wooden tokens resembling children, bears, and clawed hands. The statue is covered in red ochre save its claws, which are coated in charcoal.

A **DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check** identifies this as an altar to Luthic.

V12. SHARGAAS LAIR

These deep caves are home to the worshippers of Shargaas. This cavern contains five **Orc Red Fangs of Shargaas (known within the clan as "The Fangs")** and three **Giant Bats**. The room is pitch black unless the characters have a way of illuminating it. **The Fangs** are perched on ledges around the edge of the cave, and the **Bats** are hanging from the roof. These caves are used to bring back prisoners and loot after a raid.

Read or paraphrase the following:

This chamber is eerily silent. The floor is peppered with feces, rusty helmets, and scraps of armor.

Characters with a **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 13** notice the bats; if they have **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15** they also notice **The Fangs**.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: *This room is considered an Easy encounter.*

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Add 1 Giant Bat

APL 8: Add 1 Orc Red Fang and 1 Giant Bat

V12A. ALTAR TO SHARGAAS

Read or paraphrase the following:

A cracked obsidian altar is decorated with fangs dyed red. The offerings atop it include dead bats, handfuls of coins, and a large horn.

A successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check** reveals this to be a shrine to Shargaas.

A successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check** reveals the nature and make of the horn, indicating that it once to belonged to a Minotaur.

A successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals that around the rear of the altar is a cavity, hidden by a casting of **darkness** (emitted from the **Black Stone of Shargaas**). Inside the cavity is the following items:

- **Black Stone of Shargass (Appendix A)**
- three **vials of poison (ARB)**
- a plan looking, slightly rusted iron key (to **Area V12b**).

Treasure. The coins on the altar are **24cp**, **12sp**, and **8gp**.

V12B. PRISON PEN

This pen is separated from the rest of the cave by iron bars, driven deep into the surrounding rock. There is an iron-barred door for access, but upon investigation, it appears to be locked (**the key can be found in Area V12a above**). Alternatively, a successful **DC 16 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) check** or a **DC 20 Strength check** can open the door. If any Minotaur were taken captive during the **'Assassins of Shargaas'** (see p4) encounter earlier in the adventure, they can be found here.

V13. GIANT BAT ROOKERY

This cave is used by the worshippers of Shargaas to rear their **Giant Bat** mounts. It has several tight passageways that lead to the outside which **The Fangs** use to depart for raids. This room contains eight **Giant Bats** and four **Swarms of Bats (ARP)**.

Read or paraphrase the following:

As you walk down the narrow tunnel, the smell of ammonia burns your nostrils. The floor beneath your feet becomes soft and loamy with layer upon layer of bat guano. As you strain your ears to listen in the darkness, you can hear the sporadic flapping of wings and chittering of bats.

Any character that brings light into this room is instantly swarmed by the agitated bats who attack the character and try to drive them back into **Area V12**. If this occurs, **The Fangs** and **Giant Bats** in **Area V12** are altered by the sound.

Characters who wish to move through the chamber without disturbing any **bats** must succeed on a **DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check** without a light. Failure on this check results in the characters being attacked by the **bats**.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: *This room is considered a Trivial encounter.*

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Add 2 Giant Bats and 2 Swarms of Bats

APL 8: Add 4 Giant Bats and 4 Swarms of Bats

V14. YURTRUS CAMP

This cavern is used by the followers of Yurtrus. Here four Orc Hands of Yurtrus carry out death ceremonies and dispose of the bodies of Orcs. If the party badly wounded several Orcs in the assault at the town that also managed to escape, the Orc Hands of Yurtrus are conducting ceremonies over the bodies of a couple of Orcs that died after returning to the Orc stronghold.

Read or paraphrase the following:

One entire wall of the cavern before you are piled high with skulls, their lifeless eyes staring blankly back at you; their bleached white tusks grimacing in morbid delight. Piles of other bones festoon the cave, and here and there are strange herbs and trinkets poking out of various scattered holes within the walls.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Note: This room is considered a Trivial encounter.

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative:

APL 5: Do nothing

APL 7: Add 1 Orc Hand

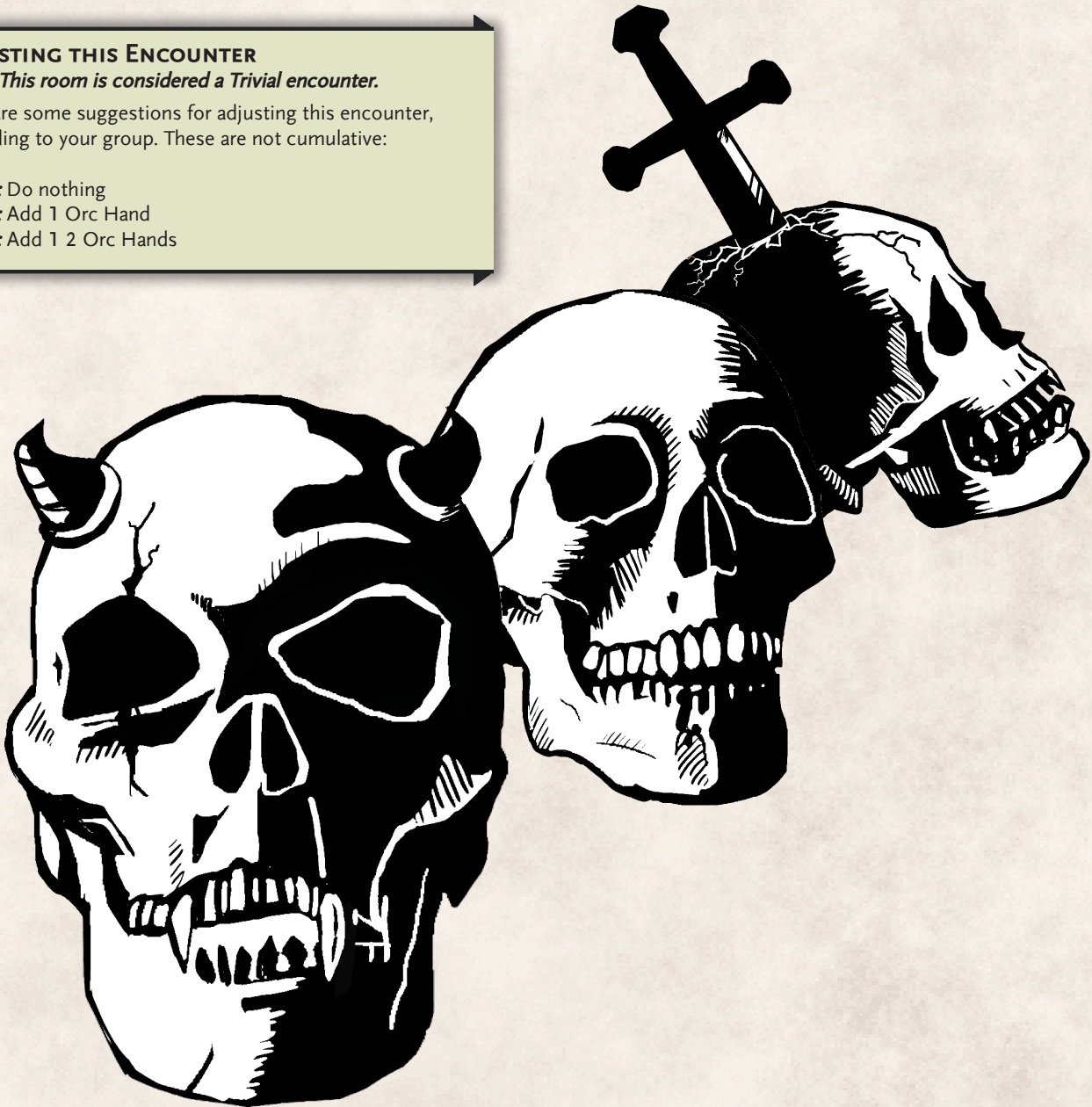
APL 8: Add 1 2 Orc Hands

V14A. ALTAR TO YURTRUS

Read or paraphrase the following:

A stone altar with a hand painted in ash and tallow stands in a cramped alcove off the main chamber.

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check marks this as an altar to Shargaas.



CHAPTER 4: RESOLUTIONS

Depending on the actions of the characters throughout the adventure, they may have achieved several goals throughout the assault on the town, the betrayal at the minotaur settlement and the orc stronghold of Varg-Kala:

- Hopefully, the party kept **Perseus** alive throughout the adventure. If not, the party may have to help reinstate a new leader of the Minotaur. You should reward the players for this action, either with uncommon magic items, XP or other treasure.
- The party should have managed to defend the town from the distraction raid, possibly killing **Fleshrend** the troll chieftain and his two **Orog** bodyguards in the process.
- After returning to the Minotaur settlement and finding **Astarte** dead, the party may have chosen to take their revenge upon **Theron**, for her murder. Because of this, they may need to stabilize the fractured Minotaur community (see dot point 1 above).
- Whilst at Varg-Kala, the party may have killed **Guthma One Eye** and **Fleshrend**. They hopefully also managed to retrieve the **Banner of Groomsh**. They may also have crippled the Orc stronghold, depending on their tactics.
- If the party managed to free any prisoners, you should reward them with a few hundred gold pieces or the promise of a favor later.
- If the Experience Point System is used, all combat encounters should be rewarded with the appropriate quantities of XP, found in the *Monster Manual* and Appendixes of this adventure.
- The following should be awarded to the players so long as the **Banner of Groomsh** was retrieved and returned to the minotaur:
 - If the **Experience Point System** is being used, an additional 5000 XP, split between the characters, should be rewarded for completing this adventure.
 - If the **Milestone Based System** is being used, no XP is awarded, but the characters should gain 1 level for completing this adventure.

PART THREE: MINOTAUR'S BANE

Keep your eyes open for the 3rd installment of *The Minotaur Trilogy*, in which the minotaur and orcs must come together to fight an even greater foe!

Once again, the Minotaur have reclaimed the Banner of Groomsh, that most vile of artefacts, which has filled the hearts of orcs with the desire to raid and pillage. Unbeknownst to the two races, this standard of war is not all that it seems...

In part Three of the trilogy, a horrifying turn of events plunges the characters deep into an Abyssal Rift, which tears into the Material Plane. Can they face the demons of their own past to seek out and annihilate what was once locked away? Will they save the Minotaur from a fate worse than death? Only you can find out.

Coming soon ... *Minotaur's Bane*... 1st quarter, 2018.



APPENDIX A: MAGIC ITEMS

BANNER OF GRUUMSH

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement by a worshipper of Gruumsh)

Many eons ago, some say at the dawn of the world, a vile hero of orcs named Theghlit Wrathswon began his crusade against the forces of good. This hulking warlord carved his way through elf and man with ease, taking the ears of his victims as he went. Some say that Theghlit was the son of Gruumsh; He Who Watches, the undisputed ruler of the orc pantheon. Legend says that when Theghlit gouged out his eye in honor of Gruumsh, a flame ignited in the socket, driving Theghlit to ceaseless slaughter.

Eventually, even Theghlit Wrathsworn began to fall. His unending rage and bloodlust caused him to face ever more powerful foes, taking on monstrous creatures and demigods. Eventually, Theghlit met his match against Minos, the Father of All Minotaur. Legend tells that the two demigods fought for days, destroying the earth around them. Eventually, however, Minos landed a fatal blow upon Theghlit Wrathsworn, pinning him to the ground with his golden horns. As Theghlit passed into the domain of Gruumsh, it is said that a portion of his soul was trapped in the banner he wore atop his shoulders. This became known as the **Banner of Gruumsh**.

Since those ancient battles, the **Banner of Gruumsh** has been captured from the minotaur and orcs dozens of times, passing through the hands of untold warlords and rulers. Centuries later, the standard finds itself in the hands of As-tarte, ruler of the Minotaur, and subsequently hidden away and untouched for decades.

Random Properties. The **Banner of Gruumsh** has the following random (?) **Artifact Properties (ARP)**:

- 3 minor beneficial properties
- 1 major beneficial property
- 3 minor detrimental properties
- 2 major detrimental properties

Increased Strength. After attuning to the standard, your Strength increases by 2, to a maximum of 24. You can't gain this benefit from the banner more than once.

Mark of Gruumsh. After attuning to the banner, you feel inclined to gouge out your own eye in honor of Gruumsh. You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight and on ranged attack rolls. In return, Gruumsh grants you his fury; you deal an extra 5 (1d8) damage when you hit with a weapon attack.

Hero of Orcs. While you are attuned to the banner, orcs obey your commands without question. You also know how to read and write Orcish. You also gain advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks against creatures with Fey Ancestry.

Avatar of Gruumsh. Once per day, while attuned to the banner, you may summon an **Avatar of Gruumsh** (use the **blackguard statistics (ARP)**) to fight by your side in battle. The avatar remains on the Material Plane for 1 hour, or until it is killed. This ability activates automatically if, whilst attuned to the banner, a creature tries to steal it from you.

The Curse of Guardianship. The banner has an unusual effect on those who have it in their possession. Whether attuned or not, those who possess the banner for any length of time will form an unconscious bond with it. Although it takes time for the bond to take hold, once it does, it cannot be easily undone. In addition, due to the banner's connection to Gruumsh himself, the casting of a **Remove Curse (PHB, p271)** has no effect on the item (though the DM may permit the casting of a **wish (PHB, 288)** to temporarily negate the effect). The only way to rid oneself of the banner is to destroy it, not an easy task once the owner obtains a bond with the item.

For each week the banner is in your possession, you are required to succeed a **DC 18 Wisdom saving throw**. Each time you fail, you become that much closer to being bonded to the item. Once you fail 3 such checks, you are considered bonded and will do whatever is in your power to protect the banner from leaving your possession or its ultimate destruction.

Destroying the Banner. The only way for the banner to be destroyed is to have it pierced one thousand times by the gold-plated horns of "... a true Minotaur Ruler ..." (DM discretion apply). If you plan to continue to Part 3; Minotaur's Bane, then on destruction of the banner an ancient evil is released and causes an Abyssal Rift to be torn into the Material Plane. Continue to Minotaur's Bane.

APPENDIX A: MAGIC ITEMS

BLACK STONE OF SHARGAAS

Wondrous item, uncommon

A **Black Stone of Shargaas** is an obsidian stone with an arcane enchantment placed upon it by a Red Fang of Shargaas. A **Black Stone of Shargaas** emanates magical darkness from it which can only be dispelled by a spell of 5th level or higher. This magical darkness can be contained within a bag, pouch or another container.

Curse. Any non-orc creature who keeps a **Black Stone of Shargaas** on their person for longer than 24 hours gains the Sunlight Sensitivity trait (see **Dark Elf (Drow)**; **PHB, p24**), which cannot be removed except with a Remove Curse spell (**PHB, p271**).



SKINSTRIPPER

Weapon (flail), unique (requires attunement)

Skinstripper is the **magical +1 flail** of Fleshrend, the infamous troll chieftain. Its handle is a thigh bone engraved with giant runes. Leather strips attach fangs, metal shards, obsidian chips and claws to the shaft.

Hit points lost to this weapon's damage can be regained only through a short or long rest, rather than through any other means.

Once per turn, when you hit a creature with an attack using this magic weapon, you can wound the target. At the start of each of the wounded creature's turns, it takes 1d4 necrotic damage for each time you've wounded it, and it can then make a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw**, ending the effect of all such wounds on itself on a success. Alternatively, the wounded creature, or a creature within 5 feet of it, can use a full round action to make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check**, ending the effect of all such wounds to it on a success.

Sinister. This item is recognized by elves who associate it with Fleshrend. His band of trolls frequently raid elvish outposts capturing and torturing elves without mercy. Those familiar with the item's history treat it and its owner with suspicion (**-2 to all Charisma based checks**).

Minor Property: Wicked. When the bearer is presented with an opportunity to act in a selfish or malevolent way, the item heightens the bearer's urge to do so.

Quirk: Hungry. This item's magical properties function only if fresh blood from a humanoid has been applied to it within the past 24 hours. It requires the equivalent of 1 hp of damage in blood to do so. This blood can come from the bearer of the weapon.

APPENDIX B: NON PLAYER CHARACTERS

ORC CHAMPION OF BAHGTRU

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (hide armour)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Bahgtru's Strength. The orc deals an extra die of damage when it hits with a greataxe attack (included in the attack). The orc also has advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to grapple.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The orc makes two greataxe attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d12 + 3) slashing damage.

GUTHMA ONE EYE

Guthma One Eye is a cruel-hearted and devious orc. He venerates the fury of Gruumsh above all else, and is determined to carve a place for himself and his warband into the world. His stronghold is Varg-Kala, a network of caves beneath Giantsblood Ridge.

Guthma is inspired by Gruumsh to act not only with strength, but also with cunning. He desires artefacts related to the orc gods, and will do anything to hunt them down.

Personality Trait. I believe myself to be descended from Gruumsh, and am his apostle on the Material Plane. I frequently chant canticles or finish sentences with veneration.

Ideal. Wickedness. Strength and cunning bring honour to Gruumsh.

Bond. Every serious choice I make must be decided by signs or omens from the gods.

Flaw. My cunning nature often infuriates other orcs, who believe only in domination.

GUTHMA ONE EYE

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)

Hit Points 93 (11d8 + 44)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +6, Wis +4

Skills Intimidation +5, Religion +4

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Giant, Orc

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Gruumsh's Fury. Guthma deals an extra 4 (1d8) damage when he hits with a weapon attack (included in the attacks).

Spellcasting. Guthma is a 3rd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). Guthma has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, resistance, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *bless, command*

2nd level (2 slots): *augury, spiritual weapon (spear)*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Guthma makes two attacks with his greataxe or his spear.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (1d12 + 4 plus 1d8) slashing damage

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft. or range 20/60ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d6 + 4 plus 1d8) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Battle Cry (1/Day). Each creature of Guthma's choice that is within 30 feet of him, can hear him, and not already affected by the Battle Cry can gain advantage on attack rolls until the start of Guthma's next turn. Guthma can then make one attack as a bonus action.

APPENDIX B: NON PLAYER CHARACTERS

FLESHREND

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armour)

Hit Points 84 (8d10 + 40)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Intimidation +2

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Giant, Orc

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Keen Smell. Fleshrend has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Regeneration. Fleshrend regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If Fleshrend takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Fleshrend makes three attacks: one with his bite and two with his claws, or two attacks with Skinstripper.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5ft., one target.
Hit: 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5ft., one target.
Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Skinstripper. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Hit points lost to this weapon's damage can be regained only through a short or long rest, rather than through any other means.

Once per turn, when you hit a creature with an attack using this magic weapon, you can wound the target. At the start of each of the wounded creature's turns, it takes 1d4 necrotic damage for each time you've wounded it, and it can then make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, ending the effect of all such wounds on itself on a success. Alternatively, the wounded creature, or a creature within 5 feet of it, can use an action to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, ending the effect of such wounds on it on a success.

FLESHREND

This hulking, slathering troll calls himself a chieftain, but has no clan, and hence acts as a mercenary for evil forces willing to pay him in specific terms. Fleshrend is more intelligent than the average troll, but has a perverse desire to flay living creatures, especially elves.

Fleshrend has some true giant blood in his veins, which occasionally comes to the surface in acts superior strength or creative sparks. One such event resulted in the creation of SkinStripper, a magical flail which Fleshrend keeps on his person at all times.

Personality Trait. I adore flaying humanoids before I devour them, specifically elves.

Ideal. Greed. I will do anything to get my hands on an elf.

Bond. SkinStripper holds a part of myself within it, I will never let it leave my side.

Flaw. I am addicted to blood and torture, without satiating my desires I become physically weak and cannot concentrate.



APPENDIX B: NON PLAYER CHARACTERS

PERSEUS

Perseus is a talented military leader who is held in high regard among the Minotaur society. Second in command, Perseus is an avid believer in the Minotaur's deep and honorable culture. Proud and courageous, he prefers to meet foes face-to-face before sneaking about for an added, dishonorable, advantage.

Personality Trait. My people are my family, I will lay my own life down to ensure their safety if it comes to it.

Ideal. Honor. Everything that I do is in the name of honor, for without honor, what worth are we?

Bond. My leader and mentor, Astarte, is the most influential and important figure in my life, I will server and protect her no matter the cost.

Flaw. My honor and courage can sometimes blind me from tactically superior plans and actions, especially those that are not so honorable.

PERSEUS

Large monstrosity, lawful neutral

Armor Class 19

Hit Points 122 (12d10 + 36)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +7

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Charge. If the minotaur moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

Labyrinthine Recall. The minotaur can perfectly recall any path it has travelled.

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the minotaur can gain advantage on all melee attack rolls it makes during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The minotaur makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 15 (2d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.



APPENDIX B: NON PLAYER CHARACTERS

MINOTAUR VETERAN

Large monstrosity, lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (splint)
Hit Points 78 (9d10 + 27)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +7
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Abyssal, Common
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Charge. If the minotaur moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

Labyrinthine Recall. The minotaur can perfectly recall any path it has travelled.

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the minotaur can gain advantage on all melee attack rolls it makes during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The minotaur makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 15 (2d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

ORC PRIESTESS OF LUTHIC

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (hide armour)
Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14(+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Skills Intimidation +3, Medicine +5, Religion +2, Survival +5
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Orc
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Spellcasting. The orc is a 7th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The orc has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, mending, resistance, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *bane, cure wounds, guiding bolt*
2nd level (3 slots): *augury, warding bond*
3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, create food and water*
4th level (1 slot): *guardian of faith*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The orc makes two claw attacks, or four claw attacks if it has fewer than half its hit points remaining.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage.



APPENDIX C: MAPS

THE RUINED TOWER



VARG-KALA



APPENDIX REFERENCE PAGE

CREATURES:

Archer (VGtM, p210)
Aurochs (VGtM, p207)
Bard (VGtM, p211)
Blackguard (VGtM, p211)
Black Pudding (MM, p241)
Boars (MM, p319)
Cave Bear (MM, p334)
Commoner (MM, p345)
Giant Bats (MM, p323)
Guards (MM, p347)
Knight (MM, p347)
Martial Arts Adept (VGtM, p216)
Minotaur Veteran (MM, p223 & 350)
Orc (MM, p246)
Orc Blade of Ilneval (VGtM, p183)
Orc Claws of Luthic (VGtM, p183)
Orc Eye of Gruumsh (MM, p247)
Orc Hand of Yurtrus (VGtM, p184)
Orc Nurtured Ones of Yurtrus (VGtM, p184)
Orc Red Fang of Shargaas (VGtM, p185)
Orc War Chief (MM, p246)
Orog (MM, 247)
Otyugh (MM, p248)
Swarm of Bats (MM, p337)
Thug (MM, p350)

REFERENCES:

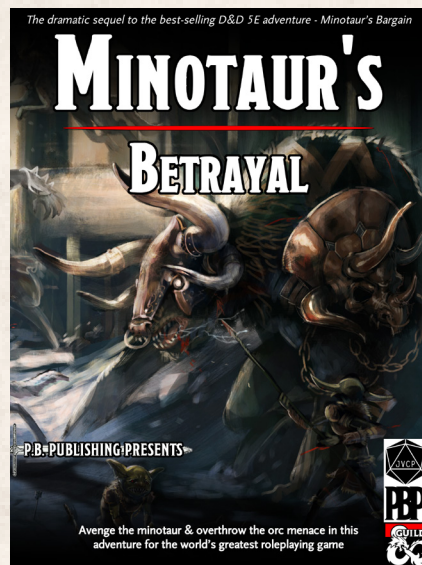
Antipathy/Sympathy spell (PHB, p214)
Artifact Properties (see Artifacts; DMG, p219 to p221)
Augury spell (PHB, p215-216)
Art Objects (DMG, p134).
Exhaustion (PHB, p181 (Travel Pace; Forced March) & p291)
Hidden Pit Trap (DMG, p122)
Poisoned (PHB, (Conditions – Poisoned) p292)

ITEMS (NORMAL AND MAGIC):

+1 arrows (DMG, p213)
Bag of Holding (DMG, p153 - 154)
Cloak of the Manta Ray (DMG, p159)
Keoghtom's Ointment (DMG, p179)
Poison (PHB, p150 & 153)
Potion of Fire Breath (DMG, p187)
Potion of Greater Healing (DMG, p188)
Potion of Healing (PHB, p153)
Potion of Resistance – Cold (DMG, p188)
Ring of Jumping (DMG, p191)
Ring of Protection (DMG, p191)
Spell Scroll of Firebolt (as per spell; PHB, p242)
Spell Scroll of Gaseous Form (as per spell; PHB, p244)

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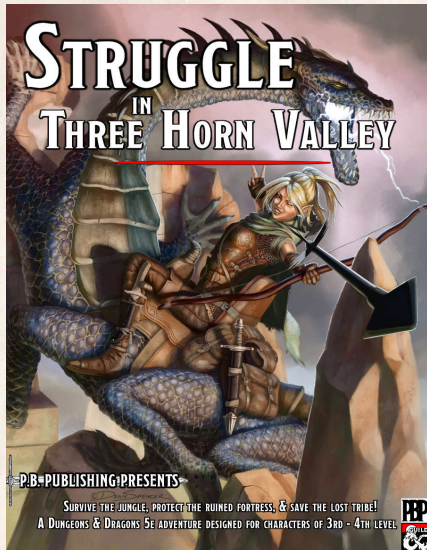
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