

# River of Blood

A One-Round D&D Living Greyhawk Adventure

by Erik Mona

The Millstream runs red with the blood of the abducted children of Greyhawk's lower class, triggering memories of a crisis thought averted long ago. Absolute Power series, part one. For characters levels 1-3.

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This is a RPGA Network adventure game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing the game (or this round of the game), but the actual playing time will be about three hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

[paragraph for pre-gen games only] Pass out the player characters based on class, gender, and/or race. Instruct the players either to prepare their characters now, or wait until you read the introduction, depending on the requirements of the scenario as described below. When they have prepared their characters, you may continue with the game.

**Scoring the game for RPGA points:** The RPGA has three ways to score this game. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use:

1. *No-vote scoring:* The players write their names and numbers on the scoring packet grid, you fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. *Partial scoring:* The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the convention coordinator wants information as to how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. *Voting:* Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the best amongst them, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes. Multi-round adventures usually required advancing a smaller number of players than played the first round, so voting is required for multi-round adventures.

When using Voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in ***bold italics***. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

A copy of *Greyhawk: The Adventure Begins*, will vastly improve the experience of your players, though it is not required in order that everyone has a good time.

## LIVING GREYHAWK Tier Structure

This adventure is untiered. It is for characters levels 1-3. Characters above this level should not be used in this adventure.

## An Introduction to *Absolute Power*

*River of Blood* is the first of *Absolute Power*, a series of linked LIVING GREYHAWK adventures that will span several years of play. In this opening chapter, a group of beginning adventurers stumbles upon hints that something of great importance is brewing within the shadowed walls of the city of Greyhawk. Clues discovered in this event may not come into play for months, or even years. This type of "continuous" story arc is unusual in long-standing organized play campaigns. What might be taken for granted in a private campaign, the taking of notes for future reference for instance, often falls by the wayside in convention-based play, as players tend to focus on only the obvious goals and encounters set out for them in a splendid, four-hour package. As the Dungeon Master, you should alert the players to the ongoing nature of the *Absolute Power* series before play begins, so that your players might break out of the convention gaming mentality and prepare themselves for the first step in a much larger journey.

All of that aside, *River of Blood* is a stand-alone adventure scenario in its own right. A player can easily sit down for four hours, explore the mystery presented herein, and walk away, never to play another adventure in this series without feeling like she's been ripped off, or only given a portion of the adventure. If we've done a good job putting this adventure together, however, and if you do a good job running it, we're certainly hoping that players will eagerly await the next installment.

What, then, is the over-arching "plot" of *Absolute Power*? It will take years for the entire story to surface. Given the nature of the LIVING GREYHAWK environment, today's DM is tomorrow's player, so we wouldn't think of ruining the entire thing this early. For now, suffice it to say that *Absolute Power* concerns itself with agents of certain powers scouring the Flanaess, looking for an item or items that will lead them to a source of power thought lost for more than a millennia.

Of course, many of these agents seek out the power for all the wrong reasons, reasons that will, over time, become clear. As the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign begins, one such agent has infiltrated the notorious home

of a convicted killer, and the blunderings of his unusual allies sets a group of beginning adventurers on a trail that may consume years of their adventuring careers, or indeed their very lives.

## The River of Blood

The City of Greyhawk, known as a haven for thieves and cutthroats as well as a center of culture and industry, has seen its share of scandal. From anonymous knifings of young nobles “slumming it” in the wrong part of town to outright war between its guilds of thieves and beggars, Greyhawk is no stranger to the type of violence most would prefer to keep covered up. 26 years ago, however, a noble of the city was implicated in a series of crimes so horrendous that news of the foul event spread as far as Ratic, confirming provincial wisdom that the city of Greyhawk was good for two things alone: corruption and death.

The scandal began with the disappearance of eight children, scions of nobles and wealthy merchants who inhabited the High and Garden Quarters of Greyhawk, a haven of culture and wealth separated from the “filth” of the Slum and Thieves Quarters by two walls and the bulk of New Town. Suspicion immediately fell upon the Thieves Guild, triggering press gangs of hired “vigilance committee” members (working at the behest of the families of the abducted) poking their noses south of Black Gate, in Old City, the haunt of thieves and the deathly impoverished. As might be suspected, these searches and accusations led to violence and the destruction of property, and what had begun as an affair of the well-to-do soon spread through Old and New city alike, affecting the lives of both the rich and poor.

The searches turned up nothing, and after two weeks, even the watch threw up their hands in frustration. Then, the criminal behind the abductions made himself known in a hideously violent act of confession. Merchants traveling east on High Street from the High Market to the Duke’s Gate noticed it first. The waters of the Millstream, the thin creek that runs throughout nearly the entire city, ran red with blood.

Tracing the blooded river north, investigators came upon an iron gate set against a steep hill, atop which stood the lordly manor of Sir Bluto, knight bachelor of the City of Greyhawk. The millstream, according to city records, emerged from the ground in a natural cave beyond the grate. The key to the grate, according to those same records, was held in trust by none other than the knightly Sir Bluto himself.

By the time investigators pried open the grate, Sir Bluto had wandered into the Garden Quarter watch station, where he confessed to his grisly crime. Though imprisoned, he soon escaped his captors. Some say he fled across the Nyr Dyv with a band of renegade Rhennee bargemen. Adventurers’ reports more than a decade later placed him within the storied edifice known as White Plume Mountain. He has never been brought to justice.

Before fleeing Greyhawk, however, Sir Bluto had left a farewell present, of sorts.

The investigators discovered that the caves below Sir Bluto’s estate had been refined, most likely by some long-dead tenant. Ancient wooden doors and walls divided the caves into a number of different chambers. One of these chambers clearly had been used as a holding pen for the children, as it stank of sweat and filth. A thin, dark flight of stairs led from the caves to the house above, allowing the passage from the world of the city to the underworld without risk of being seen.

And an underworld it was. Near the center of the cavern, where the stream bubbled up from a natural spring, investigators discovered the naked, mutilated bodies of the eight missing children, which had been hanged from barbed chains from the cavern’s ceiling, their lifeblood draining from the quasi-mystical symbols carved into their flesh to the flowing water beneath them. Conventional (though, after the fact, fiercely covered-up) wisdom suggested that the vile Sir Bluto had worshipped fiends in this hidden sanctum, and that the eight dangling corpses had been the culmination of his devotion to his infernal masters. The official story was that Bluto was a madman which, of course, he must have been. The people, with the help and urging of the government, put the killings behind them, for the most part remembering them only by the sobriquet they had picked up thanks to the lurid image first espied by the merchants on High Street: The River of Blood murders. Sir Bluto’s home, within the shadow of the Guild of Wizardry, has remained vacant all these years. The key to the grate, ever since the day the bodies were removed from the caves, has been in the care of the city watch.

### Veralian Took and his Cohorts

Three weeks ago, a stranger to the City of Greyhawk arrived under cover of darkness, and made his way to the home of the infamous Sir Bluto. This man, a mercenary by the name of Veralian Took, had been hired by unknown agents to set up residence in the house, investigate the entirety for some hint as to what Sir Bluto had been up to, and report back to his contact at some location to be named later. For the industrious Took, breaking into the home had been easy. Clearing thirty some years of dust and debris, however, had taken more time. Much longer, in fact, than he had originally accounted for.

Everything likely would have gone as planned if not for Took’s associates. Though his human friends Garoth the Houndsman and Furtok the brute grew restless, always afraid that their trips to the High Market to gather provisions would raise suspicions, it was Took’s inhuman cohorts who caused the true problems. Traveling with Veralian Took was a band of xvarts, blue-skinned goblinoids who he long ago picked up while adventuring in the Bandit Kingdoms. Xvarts have an affinity for rats, and so this particular band of xvarts saw Took, himself a wererat, as something of a messiah.

Veralian Took might occasionally change form into a rat, but he was no idiot. He knew that smuggling a band of xvarts into the city of Greyhawk would be difficult, and that keeping them there without them causing trouble would prove an even greater challenge. Within a week of gaining entry to Sir Bluto's home, however, Took discovered the secret passage to the caves below. After befriendng some particularly fierce rats who had inhabited the caves and exploring the cavern, the xvarts made the place their home. Veralian Took locked the door from cave to house, effectively trapping the xvarts between home and grate.

Though xvarts are by nature cavern dwellers, Took's companions didn't appreciate being cooped up under Sir Bluto's house. Worst of all, Veralian Took was taking much longer than he had originally promised, and the xvarts were in serious danger of missing one of their high religious festivals, Raxivort's Orgy. This most sacred of holy weeks heralded the frenzied mating season of xvartkind, and Took's optimism regarding the length of their stay in Greyhawk left the humanoids trapped in a foreign, human city with no females to speak of. Though underestimated by their humanoid kin, xvarts are notoriously crafty. Within days, while their human companions scavenged through Sir Bluto's abode, the xvarts had managed to pry the bars of the safety grate apart just enough to allow passage to the High Quarter. If xvart females could not be found, humans would have to do.

## **A New River of Blood?**

As yet, the xvarts have met with only marginal success. On their first foray to the world beyond the grate, they ventured south, along the millstream. Traveling under the cover of night, two xvarts made it as far south as the wall dividing the bulk of Greyhawk from the Old City. Under ordinary circumstances, the creatures would have been stopped by a thick metal gate at the wall, but this had been pried loose by thieves on some recent caper. Thus, the xvarts delved deeper into the worst neighborhood in the teeming city of Greyhawk, the so-called Slum Quarter, where a man's life is worth only so much as he carried in his pockets. Most often, this amounted to nothing.

And yet, in these darkened streets, some amount of innocence flourishes still, in the form of children too young to know that their path has been dictated for them since birth. Two such children, Erdan and Dena Pakiss, played on the banks of the Millstream that night. Even though, by the time it passed the south wall, the waters of the Millstream ran with the refuse of a metropolis, these children played. On the night in question, a horrible brand of filth made its way south with the current. The body of the young boy, Erdan, was discovered at dawn. Of the girl, Dena, no sign remained.

Murders and abductions, even (or perhaps especially) of children, are not unusual in the Slum Quarter, where the most destitute of men bring with them the most despicable of vices. The names of the

murdered and missing were entered into certain ledgers in a watch house already swarming with crimes demanding more immediate attention, and the matter, at least so far as city officials went, was largely forgotten.

Five days later, however, an eight-year-old girl named Caran Meratan vanished while washing her family's clothes in the Millstream near where Erdan Pakiss was found. Certain inquiries were made in the nearby neighborhoods. A Tenha street vagrant who (it was said) fancied children was beaten to death by an angry mob of Slum Quarter laborers. The man had claimed innocence to the last, and no trace of where the children might have been kept was discovered.

As yet, the city watch remains (at best) casually interested in the crimes. The superstitious folk of the Slum Quarter keep their children locked up at home, afraid that any of their neighbors might be the fiend responsible. Though the crimes are yet young, some in Old City have raised the specter of the River of Blood, noting the importance of the Millstream in both crimes. The situation is such that, with perhaps one or two more abductions, tensions in the Slum Quarter could grow to bursting.

Into this state of affairs comes a carriage of would-be adventurers, visiting the city of Greyhawk for what is likely the first time. Their trip is to be interrupted, however, by a little girl who will set them on two mysteries. The first will return another child to her mother. The second will span the entire Flanaess, and will define the newcomers' adventuring careers.

## **Encounter One: Introductions**

As the adventure begins, the PCs find themselves in a carriage meant to seat six (though seven can be accommodated, if uncomfortably). For whatever reason (this should be left to each player to decide for himself), the PCs have traveled from the matriarchal city of Hardby, on the Woolly Bay, north to the cosmopolitan city of Greyhawk. The trip has taken more than two days, with stops at coaching houses along the way. This has left the group with ample time to get to know each other. As play begins, go around the table, allowing each player to give a physical description of their character. Ask each player to keep in mind why his or her character has come to the free city, as well as asking them to share what the others might have learned about their character after a day or so of conversation with a handful of strangers in cramped quarters.

The wagon in which the PCs begin the adventure is owned by the Able Carter coachhouse, which runs regular carriage travel up and down the Selintan River valley. The two coachmen, Ernst and Eluk, are quiet but efficient teamsters; they keep to themselves most of the trip.

Once the party has become acquainted, continue with the following, showing the players the attached map of the city of Greyhawk to give them an idea of where

they are (the party enters through the Highway Gate at the southern edge of the city:

*The immense walls of Greyhawk seem to grow larger as your carriage approaches the city. Outside the walls, a handful of ill-cared-for structures cluster around the River Road. Tired, dirty faces look out at you as your carriage passes by. The larger of the two coachmen, Ernst, ducks his head near the right-hand window. "We're about at the Highway Gate," he says in a gruff voice. "Beyond that's Old City. Should be safe this time of day, but it's not worth chancin' it. Stay in the carriage until we get to the Able Carter coachhouse, in the Artisans District beyond the Black Gate, inside."*

*The carriage comes to a stop outside two tall towers. A large, twelve-foot-wide archway stands open between the towers. Ernst hops from his perch atop the carriage and opens the right-side door. "Now, then," he says. "The guards here at the gate'll be wantin' to know your business in the city, and you'll have to sign in, too."*

Less than a minute later, the carriage is approached by two guardsmen dressed in red tabards, with a large yellow star emblazoned on the chest. The men wear chainmail beneath their tabards, and are armed with clubs. Plain metal shields are secured on their backs.

These guards speak in hushed tones with the teamsters before approaching the PCs in the carriage. The apparent leader, a tall human man with dark hair of medium length, asks each member of the party what their business is in Greyhawk. The man is polite, making notations in a logbook after he has heard each PC's story. If anyone should provide so crass a reason for coming to Greyhawk as "I'm in search of Adventure," the guard tries to stifle a smile and shakes his head sadly. The guard gives half-orcs a long, serious look before tersely asking them their business in Greyhawk. He knows he's not allowed to deny half-orcs entry into the city, but that doesn't mean he has to like it, either.

Anyone claiming to worship an evil power such as demons, any humanoid god, or especially Iuz, will be denied entry to the city.

After each member of the party has explained their business, the guard asks them to sign their names in his logbook. If they do not know their letters, a simple "X" will suffice.

Should the party foolishly start any trouble with the gate guards, the two at the carriage will whistle to their companions in the gatehouse. One of the guards within lowers a portcullis in the passage between the towers, and the five additional guards outside the gates (checking on other visitors) rush to the aid of their colleagues. Further, both coachmen set upon the troublemaker with their clubs, eager that the Able Carter business distance itself from any hint that it might have brought troublemakers into the city.

**City Watch Guards, male and female human Warr:** Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 5 in. – 6 ft. tall); HD 1d8+5; hp 10; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +5 chainmail,

+1 small steel shield); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, club), or +2 melee (1d8/crit 19-20/x2, longsword), +3 ranged (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); AL N or LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0.

Str 13, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Ride +6.

Feats: Toughness, Weapon Focus (club).

Equipment: Club, short sword, light crossbow, chainmail.

**Ernst, male human Warr:** Medium Humanoid (6 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 1d8+5; hp 10; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 chain shirt); Atk +4 melee (1d6+2/crit x3, handaxe), +3 ranged (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0.

Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Ride +6.

Feats: Toughness, Weapon Focus (handaxe).

Equipment: Light crossbow, handaxe, club, chain shirt, pouch containing 22 gp.

The larger and more outgoing of the Able Carter coachmen, Ernst is a gregarious light-skinned bear of a man. The coachman is quick to smile, and even quicker to whet his thirst with strong alcohol when stopping at some roadside in. He's cautious when on the job, however, and puts the interests of his employer above all else.

**Eluk, male human Warr:** Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d8+2; hp 7; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 chain shirt); Atk +3 melee (1d6+2/crit x3, handaxe), +4 ranged (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0.

Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Ride +6.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (light crossbow).

Equipment: Light crossbow, handaxe, club, chain shirt.

Eluk is much shorter and fatter than Ernst, and while he is a kind-hearted man, he can't help but resent his partner. He tends to bitterly follow Ernst's lead, and doesn't speak very often.

## Encounter Two: A Strange Visitor

After the PCs have dealt with the gate guards, Ernst ushers them back into the carriage (if they ever left), closes the door, and retakes his position next to Eluk atop the coach box. In moments, the carriage once again begins its northward journey.

*Passing through the wide archway at the Highway Gate, you emerge into the city of Greyhawk at the part of town Ernst*

referred to as “Old City.” Looking out your windows, it’s not difficult to see how it picked up that name. The buildings crowded about the wide thoroughfare north of the gatehouse have suffered much through the ages, both from the ravages of time and, apparently, from a good deal of neglect, as well. A throng of children wearing tattered clothes approaches your carriage, palms extended in a begging posture. The coachmen snap their whips in the direction of the crowd, and with a shout urge their horses forward, soon leaving the children behind.

After passing what must have been a regal bathhouse in its own era, the carriage comes to a bridge that spans a thin stream of not-quite-clear water. A handful of weary-eyed women look up at the carriage as you pass by, laundry and pounding stones in hand. Their young children splash and play in the water as you pass overhead.

At last, the wagon slows to a halt, and Ernst’s voice can be heard above the trot of the horses on cobblestone. “We’re at the Black Gate,” he says. “The guards here will want you to sign your names, and we’ll be ready to go in no time.”

The scene here at Black Gate is nearly identical to that at the Highway Gate, save that this gate is far busier. Two whole patrols of guardsmen (use the statistics for the Highway Gate guards, above, if necessary) monitor the traffic through the gate, asking that all who pass through sign a ledger coded with the approximate time of day at which they passed through the gate. Per an old tradition, these guards do not enquire about the business of those passing through, a fact much appreciated by the thieves who infest Old City.

Once the Black Gate has been passed, proceed with the following:

**Beyond Black Gate, it’s as if you’ve entered a completely new city. Brightly colored banners fly from the buildings on either side of the wide street, and painted signs above many doors announce businesses of many kinds. The coach turns west along a narrow road, and to your right, just before a row of tall buildings cuts off your view, you see a large marketplace at which hundreds of people have gathered to trade, sell, or perform.**

**Traveling down the sideroad, you pass the smell of baking bread. To the right, a small group of halflings have stopped to watch a gnome juggling faintly glowing balls of light. They clap appreciatively as the gnome finishes, bowing with a flourish.**

**Suddenly, the left door of the coach flies open. A naked young human girl, perhaps seven years of age, darts into the carriage, slamming the door behind her. The girl’s skin glistens with water, and she curls on the floor, sobbing loudly. The carriage comes to an abrupt stop.**

The little girl, Caran Meratan, has long, dark brown hair. Her left temple is marked by a deep purple bruise, but she appears otherwise physically unhurt. She shivers visibly, her teeth chattering wildly. The girl does not speak, but instead breathes heavily and grunts, as if she has just gone through a profoundly traumatic experience. If someone attempts to console her, she hugs them and buries her face in their chest, sobbing all the while.

**Caran Meratan, female human Com:** Medium Humanoid (4 ft. tall); HD 1d4; hp 2; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (Dex); Atk -1 melee (1d3§, unarmed strike); AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +3.

Str 9, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.

**Skills:** Climb +3, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +3. **Feats:** Endurance, Iron Will.

Seconds after the girl bursts into the coach, the left door flies open to reveal Ernst, with light crossbow leveled. The moment he sees who has broken into his carriage, however, he lowers his weapon. If the girl has not yet been covered up, he averts his gaze until she has.

Throughout this ordeal, little Caran will not speak. If asked about who she is or why she burst into the carriage, she makes a wild, pointing gesture to the door. Though it may take the PCs a moment to realize it, Caran points to the door because, on the outside, it is emblazoned with an eight-spoked wagon wheel, the crest of the Able Carter coaching company. Cold, beaten, and frightened, the girl emerged from the Millstream wracked by confusion and fear. When she saw the PCs’ carriage, hope returned to her. She recognized the symbol of the eight-spoked wheel as that of the coaching house at which her father works, and ran to it as if to safety. Once the PCs have made the connection that she’s pointing at the crest, she nods. “Father,” she whispers.

If the PCs don’t make the connection, Ernst the coachman has an epiphany, putting two-and-two together. “There’s a wainwright by name of Barat what works for the coachinghouse. He’s got a little girl, maybe her age, been missing a week now.”

The party will most likely proceed to the coaching house.

## Encounter Three: The Father

The Able Carter coaching house is actually something of a compound, replete with a stable, a garage, and front office (as well as a handful of rooms for the coachmen, on the second floor of the office building). While most coaching houses are situated outside the city’s walls, the Able Carters have been allowed to set up shop so near the Petit Bazaar by a special compact with the Union of Merchants and Traders, who appreciate nearly obscene discounts for the services of the house. When the PCs arrive, two carriages sit in the small walled-off yard in front of the compound, with heavily muscled laborers loading or unloading baggage from atop the wagons.

Ernst leads the party to a small outbuilding at the back of the compound, where a thin, tired-looking middle-aged man works at fitting a wooden spoke into an uncooperative wheel. This is Barat Meratan, and when he sees his girl he immediately abandons his work to run and embrace her.

**Barat Meratan, Exp:** HP 7.

Stifling tears of joy, the wainwright asks the PCs how they came to find his little girl. He asks Caran what happened, but the little girl simply shakes her head, as if she's unwilling to discuss her ordeal as of yet. Once he realizes that he'll get nowhere talking to his daughter, Barat looks to the PCs.

**Barat turns away from his daughter, and looks at you with cold, tear-soaked eyes. "We live in the Slum Quarter, Caran and me. I get enough here to raise her decent, but only just. I thank you for bringing my girl back to me. I'd begun to think. . ."**

**"Nelán Pakiss, a washerwoman what lives by us. . . her two kids vanished while playin' in the Millstream about two weeks ago. Well, that ain't completely right. They found her boy, Erdan, all cut up by the side of the water. The girl, Dena, she was friends with Caran, eight, just like my daughter. They never found her." Barat's lips purse tightly, and he wipes away a tear before continuing.**

**"I warned my Caran to stay away from the place where they found poor Erdan, but I also told her to do her chores. I was working late at night eight days back, and when I came home, there was no sign of my daughter. I called up some neighbors, and we went looking. I took my group to the Millstream, and when I saw our laundry sitting by the edge of the water, I lost my legs. We couldn't find her." Barat shakes his head. "We couldn't find her and I feared the worst."**

**"I went to the watch, but you don't know what it's like in the Slum Quarter. The last thing they wanted to hear about was a missing child. There was a line of criminals to be processed a block long when I went there, I guess some fight had broken out. They took Caran's name, but didn't say a thing. I tried to tell them it might be the same thing as what happened to the Parkiss kids, but they didn't even seem to notice what I was talking about. But the folk of the Slum Quarter've been whispering. They say it's another River of Blood."**

**Barat looks at you, furrows his brow, and speaks. "I don't suppose any of you would be in a position to help us out? Nelán Parkiss is dying with grief, and if there's a way to get her little girl back. . . Do you think you have it in your hearts to help us?"**

Should the PCs decide against helping the folk of the Slum Quarter. . . chances are they won't turn out to be very good adventurers, since they aren't very good at taking the bait. If, however, they decide to give it a go, Barat thanks them, and offers to help out in any way that he can.

As time goes on, Caran Meratan gets more and more comfortable. Though she's still suffering from shock, gentle PCs will be able to elicit the following information from her, on a successful Diplomacy check (DC 15, or DC 10 if the PC in question has already exhibited kindness to her).

- She was taken by the bloomin (she means "blue men," but she's a little shaken at present).
- She doesn't know how many of them there were.
- The bloomin came out of the water to her right (she was on the right bank of the millstream, indicating

that the xvarts approached her from the north) and punched her in the head. Everything went dark after that.

- She woke up somewhere very cold, and very dark. She didn't have her clothes on. (And, in case the PCs ask, the bloomin didn't do anything "naughty" to her, except to push her around a lot. "They're smaller than me," she says. "I think they're jealous.")
- She was put in a pit, where she found Dena Parkiss.
- She didn't tell Dena about Erdan, and makes the PCs swear that if they save her, they won't tell her, either.
- She doesn't know how long she was in the pit, but she thinks it was more than a few days. She cried a lot, and it was very scary.
- Dena has a hurt leg, from when the bloomin threw her in the pit.
- A few hours ago, the bloomin tossed her a rope, and told her they wouldn't give her food unless she held on. They pulled her to the top and hit her on the head again, just to be mean.
- She pretended to be knocked out.
- They laid her on the floor and put a blanket or something on top of her. They kept fidgeting with the blanket, and talking to each other in a weird language. (In fact, the xvarts were measuring her for a ceremonial "wedding dress" garment crucial to the rituals involved in Raxivort's Orgy. She should make it clear that they didn't seem to want to harm or touch her.)
- When they didn't seem to be standing very close to her, she stood up and ran. She was still woozy from the punch to the head, and doesn't really remember this part clearly.
- She remembers opening a door, and hearing lots of shouts. Eventually, she got outside and fell into the Millstream (she's actually misremembering, here, as she fell into the Millstream before exiting the cave).
- She was scared and embarrassed about having no clothes on, so she traveled along the Millstream for a while. She got out when she started to get really cold.
- She knew she got out in the "worker quarter," where her dad worked.
- She jumped in the PCs carriage because she recognized the symbol of "pa's workplace."

The PCs can get the following information from Barat (no Diplomacy check needed, since he's interested in helping the PCs in whatever way he can).

- Erdan Pakiss was found 13 days ago.
- Caran disappeared 8 days ago.
- The inspector from the watch who took his report seemed decent (if a bit terse), but he hasn't heard from him since. His name was Inspector Tissen.

- He can guide the PCs to Nelan Pakiss' house (in fact, he encourages this—he'd like to give the woman some hope by introducing her to the PCs).
- The River of Blood is the name for a mass murder of eight children back in 565. Apparently some knight in the High Quarter did it. He was caught for a time, but got away.
- Barat doesn't trust knights or nobles, and thinks the knight (Sir Bugo?) probably paid off the watch and was allowed to leave.

There are, essentially, three paths the PCs might take from this point forward. If they agree to follow Barat to Nelan Pakiss' home, go to Encounter Four: The Mother. If they decide to investigate the River of Blood mass murder case, go to Encounter Five: Reading Up. If they decide to visit the site of the abductions, go to Encounter Six: The Scene of the Crimes.

## Encounter Four: The Mother

Should the PCs agree to visit Nelan Pakiss, Barat will agree to be their guide. He takes a moment to speak with his master, who allows him to take the rest of the day off to spend time with his daughter. Thereafter, Barat leads the PCs to the Processional, the wide road that travels along Greyhawk's north/south axis.

The wainwright leads them once again to the Black Gate, where once again they must sign the ledger. Incidentally, should one of the PCs come up with the idea to requisition a copy of the gate ledgers to see if anyone unusual passed through on the nights on which the two abductions occurred, they will elicit little more than chuckles from the gate guards. They tell the PCs that "all the gold orbs in Greyhawk" wouldn't buy them a copy of the logs. "Hells," the guard admits. "Even I don't know what happens to these things after we turn them in." In other words, there's no chance of the PCs getting access to these ledgers (even if they could, it wouldn't help them, as the xvart abductors traveled along the Millstream and through the broken bars at the wall to the west of Black Gate).

**Turning west off the wide road leading from the Black Gate, you follow Barat as he weaves his way through the rough, narrow streets of the Slum Quarter. The bulk of the buildings here are constructed of ancient stone and moldering wood. Most windows are bereft of glass, and a light breeze carries a faint "unwashed" smell at every turn. And turns there are. Barat seems to know by heart routes that would no doubt leave you lost without the benefit of his guide skills.**

**After traveling (you guess) about three blocks through winding alleyways, you come to a rickety old tenement building. Deep black ash stains the left side of the building, where holes in the wall reveal vacant apartments. The entire thing looks like it could fall at any moment.**

**"Nelan lives up here," Barat says. "On the fourth floor." With that, he approaches a thin stairway that winds its way up the exterior of the structure, beckoning you to follow.**

Despite appearances to the contrary, the stairs and building (at least on the right-hand side) are quite safe. The wood creaks, particularly as heavy characters make their ascent, but the PCs need not truly fear a collapse.

Barat leads the PCs to a landing on the fourth floor. The PCs must enter the Pakiss apartment via the window, since the apartment's door and the building's interior stair were both badly damaged by fire several years ago.

**The interior of Nelan Pakiss' apartment is well-kept, though it's clear the family doesn't have much food. The entire apartment is one room, with a large bed with a straw mattress, a table with three unmatched crude wooden chairs, and a corner that seems to have been designated as a kitchen. There, the floor is made of stone, and a small fire burns under a metal pail hanging by its handle from a peg in the wall. The smell of burnt stew hangs heavy in the air. A discarded wooden soldier lies on the floor near the window entrance.**

**Nelan Pakiss, a homely, heavysset human woman apparently in her mid-thirties, sits on one of the chairs at the table, absently holding a three-legged broken wooden unicorn toy in her hand. As you enter through the window, she gives a start, but relaxes upon seeing Barat.**

**The wainwright approaches her carefully, speaking with a soft voice. "Nelan, these people brought Caran back to me, today. I've brought them here to help you find Dena."**

Nelan Pakiss has endured much in her working class life in Greyhawk's Slum Quarter, but the loss of her children, the sole providers of joy in her life, has nearly killed her. Though Barat's words seem to interest her, they don't ignite any sparks—she's all but completely run out of hope.

**Nelan Pakiss, Com1:** HP 2; Equipment: Nothing of value.

Though it's difficult to get Nelan to show emotion, she is willing to help the PCs with whatever information she can. She might reveal the following bits of information, speaking in a soft, quiet voice:

- Erdan was 11 years old, and always wanted to sail across the Nyr Dyv. She had taken the children to the Lake of Unknown Depths six years ago, to scatter the ashes of their father, a fisherman who died after eating some diseased food.
- She has a little difficulty speaking about it, but Erdan was discovered with a deep gash to the back of his neck. The man from the watch said he was probably hit by a scimitar or a long, curved blade of some kind. She identified his body, but said she almost didn't recognize him at first. "He looked so cold," she says. "So cold."



- Dena is a bright young girl, 8 years of age. She has long, blonde hair, and when she was taken she was wearing a long green dress.
- The children were at play in the Millstream, near where an old statue of a griffon lies half-submerged in the water. It was one of their favorite spots, because the stream was a little deeper, there, which made for better swimming. (Barat nods when she explains the location, giving the impression that he knows where she's talking about.)
- Though the watch was very helpful and considerate at first, she doesn't feel that they've lifted a finger to help her. At first, this bothered her, but now that almost two weeks have passed, she seems resigned to the fact that no one will help her.
- The guard who investigated the case was named Inspector Tissen. He's stationed at the Old City Watch Station. Nelan doesn't trust him at all.
- At that admission, a bit of a glimmer comes to her eye. "Do you think you can help me?" she asks.

Nelan doesn't know anything about the River of Blood murders, and seems only passively aware that Barat's daughter had been abducted, too. If presented with evidence regarding the case (such as the story about Caran's "bloomin"), she perks up a bit, as it suddenly dawns on her that her daughter might not be lost to her, after all. Still, it will take time for everything to sink in, and time is something Nelan Pakiss had almost given up on.

After speaking with Nelan, the PCs have a number of options. If they wish to research the original River of Blood murders, proceed to Encounter Five: Reading Up. If they wish to examine the Millstream near the fallen griffon statue, proceed to Encounter Six: The Scene of the Crimes. If they wish to discuss the case with the local lawmen, go to Encounter Seven: The Law, Slum Quarter Style.

## Encounter Five: Reading Up

There are essentially three ways the PCs can attempt to gather information about the original River of Blood killings. Going to the authorities gets them nothing they haven't already heard, as city records at the individual watch stations are so pitiful as to be non-existent. A trip to the Great Library of Greyhawk, on the other hand, might turn up some very useful information.

The Great Library is open every day from dusk until dawn. There is no admission fee. Magical lights are hung throughout the building, remaining lit all hours. Silence is expected of all users, and armor and weapons are strictly banned.

The PCs won't be permitted to take any books home, but a discussion with a lesser librarian leads them to the History wing of the library. The librarian happens to be a student of Greyhawk's recent history, and knows just

where to look. Give the PCs Handout One: The River of Blood Murders.

Lastly, some PCs may wish to use the Gather Information skill. This takes an entire day or evening, and requires 15 gp, used for buying drinks and "making friends" with the locals. If a successful check (DC 15) is made, the PC in question discovers 1d6 "facts" about the case (cull these from Handout One). If the check result is 20 or higher, one of the PC's contacts suggests that the PCs try the Great Library of Greyhawk, which tends to have information on any number of subjects.

## Encounter Six: The Scene of the Crimes

Eventually, the PCs will get around the checking out the scene of the crime. The fallen griffon statue is something of a Slum Quarter landmark, and Barat Meratan can find it with little difficulty.

Here, the Millstream is bordered by rows of tenement homes. Relatively few windows look down upon the water, and many of those that do have been boarded up to keep out the winds. Though part of the area is plainly visible from the street, it's easy to see how, under cover of darkness, it might make for a dangerous locale.

Of course, any footprints from either of the crimes have long since been trod upon by amateur Slum Quarter vigilantes or the dozens of area residents who still use the place as a laundry spot.

The water here is not, by any stretch of the imagination, clean. Visibility below the surface is less than six inches, and the water has a very uncomfortable "silty" feel.

The stream is about eight feet deep near the griffon statue, and about five feet deep everywhere else. "Dragging" the bottom of the area is a difficult enterprise, but three hours of work with a rake or a shovel turns up an old boot and the decades old skull of a cat.

Investigating the scene can lead to one interesting piece of information, however. If the PCs follow the Millstream north, they eventually come to a series of vertical bars in the wall that divides Old City from New. The bars are obviously meant to prevent passage from one part of the town to the other, but a careful look reveals that the center bars have been bent, allowing even a large man to pass through with relative ease. If Barat is with the PCs, he mentions how odd that is, and says that the city usually tries to keep tight control over who passes from one section of the town to another.

Though they might not make the connection, the xvarts passed through the bent bars on their two forays into the Slum Quarter. This clue, though minor, may set the PCs on the idea that the "bloomin" used the Millstream as a kind of highway. That in turn may lead them to the wall between the so-called "middle town" and the Garden and High Quarters. There, the Millstream

passes under a similar set of bars. In this case, one whole bar has been removed, allowing anyone of size Small or larger to slip through with ease. Medium creatures may make an Escape Artist (DC 30) check to get through, failure indicating momentarily getting stuck and ultimately being thwarted in the attempt to get through.

## Encounter Seven: The Law, Old City Style

West of the Processional, the borders between the Thieves District and the Slum Quarter are ill-defined. To most residents of Old City, a tenement is a tenement is a tenement. To the officers of the Old City Watch Station, however, the borders are an easy way to separate the misery of the south end between problems that need to be solved, and problems that will solve themselves.

Unfortunately, the folk of the Slum Quarter fall strictly within the “problems that will solve themselves” category. Given the skullduggery and traffic of the Thieves Quarter, the watch tends to focus its efforts there. Few of the guards are natives of the Slum Quarter, and to them the region is as arcane and dangerous as it is to any foreigner.

Should the PCs venture to the Old City Watch Station in search of clues, a lesser officer tells them to wait in a common area until Inspector Tissen is finished interviewing a suspect. The common area is filled with all manner of disreputable types: a towering half-orc female in heavy makeup and two black eyes stews in a corner, smelling of day-old perfume. A handsome lightfoot halfling sits in a chair with his back to the wall, carefully surveying the room. When the PCs’ gaze meets his, he smiles, revealing several freshly missing teeth and a mouth full of blood. A family of destitute beggars sits on the floor near the building’s entrance, absently holding tin cups out in front of them. After about thirty minutes of waiting, Inspector Tissen arrives.

***A tall, dark-haired man in a well-tailored though working class suit approaches you. He wears a light moustache on his upper lip, and his hair recedes about halfway up his scalp. A splotch of fresh blood marks the left shoulder of his outfit. He smiles as he walks forward, cleaning off his right hand with a handkerchief with dark reddish-brown stains.***

***“I’m told you’re looking for me,” he says. “I’ve given my interviewee a few minutes to think about his crime before confessing, so I’ve got a little time to spare on whatever it is you need.”***

Inspector Tissen does not suffer fools or idealists (and idealistic fools least of all). He’s frank if someone asks him if he was just beating a confession out of a suspect. “I suppose those with a more sheltered life might look at it that way. I see it as a matter of efficiency.” Despite his cruel streak during interrogations, Tissen is an honest, if overworked, officer of the law.

When asked, he doesn’t seem to even remember the Pakiss case until the PCs also mention Caran Metaran. “When you’ve seen as many bodies as I have,” he says, “they all seem to run together.” He reviews crime scene information that the PCs have probably already figured out, as well as offering some idea why the watch isn’t doing anything further to investigate.

- Erdan Pakiss was attacked from behind with a sharp, curved weapon, probably a scimitar or long, curved knife. He’d been dead a few hours, at least, by the time his body was found.
- He quite casually states that Dena must be dead, by now.
- He’ll say the same of Caran, unless the PCs tell him she’s alive and with her father.
- He cautions against the group believing Caran’s story of “bloomin.” “Look,” he says. “I’ve seen a lot of these cases. There’s a lot of sick people in Old City. People with . . . vices that most of us just don’t have. I’ve seen kids from situations like that. There’s a certain amount of guilt involved, and she’s probably just making the story up. I mean, come on. Blue men?”
- “Anyway,” he says. “The case is closed, as far as I’m concerned.” Tissen explains that seven days ago, a mob of angry, drunken laborers who had heard Barat’s sob story in a local bar sought out and found a Tenha refugee named Qeyah who was known to have a “thing for the children, if you catch my drift.” They beat him to death just off the Processional, and strung his corpse up on an old lamp post.
- There was no investigation into Qeyah’s murder. “Sometimes,” Tissen explains, “trash cleans up trash.”

Of course, Qeyah had nothing to do with the recent abductions, but since there have not been any abductions since the Tenha’s murder, Tissen considers the matter closed. He offers the PCs some back-handed encouragement. “Look, take it from an expert. That girl is dead and buried wherever Qeyah took her. It’s best not to get her mother’s hopes up, when I think the best you’ll do is turn up a corpse.”

Tissen is not helpful if the PCs ask more about the Qeyah incident. He won’t tell the PCs where the murder occurred, nor will he implicate anyone involved. “Let it rest,” he says, with just a hint of menace in his voice. If the PCs should happen to investigate this red herring further, stymie them at every turn. The people of Slum Quarter look out for their own, and no one will turn in the vigilante who killed a despicable man like Qeyah.

Incidentally, Barat only heard about Qeyah’s killing three days ago. He has no idea what bar he might have told his story in that week, as he had been drinking very heavily.

From here, the PCs will probably put two and two together, and will want to investigate the caves beneath the home of Sir Bluto. That leaves them, essentially, with three options. Law-minded PCs might wish to travel to

the Garden Quarter City Watch Station, in order to get permission to explore the allegedly abandoned home of Sir Bluto and the caves beneath. Perhaps they also seek the key to the grate in the hill beneath Sir Bluto's home. In any event, should the PCs seek out the law, proceed to Encounter Eight: The Garden Watchers.

If the PCs decide to investigate Sir Bluto's home, proceed to Encounter Nine: A Noble Home.

Should the PCs simply choose to investigate the grate and the caves, proceed to Encounter Nine: The Blooded Cavern.

In order to get to any of the remaining encounters in this scenario, however, the PCs must travel up the Processional and through the Garden Gate. There, they must sign another gate ledger (this time maintained by an extremely casual patrol of six guards).

***The city beyond the Garden Gate seems to be part of a completely different metropolis. Whereas the crumbling buildings of Old City seemed to lean upon each other, the structures of the Garden and High Quarters are situated on large yards, replete with well-manicured gardens and fountains. A huge pyramidal building [the Guild of Wizardry] dominates the northeastern skyline, and numerous temples line the wide, paved streets.***

## Encounter Eight: The Garden Watchers

The guards at the Garden Quarter City Watch Station (an impressive structure converted from the home of a nobleman) are able to see the PCs immediately. There's not much criminal activity in the Garden Quarter, so their days are mostly filled patrolling already safe streets.

This lack of action has bred a certain kind of laziness in the guardsmen. If the PCs present their case for investigating Sir Bluto's home, or the caves beneath it, the men snicker, as if they've heard tales of the "haunted caves" before. They're generally dismissive of the PCs, and won't offer to help. They will, however, warn the PCs from skulking around the Garden Quarter like a bunch of thieves. Bluto House, they say, is government property, and they'll punish anyone breaking in. Their voices, however, don't seem to support the stance, as the guards appear as if even getting out of their chairs would be a major struggle.

If the PCs ask them for the key to the grate, a sergeant tells them that the key was lost long ago.

## Encounter Nine: A Noble Home

The PCs might approach an investigation of Bluto House in any number of ways. If they are smart enough to watch the house from a distance, they note movement in the windows, and occasionally hear the muffled barking of

dogs. By watching the building for as little as an hour, it's obvious that the place is inhabited.

Long-term surveillance of the mansion will actually grant the PCs' a view of one of the building's inhabitants. At noon each day, a heavily muscled, bald human with dark skin and a long moustache leaves the building via the front door, and walks to the High Market. Near the house, he looks a lot like an idiot trying to be quiet, and failing miserably. Once he makes it to the main road, however, he acts normally and blends in with the crowd. This is Furtok, a man known to his friends as the Brute.

If the PCs follow Furtok as far as the High Market, there's a chance he'll notice them. Roll and opposed check between Furtok's Spot or Listen skills (both at -1) and the following PC(s)'s Move Silently or Hide skills, whichever is lower. If Furtok realizes he is being followed, he'll try to lead the PCs into a space off the road, where he can beat them into a pulp with his club. He's not terribly bright, and will go for the kill, afraid that he and his friends will be betrayed to the law of Greyhawk (such as it is).

If Furtok does not notice his tail, the PCs will be able to see him purchase enough food to feed about twelve men, and a number of packages of raw meat (for the dogs).

If a PC keeps a watch on the western side of the house (the side on which the outhouse is positioned), he or she will note all three of the human inhabitants of the house over the course of a day. Get the humans' physical descriptions from their respective room keys, below.

And, of course, there's always the chance that the PCs will simply walk up to the house and knock on the door. If they do so, read the following.

***The door opens, revealing a tall, middle-aged human man with oily black hair and a crooked nose. "Hello," he says in a nasal voice. "Can I help you?"***

This is Veralian Took, the wererat who was sent to Bluto House by agents unknown to discover the root of Sir Bluto's insanity. He offers himself, however, as Shim Dencastle, late of Veluna. Find a way to allow Sense Motive checks without giving away the fact that Took is bluffing. Took's Bluff skill is at +9, and because his story is reasonable, there is no modifier to the PCs' Sense Motive check.

Allow any player who says something like "I'm keeping a close eye on him" to roll a Spot check (DC 15) to notice that Took's hands are covered with a white dust, not unlike broken plaster.

Took pretends that he has moved here recently, and has filed all the correct papers with the Office of Housing (in fact, such a body does not exist, but the PCs probably won't know this). He feigns shock and horror at the story of the abducted children, and claims he's never been in the caves beneath the home. Why, he says, if the party would like to come in to explore his home, he'd be more than happy to show them around.

This, of course, is a ruse. Before he answered the door, Garoth the Houndsman positioned himself in Area 3, and stands ready to unleash his hounds when the PCs pass his door. Took attempts to lead the PCs to Room 2, hoping they fall for his trap. If Furtok was not dispatched outside the home, he's hiding in Area 2, club in meaty fist.

Another strong possibility is that the PCs will simply break into the house, through either the front door (leading into Area 1) or the service entrance, leading into Area 5). Both doors are guarded by decent locks (DC 25). Anyone skulking about area 3 (the main hall) will have to find a way of dealing with the dogs in the library, or their barking will soon alert everyone else in the house.

A room-by-room description of the house follows. All ceilings are 20 ft. high. Each NPC has been listed at his most likely location, but there's no reason why they might not be wandering around. Garoth and Furtok split the nightly watch. Took sleeps a lot during the day, and keeps an erratic schedule. If one of the three men notices the PCs, he will call out to the others by name. They have worked together for some time, and none of them want to die. They aren't, on the other hand, afraid to kill. . . .

### 1. Entry Hall

*A long hallway runs from a large ballroom, to the south, to a closed wooden door, at the north wall. Two exits mark the western wall. The northernmost is a wooden door carved with the sun-symbol of Pelor. The other door isn't a door at all, but an arch leading to what appears to be some sort of cloak room. The eastern wall is decorated with dusty, ratty tapestries depicting rural scenes. The red carpet on the floor was probably once quite nice, but is now filled with dust and mold.*

There is nothing of particular interest in this room, though it grants access to the bulk of the first floor.

### 2. Sitting Room

*Light from the outdoors shines into a sitting room that must once have been elegantly decorated. A plush chair sits in the west corner, but much of its stuffing has been pulled out, probably by rats. A large hemispherical globe of Oerth, about six feet in diameter, marks the northern corner of the room. The detail of the area around the Flanaess is exceptional, but the rest of the world is represented as large swathes of white. A brass symbol of Pelor is attached to the globe by an iron rod running through the world's axis. A ratty old rug that only barely still bears the seal of the city of Greyhawk covers the floor in the center of the room.*

There's nothing under the rug, but the hemispherical globe can be lifted from a socket in the floor by grasping the symbol of Pelor and turning it to the right. This elicits a click, which allows passage to the secret stairway to the caverns (see Area 10 on The Caves map).

### 3. Library (Dog Room) (EL 1)

*This room must once have been a library, as empty bookshelves line each wall. A few books lie scattered about the room, which reeks of animal sweat and urine.*

After Took searched the library for any sign of that Bluto had been up to and failed (it had been ransacked long ago), he allowed Garoth to house his dogs here.

**Dogs (3):** Small Animal (4 ft. long); HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, bite); SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1.

Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5.

SQ: Scent (Ex)—Can detect opponents within 30 ft. by sense of smell.

**Treasure:** The dogs have destroyed anything of value that escaped the looters of a bygone era except one book, a small leather-bound devotional tome known as the Travels of the Far Wanderer. The book's corners are protected by solid silver tips, making it a valuable find. It's on one of the higher shelves, and is impossible to see unless one climbs up the bookcases.

### 4. Cloak Room

*This small room has two exits, a wooden door in the southwestern wall and a large arch leading to the entry hall and the front door. Numerous wall-pegs placed at eye level suggest that this room was once a cloak room, where visitors could shed their outer garments for an evening of entertainment.*

There is absolutely nothing of interest, here.

### 5. Kitchen

*This large room contains a number of tables and counters, on which meals must have been prepared decades ago. The bulk of these tables are filthy, though one seems to have been cleared off, recently. Three galda fruits and a loaf of wheat bread rest on the clean counter.*

The food items here are the makings of the gang's next meal. A number of old knives might be scrounged here by someone desperate for a weapon, but the majority of the cooking implements present are rusted and not sanitary for cooking use.

### 6. Dining Room

*This fine dining room seems to retain some of the grandeur it must once have projected. A candle chandelier hangs from the ceiling only the slightest bit off-center, and only two of the six chairs here are broken on the room's hardwood floor.*

If the PCs examine the table, they can see that three of the chairs are less dusty than the others. Also, a good deal of crumbs remain on the table, suggesting that it has seen recent use.

### 7. Ballroom/Elaborate Staircase

The tiled floor of this immense room showcases a stylized Baklunish repeating-pattern motif. It must have cost a fortune. A small, vacant orchestra box on the western wall provides a good overview of the ballroom chamber, which must have seen it fair share of important events in the past. An elaborate candelabra hangs from the ceiling, though all of the candles have long since melted to nothing, and it does not appear to have been serviced in some time.

The entire room is ringed by a sweeping staircase that begins near the house's front door and follows the outer wall, leading to the second floor. A portrait above the stairs on the eastern wall displays a paunchy, red-haired man of regal appearance wearing a breastplate and wielding a rapier in a gentlemanly pose. Even from a distance, the man's eyes seem to hold a powerful, and perhaps malevolent, glare.

Two exits lead from the room. The open Entry Hall extends to the northeast, and an ornate dark wooden door marks the center of the northwestern wall.

The portrait on the east wall is of Sir Bluto, painted some ten years before his disgrace. In certain circumstances, it's possible that Took and Garoth hide behind the sofa in Area 9 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor map, hoping to pick off the PCs with their light crossbows once they reach the portrait.

## 8. Outhouse

This plain wooden structure smells awful.

## Bluto House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

All ceilings are 20 ft. high.

## 9. Landing

The elaborate staircase ends at a large open area complete with a balcony overlooking the regal ballroom below. Hallways branch off to the north and east. A musty sofa sits against the north wall, to the right of the hallway.

It's likely that this area will become a major battle ground, should a fight break out inside the house. As stated above, Took and Garoth hide behind the sofa (3/4 cover). This grants them a +7 to their AC and a +3 cover Reflex save bonus. If Furtok is alive when a fight breaks out here, he charges down the stairs swinging his club, oblivious to any sort of tactical advantage the stairs or related cover could provide him.

## 10. Furtok's Room

This simple room as seen recent use, as (relatively) fresh bedsheets lie unmade upon the bed, here. A chest of drawers against the north wall stands open, revealing three changes of clothing for a very, very large man. A half-carved wooden apple sits unfinished on the nightstand, next to a simple carving knife.

Furtok the Brute uses this room while cooped up in Bluto House. He spends most of his time whittling, a craft at which he does not excel. The room contains nothing of true value, as Furtok carries his store of gold coins along with him at all times. If the PCs managed to get this far without alerting the villains to their presence, chances

are good that Furtok is here, whittling on his apple while lazily lounging in bed. If the Brute knows interlopers are in the house, however, the chances of him being found here are extremely slim.

**Furtok the Brute, male human Ftr2:** Medium Humanoid (6 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 2d10+4(+3); hp 18; Init -2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (-2 Dex, +2 studded leather); Atk +6 melee (1d6+3, club); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref -2, Will -3.

Str 17, Dex 7, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 5, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +7, Jump +7, Listen -1, Spot -1, Swim +7.

Feats: Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (club).

Equipment: Club, studded leather, 11 gp.

Furtok knows nothing of Took's plan. He knows they're looking for something in the house, but Took won't tell him what it is. He's getting restless, and is thinking of telling the wererat to find his muscle somewhere else. Furtok is the main "gopher" between the house and the High Market, and on his various trips he's begun to think that he might be able to make a life for himself in Greyhawk.

**Tactics:** Furtok the Brute is, first and foremost, an idiot. He thinks anyone smaller than him is "puny," and will leave hand-to-hand combat with an "inferior" to engage what looks to be a more challenging opponent (largely oblivious to the fact that doing so likely triggers attacks of opportunity from his original opponent). Furtok is not interested in surrendering, but that has more to do with the fact that he simply can't understand that he's losing than anything else.

## 11. Garoth the Houndsman's Room

Unlike other rooms in the house, this small guest bedroom is meticulously clean, and probably looks much like it looked 20 years ago. Someone has recently spent a great deal of time refurbishing the place. The bed is made neatly, and a set of combs and manicurial blades rest on the nightstand.

Garoth the Houndsman, Took's meticulously clean dog handler, adopted this room early on, and has spent much of his time fixing it up. As a ranger, Garoth spends most of his time in the outdoors, but he's having second thoughts, wondering if the only reason he's so enamored with the woodlands is because he never got a chance to live in the lap of luxury, in a house like this one. Being cooped up in the house while Took pokes around each of the rooms has left Garoth with a lot of time to think, and he's strongly considering betraying his master, stealing his gold, and setting up a life for himself here in Greyhawk.

**Garoth the Houndsman, male human Rgr2:** Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d10+2; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +2/+2 melee (1d8+2/19-20/x2, longsword) and (1d6+2/19-20/x2, short sword), +4 ranged (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); SQ Favored Enemy (elves); AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0.

Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 15.

**Skills:** Animal Empathy +5, Handle Animal +5, Listen +5, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +5. **Feats:** Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Focus.

**SQ:** *Favored Enemy (elves)*—The ranger gains a +1 bonus on Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot and Wilderness Lore checks when using these skills against elves. He also gets the same attack and damage bonuses against creatures of this type (the damage bonus with ranged weapons applies only if within 30 ft.).

**Equipment:** Longsword, short sword, leather armor, light crossbow, 15 crossbow bolts, pouch with 18 gp.

Garoth has worked with Veralian Took for four years. He appreciates that Took seems to care for his dogs almost as much as he does, and is loyal to the wererat. If one thing bothers him about his leader, it's that he doesn't know who Took is working for, and Took had never confided in him enough to tell him.

**Tactics:** If Garoth cannot get to the library, he hides behind the sofa in Area 9, and attempts to plug the PCs with crossbow bolts as they may their way up the elaborate staircase. He then moves to block the top of the stairs, drawing both of his weapons and engaging in hand-to-hand combat. Garoth is not as zealous as Took or as stupid as Furtok. If offered a sizable bribe (larger than 100 gp), he'll happily abandon his companions to their fates. If the PCs have killed any of his dogs, however, he becomes a frenzied killer, going for the throat of anyone responsible.

## 12. Empty Guest Room

*A large bed rests against the west wall, next to a simple nightstand. A large chest of drawers against the north wall appears to have been searched hastily, and rests at an odd angle against the wall, as if someone pried it away from the wall, looking for something. There are no sheets on the bed (which has an old, down mattress), and the room does not appear to be in use as a sleeping quarters.*

Took and company tossed this room very early in their investigations and discovered nothing. The PCs won't discover anything, either.

## 13. Dressing Room

This small room, connected to the bedroom (Area 14) by an arched doorway, contains many bars from which clothing might be hanged. The floor next to the wall is slanted, slightly, to account for the better presentation of a large collection of shoes. All of the clothes and shoes of old are gone, however, and have been replaced by Veralian Took's four outfits of simple brown leather garments. The room is otherwise empty.

## 14. Took's Room

*This large bedroom, obviously once the quarters of the master of the house, has been refurbished, recently, but only just. The furniture has been arranged in a pleasing fashion, with cabinet doors and drawers closed and free of dust and grime. The bed,*

*however, is a real mess. The sheets have been pulled from the mattress and arranged in a circle around the bed's center, almost like a nest. Whoever sleeps here must have difficult nights. An arched wooden door on the eastern side of the south wall stands slightly ajar, and appears to lead to some sort of walk-in closet.*

*An elaborate writing table against the west wall holds three lit candles, and a piece of parchment rests on the table, along with an open inkwell and a fresh pen.*

Though Veralian Took sleeps in this chamber, which indeed once belonged to Sir Bluto, he doesn't spend a lot of time here. Instead, he spends most of his hours poking holes in the various walls of the mansion, measuring interior walls against the same space outside to determine where secret chambers might be hidden, and tapping on walls with a wooden hammer, hoping to head a hollow sound in return. Took is a very patient man, and furthermore is so methodical in his searches that it's taking him far, far longer to search the house than he initially thought it would. While he doesn't see that as a problem, it's starting to get on the nerves of his human companions, and below the house, the xvarts are near riot.

In Took's opinion, it may all have been worth it. Just today, he's discovered a secret room at the end of the south hallway from Area 9 (Area 17), and though he has not yet searched the chamber, he feels in his poisoned blood that what he's been looking for will be found within.

Took will be found in this room only if the PCs have managed to sneak their way into the home. Otherwise, he'll answer the door or hide out behind the sofa in Area 9 (see above). No matter when the PCs arrive, they will have interrupted him while writing a message to a point of contact he has been instructed to work with by his controllers, who (as far as he knows) are based out of the Duchy of Urnst.

Veralian Took, who in prior years had been a simple sneak-thief, was inducted into a secret order in Leukish after he was caught breaking into their headquarters (which he thought was a simple warehouse). This order inflicted him with the curse of lycanthropy, which he sees as a boon, since in his hybrid rat/man form he is virtually immune to most normal weapons. This has saved his life on numerous occasions, and he feels as though he owes everything to the Leukish cabal. He will not, under any circumstances, betray their confidence.

## Veralian Took, male wererat (human form) Rog3:

Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 3d6+6; hp 17; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +6 melee (1d6/18-20/x2, rapier), +6 ranged (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); SA *Curse of Lycanthropy*, Sneak Attack +1d6; SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge, may shape shift into dire rat or hybrid form as a standard action; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +2.

Str 13, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 16.

**Skills:** Bluff +9, Climb +7, Hide +9, Listen +12, Move Silently +9, Open Locks +9, Search +11, Spot +12, Tumble

+9. *Feats*: Improved Initiative, Improved Shape Shift, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Weapon Focus (rapier).

SA: *Curse of Lycanthropy* (Su)—Any humanoid hit by a bite attack while Took is in animal form, or by a blow from a slashing or piercing weapon, must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 15) or contract lycanthropy.

SQ: *Evasion* (Ex)—If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage (such as a fireball), she takes no damage with a successful saving throw. *Uncanny Dodge* (Ex)—Retains Dex bonus to AC regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

Equipment: Rapier, light crossbow, 15 bolts, leather armor.

**Veralian Took, male wererat (hybrid form) Rog3:** Medium Shapechanger (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 3d6+9; hp 20; Init +10 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 natural, +6 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +6 melee (1d6/18-20/x2, rapier), +6 ranged (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); SA *Curse of Lycanthropy*, Sneak Attack +1d6; SQ *Evasion*, *Uncanny Dodge*, may shape shift into dire rat or humanoid form as a standard action, *Damage Reduction*; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +2.

Str 13, Dex 22, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 16.

*Skills*: Bluff +9, Climb +7, Hide +12, Listen +12, Move Silently +12, Open Locks +12, Search +11, Spot +12, Tumble +12. *Feats*: Improved Initiative, Improved Shape Shift, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Weapon Focus (rapier).

SA: *Curse of Lycanthropy* (Su)—Any humanoid hit by a bite attack while Took is in animal form, or by a blow from a slashing or piercing weapon, must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 15) or contract lycanthropy.

SQ: *Evasion* (Ex)—If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage (such as a fireball), she takes no damage with a successful saving throw. *Uncanny Dodge* (Ex)—Retains Dex bonus to AC regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. *Damage Reduction* (Ex)—A lycanthrope in animal or hybrid form gains damage reduction 15/silver. (This means that the lycanthrope ignores the first 15 points of damage from any blow from a weapon or natural weapon. Energy attacks and spells still harm it, and the lycanthrope takes full damage from silver weapons.)

Equipment: Rapier, light crossbow, 15 bolts, leather armor.

Veralian Took dislikes his dire rat form, and will not shift into it during the course of this scenario.

**Tactics:** Veralian Took will fight to the death, if he must, in order that he not be prevented from breaking through the wall in Area 17. He is fiercely loyal to his mysterious masters, and will not under any circumstances reveal who he is working for, or why he is in the house.

In hand-to-hand combat, Took prefers to shift into his hybrid form, doing so in full view of his enemies in

hopes of frightening them. He laughs off blows that do not hurt him, and strikes to kill.

**Treasure:** Hidden in a pouch under his mattress, Veralian Took has stuffed away 37 gp. An unfinished letter (Handout Two: Took's Letter) sits on the small table near the window.

**Development:** PCs may make a Heal check (DC 15) to know that those afflicted by the bite of a lycanthrope might stave off the disease by eating a sprig of belladonna (also called wolfsbane) within an hour of a lycanthrope's attack. Those eating the sprig must attempt a Fortitude save (DC 20) to shake off the affliction. If a PC with the Heal skill administers the herb, use the character's save or the healer's Heal check, whichever is higher. The character gets only one chance, no matter how much belladonna is consumed. The belladonna must be reasonably fresh (picked within the last week). Sprigs of just such an herb may be purchased in Greyhawk's Petit Bazaar for 10 gp, each.

However, fresh or not, belladonna is toxic. Since the character is deliberately ingesting poison, he or she automatically takes initial damage of 1d6 points of temporary Strength. One minute later, the character must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 13) or take an additional 2d6 points of Strength damage.

For magical means of defeating the curse of lycanthropy, see the lycanthropy certificate in the Treasure Summary.

## 15. Training Room

*The floor of this strange room is covered in dirt and straw. A large weapons rack, now empty, rests against the southern wall, near the door, six cloth and leather dummies hang from thick ropes attached to the ceiling. A dry, musty smell pervades the room, and several of the dummies appear to have rotted over the years. All six of the dummies have been "gutted," as if someone took a sharp-pointed dagger to them in order to see what might have been hidden inside. A free-standing dummy used for holding plate armor stands naked against the west wall.*

As it turns out, nothing was hidden inside the dummies, though Took certainly spent a lot of time checking. Decades ago, Sir Bluto used this room to keep his knightly skills fresh, but it hasn't been used for that purpose in some time. Instead, it's become home to ten rats, who lair in a pile of straw in the northwest corner of the room. These rats have been instructed by Took to attack anyone other than himself, Garoth, and Furtok.

**Rats:** CR 1/8; Tiny Animal (1 ft. long); HD 1/4d8; hp 1; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1, bite); Face/Reach 2 1/2 ft. x 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1.

Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2.

*Skills*: Climb +12, Hide +18, Move Silently +10. *Feats*: Weapon Finesse (bite).

SQ: *Scent* (Ex)—Can detect opponents within 30 ft. by sense of smell.

**Tactics:** If possible, the rats prefer to swarm a single creature.

**Treasure:** Buried in the straw is an electrum ring accidentally dropped by a sparring partner of Bluto's several decades ago. It's worth 75 gp.

## 16. Trophy Hall

*This thin room has been thoroughly trashed, but it appears as though it might once have been a trophy hall. Among the refuse on the floor, here is a ratty, poorly preserved buck head (with a once-impressive-but-now-broken 16-point rack), a rusty old shield bearing the device of Iuz, and several broken spears, apparently of orcish make. Many of these items apparently once rested on stone pedestals, most of which have been toppled. There are many more pedestals than items that might have rested atop them.*

Before fleeing the city, Sir Bluto ensured that those treasures he truly cared about escaped with him, so what remains here are only those items he decided not to bring along. In short, there's nothing of value in this room.

However, when Veralian Took first came to the house, it all looked very impressive. He pulled on this, and pushed on that, all in hopes of opening some secret door or finding some secret message. Instead, he ended up breaking a lot of stuff.

## 17. Secret Library

Getting into this room will take some work, as Veralian Took has only just discovered it. Apparently, Sir Bluto had the room sealed with plaster, making it look like the walls of the western hall off Area 9. Enough of the wall has been knocked away with a crowbar (which still rests on the floor, here) to allow a Small creature to squeeze into the dark room on a successful Escape Artist check (DC 15). Knocking out the wall is not at all difficult. Once the PCs have done so, continue with the following:

*The room beyond the plaster wall is extremely cramped, but your light reveals a table and chair at the far end of the room, against the wall. Upon the table rest two books and a piece of crumpled parchment. Bizarre mystical seals have been carved into the wooden floor, and a flaky dried rust brown substance fills many of the grooves in the floor. Bizarre inscriptions have been written into the wall in a strange, angular language.*

This was Sir Bluto's inner sanctum, the place to which he ventured to contemplate the diabolical masters he began to follow about seven years prior to the River of Blood murders. Allow PCs with the Knowledge (Arcana) skill to make a check at DC 20 to recognize the primary seal as that of the daemon Anthraxus the Decayed, an extremely powerful being from the Gray Wastes of Hades. Other seals represent the personal devices of other daemons from the lower planes, though they are so obscure that the PCs have no chance of knowing which ones. However, an additional Knowledge (Arcana) check (DC 25) reveals that at least six of the seals (there are thirteen,

total), including that of Anthraxus, contain a mystical symbol synonymous with disease.

The writing on the walls is in the Infernal alphabet and language, and consists of several lengthy quotations on the relation of infernal powers to the folk of Oerth. The quotes are taken from a blasphemous volume known as *Princes Fallen to the Cleansing Flame*, a rare book that many evil cultists will kill for. Most copies are destroyed when discovered by authorities. Anyone who can read Infernal (or who makes a successful Decipher Script check at DC 30) and who has the Knowledge (Arcana) skill may make a Knowledge (Arcana) check at DC 25 to determine the above information.

**Treasure:** The books on the table are *The Death Saga of Molaho Khem* and *The Poems of Thalac Jiwo* (see treasure summary for details). The crumpled up letter (Handout Three) is a first draft of a letter that was sent nearly 30 years ago.

## Encounter Ten: The Blooded Cavern

The caves beneath Bluto House are either natural or worked stone. The floors have generally been smoothed, but some walls remain quite rough. The ceilings in Areas 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9 are roughly 20 ft. tall. Elsewhere, the ceiling reaches about 10 ft. high. Xvarts are blessed with darkvision (60 ft.), so the caverns are completely dark. Most PCs will need to provide some sort of light source, which will, of course, draw attention.

The creek is about 5 ft. deep throughout most of the cavern, up to about 8 ft. deep in Area 7, where a natural spring fills a small pool (and acts as the source of the entire flow of the Millstream). The current is not strong, so gaining surprise by swimming underwater in the creek is generally a good idea. Remember, however, that anyone wearing armor other than leather or padded suffers a check to their Swim check, in addition to the -1 per 5 lb. of gear carried. The average xvart makes Listen checks at +0 and Spot checks at +2.

Should a xvart notice a PC, he will call out the alarm, which draws xvarts in adjacent rooms within one round and the xvart priests within three rounds. If the PCs make it all the way to the lair of the xvart priests, the priests will not bother to call for aid, assuming that their friends have already been killed.

### I. Grate Entrance

*A 10 ft. wide by 6 ft. high metal grate stands against the steep wall of what might be termed the cliff of a hill about thirty feet high. The millstream, shallow and only about five ft. across, flows lazily from the dark cave beyond the grate.*

*Looking carefully at the grate, you notice that the left side, near the hinges, has been pried away from the edge of the cave entrance, about enough that a child or small humanoid might be able to sneak through. A large, forbidding lock at the right side of the grate seems to hold it tight.*



The lock is of excellent quality (DC 30). The spaced pried away from the edge of the cave by the xvarts is large enough that Small-sized character can easily slip through. Medium-sized characters require an Escape Artist (DC 30) to perform the same feat. Prying the grate further from the wall requires a crowbar and a successful Strength check (DC 20). Up to two persons can cooperate on the task.

The grate extends all the way to the bottom of the creek, so swimming under it is not an option.

## 2. Water Tunnel

Though the xvarts do not themselves guard the water tunnel, they have asked one of the rats to do it for them. This rat sits on the east bank of the creek, at the exact point where the number "2" appears on the map. It keeps its eyes trained on the grate, and runs to alert the xvarts of intruders. PCs with darkvision may make a Spot roll (DC 15) to notice a rat running away from them, further into the cavern, upon their arrival. Should the PCs come at Area 2 from Area 3, the rat will have already rushed to the aid of the xvarts there, and will not be present.

**Rat:** Tiny Animal (1 ft. long); HD 1/4d8; hp 1; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1, bite); Face/Reach 2 1/2 ft. x 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1.

Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2.

*Skills:* Climb +12, Hide +18, Move Silently +10. *Feats:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

*SQ: Scent (Ex)*—Can detect opponents within 30 ft. by sense of smell.

## 3. Large Cavern

The rank and file of Took's xvart followers rest on straw mats in this room. If they are aware of PCs coming from Area 2, they cluster along the wooden wall to the south, hoping to surprise them as they enter. If they hear crunching glass or fighting sounds from Area 9, they stand ready outside the door to that room, with a readied action of throwing their daggers at whoever opens the door. If they are not anticipating an attack and notice the PCs at the last minute, they raise the hue and cry in their own language, which brings their allies in Areas 4, 5, and 6 running.

**Xvart warrior (4):** Small Humanoid (4 ft. tall); HD 1d8+3; hp 7; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 shield); Atk +0 melee (1d6-1, short sword) or +2 ranged (1d3-1, dagger); SQ Darkvision, 60 ft., *Speak with Animals*; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0.

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

*Skills:* Hide +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +2. *Feats:* Toughness.

*SQ: Speak with Animals (Sp)*—Once per day, a xvart can speak with animals as a 1<sup>st</sup>-level druid to communicate with rats or bats, including dire varieties.

*Equipment:* Short sword, daggers (3), small wooden shield.

**Rats (8):** Tiny Animal (1 ft. long); HD 1/4d8; hp 1; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1, bite); Face/Reach 2 1/2 ft. x 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1.

Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2.

*Skills:* Climb +12, Hide +18, Move Silently +10. *Feats:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

*SQ: Scent (Ex)*—Can detect opponents within 30 ft. by sense of smell.

## 4. Leader's Room

This room is the dwelling space of Xikchit, the xvart leader. Xikchit is very worried about missing Raxivort's Orgy, and is pleased that the priests have come up with a way that they might still gain Raxivort's glory even when trapped in this city. He is about a week from telling Took that, despite the fact that he is blessed as a wererat, he and his gang of xvarts are going to depart for greener pastures.

**Xikchit (the leader), male xvart Ftr3:** Small Humanoid (4 ft. 1 in. tall or long); HD 3d10+3; hp 19; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 15 ft.; AC 20 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +8 full plate); Atk +6 melee (2d4+3/18-20/x2, falchion), +5 ranged (1d8/19-20/x2, light crossbow); SQ *Speak with Animals*; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2.

Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 13.

*Skills:* Climb +6, Hide +6, Jump +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +4. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (falchion).

*SQ: Speak with Animals (Sp)*—Once per day, a xvart can speak with animals as a 1<sup>st</sup>-level druid to communicate with rats or bats, including dire varieties.

*Equipment:* Falchion, light crossbow, 15 bolts, full plate.

**Tactics:** Xikchit is a rather despicable sort. He knows a smattering of common, and if a fight breaks off, he'll claim that he will call it off if he can do personal battle, to the death, with the party's largest warrior-type. This is in fact an old trick of the gang's. They will merely fall upon the party en force after the fight, no matter who wins.

**Treasure:** Xikchit keeps a small gem idol of a flaming hand hung on a thong 'round his neck. It's worth 30 gp.

## 5. Captive Room

Two xvarts guard this room, which seems to contain nothing but a pile of old rotting animal skins. In fact, the skins cover a wooden trap door, which in turn covers a 6 ft. diameter cylindrical tunnel (30 ft. deep). Dena Pakiss rests at the bottom of that tunnel with a festering broken leg. The furs muffle her cries.

**Xvart warrior (2):** Small Humanoid (4 ft. tall); HD 1d8+3; hp 7; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 shield); Atk +0 melee (1d6-1/19-20/x2, short sword) or +2

ranged (1d3-1/19-20/x2, dagger); SQ *Darkvision*, 60 ft., *Speak with animals*; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0.

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

**Skills:** Hide +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +2. **Feats:** Toughness.

**SQ: *Speak with Animals* (Sp)**—Once per day, a xuart can *Speak with animals* as a 1<sup>st</sup>-level druid to communicate with rats or bats, including dire varieties.

**Equipment:** Short sword, daggers (3), small wooden shield.

**Dena Pakiss, Com1:** HP 1 (of 3).

## 6. Partially Collapsed Water Tunnel

The tunnel here was not in fact collapsed, but rather was plugged up with large stones and blocks of mortar. A Spot check (DC 10) reveals that many of these stones have been marked with the seals of the city of Greyhawk and the Guild of Wizardry. This is meant as a warning, as the Directors of the city at the time of the River of Blood did not want anyone to go beyond this point. A slightly more difficult Spot check (DC 20, dwarves may apply their +2 Stonecunning bonus) reveals that the "debris" was carefully arranged so as not to block the flow of the Millstream.

Near the top of the pile, a small tunnel has been cleared. The xvarts made this tunnel early in their explorations, when they sought to discover everything they could about the caverns. Unfortunately for them, the Guild of Wizardry had left a nasty surprise back in 565 CY, and the first xuart through the tunnel was immolated in flame. His blackened bones still rest on the opposite side of the cave in, reminding the priests in Area 7 of their loss.

Unless the PCs are deliberately being quiet, the xvarts in Area 7 have a strong chance of hearing them (a DC 10 Listen check). Of course, the PCs might also swim under the debris, which is their best chance at taking the priests unawares.

## 7. Priest's Room/Sacrifice Chamber/Spring

This room is the grim chamber in which Sir Bluto sacrificed eight children to his infernal masters in 565 CY. Thereafter, the city had it sealed up. The only sign that remains of the crime is a faint outline of an eight-pointed star symbol on the ceiling above the natural spring (See Handout Four). The tips of the star are slightly marred, as they once held hooks, from which barbed chains could hang. These hooks are long since gone, but the city never bothered to fully wipe away the symbol.

Now, the chamber is the home of the xuart high priest, Lacknaq, and his two underpriest companions, Decif and Mestak.

**Lacknaq, male xuart Clr 2:** Small humanoid (4 ft. tall); HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chainmail); Atk +2 melee (1d6, light mace), +1 ranged (1d8/19-20/x2,

light crossbow); SQ *Speak with Animals*, Domains: Evil, Trickery; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +6.

Str 13, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14.

**Skills:** Concentration +8, Heal +6, Hide +4, Knowledge (religion) +5, Move Silently +2, Spellcraft +5. **Feats:** Combat Casting.

**SQ: *Speak with Animals* (Sp)**—Once per day, a xuart can *Speak with animals* as a 1<sup>st</sup>-level druid to communicate with rats or bats, including dire varieties. Domain: Evil: Casts evil spells at +1 caster level. Domain: Trickery: Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills.

**Equipment:** Light mace, sliver holy symbol of Raxivort, chainmail, *potion of love*, necklace with *magical iron key*.

**Spells Prepared (4/3+1):** 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *light* (2); 1st—*bane*, *cause fear*, *command*, *protection from good* (e).

**Dacif, male xuart Clr1:** Small Humanoid (4 ft. tall); HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20/x2, dagger), +0 ranged (1d4/19-20/x2, dagger); SQ *Speak with Animals*, Domains: Evil, Trickery; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2.

Str 13, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14.

**Skills:** Concentration +4, Heal +7, Hide +4, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +2, Spot +5. **Feats:** Alertness.

**SQ: *Speak with Animals* (Sp):** Once per day, a xuart can *Speak with animals* as a 1<sup>st</sup>-level druid to communicate with rats or bats, including dire varieties. Domain: Evil: Casts evil spells at +1 caster level. Domain: Trickery: Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills.

**Equipment:** Dagger, wooden holy symbol of Raxivort.

**Spells Prepared (3/2+1):** 0—*cure minor wounds* (3); 1st—*inflict light wounds* (2), *change self* (e).

**Mestak, male xuart Clr1:** CR 1; Small Humanoid (4 ft. tall); HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20/x2, dagger), +0 ranged (1d4/19-20/x2, dagger); SQ *Speak with Animals*, Domains: Evil, Trickery; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2.

Str 13, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 14.

**Skills:** Concentration +4, Heal +7, Hide +4, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +2, Spot +5. **Feats:** Alertness.

**Special Qualities: *Speak with Animals* (Sp):** Once per day, a xuart can *Speak with animals* as a 1<sup>st</sup>-level druid to communicate with rats or bats, including dire varieties. Domain: Evil: Casts evil spells at +1 caster level. Domain: Trickery: Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills.

**Equipment:** Dagger, wooden holy symbol of Raxivort.

**Spells Prepared (3/2+1):** 0—*cure minor wounds* (3); 1st—*inflict light wounds* (2), *change self* (t).

**Tactics:** If the xvarts hear the PCs coming, Dacif casts *change self* to make him look like Dena Pakiss. He knows enough Common to act like a scared little girl. Lacknaq

then bargains his and Mestak's life for the release of the girl, who they don't want, anyway. They try to blame the whole Raxivort's Orgy plan on their leader, Xikchit. Assuming the PCs agree to their terms, Dacif attempts to lead the group into traps, suggesting that she thinks the xvarts kept their treasure in Area 8, etc.

### 8. Rat Lair

Five dire rats live in this room, which used to be blocked off dead space between the natural cavern wall and the wooden walls of Areas 3 and 9. Their scent abilities allow them to detect anyone within 30 ft. If they don't smell like xvart, they smell like dinner. There is nothing of value in this room.

**Dire Rats (5):** Small Animal (3 ft. long); HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15; Atk +3 melee (1d4, bite); SA Disease; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3.

Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4.

**Skills:** Climb +11, Hide +11, Move Silently +6. **Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite).

**SA:** Disease (Ex)—Filth fever—bite, Fortitude save (DC 12), incubation period 1d3 days; damage 1d3 temporary Dexterity and 1d3 temporary Constitution.

**SQ:** Scent (Ex)—Can detect opponents within 30 ft. by sense of smell.

### 9. Wine Cellar

Old wine racks line both walls of this room. All of the wine spoiled, and glass from about three dozen broken bottles litters the floor. Anyone attempting to Move Silently through this area must make their checks at a -5 penalty. Non-xvarts walking through this area will attract the dire rats from Area 8, who emerge from a hole in the wall about a foot from the floor in the southeast corner of the room.

### 10. Stairs to Bluto House

These spiral stairs lead to the hemispherical secret trapdoor in Area 2 of the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor of Bluto House. The door is locked from the north side, meaning it's difficult to get in from the xvart side. The lock is of good quality (DC 20).

## Conclusion

The PCs may bring some of Took's gang to the Garden Quarter City Watch Station. This will elicit a good deal of surprise on behalf of the guards there, who aren't used to having this type of thing happening in their part of town. The guards ask the PCs to stay in town for a while in case they need to be questioned, but nothing ever comes of it.

If the PCs return Dena Pakiss to her mother (most likely by getting Barat to guide them to her tenement), Nelan brightens up, thanking the heroes for their kind deed. She offers to cook them stew (a not all that appetizing prospect, from the smell of the kettle

simmering in the corner) any time they wish. Dena and Caran play together, making Erdan's old wooden toy soldier ride the three-legged wooden unicorn toy. Due to Barat's talk in Slum Quarter taverns, the folks there are filled with appreciation for what the PCs did. The people in the quarter are willing to do them a favor later (influence point with the population of Greyhawk's Slum Quarter).

In the course of their investigations, the PCs have unearthed clues about Took's contact in Erybend, someone called the Lowborn, and a whole lot of things having to do with the number eight. What these clues mean, and where they lead, will be revealed in the next adventure in the *Absolute Power* series.

## The End

### Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the discretionary roleplaying experience award. The roleplaying award should be given for consistent character portrayal and contribution to the fun of the game. You can award different roleplaying amounts to different characters.

Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

#### Encounter Five:

Researching the Original River of Blood mystery: 25 xp

#### Encounter Six:

Following the Millstream north to the damaged bars: 25 xp

#### Encounter Nine:

"Casing" the house before entering 25 xp  
 Defeating Veralian Took 75 xp  
 Defeating Garoth the Houndsman 50 xp  
 Defeating Garoth's dogs 25 xp  
 Defeating Furtok 50 xp

#### Encounter Ten:

Defeating Xvarts (in general) 75 xp  
 Rescuing Dena Pakiss 100 xp

Total experience for objectives 450 xp  
 Discretionary roleplaying award 0-50 xp

**Total possible experience 500 xp**

## Treasure Summary

Player characters may keep items from the scenario that are listed on the treasure list below or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the characters cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.
2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchmen, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the player characters to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.
3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some player characters. Items which are worth more than 1,000 gp that are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and all magical items, will be discovered in the possession of the character by one means or another. The character must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. In addition, the PC caught receives campaign-decided penalties for being known as a thief, such as Infamy. For other stolen items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment and the circumstances within the game to determine whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules, which does not have a certificate, will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things which it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

- 11 gp (from Furtok)
- 37 gp (from Verlaian Took)
- 18 gp (from Garoth the Houndsman)
- 75 gp electrum ring (discovered in the straw and dirt floor of Area 15).
- 30 gp gem carved in the shape of a flaming hand (from Xikchit)
- **Influence Point in Residents of City of Greyhawk Slum Quarter** (one per PC, not tradable): This point will be useful in future adventures with residents of the Slum Quarter in the City of Greyhawk. They remember what your character did, and are willing to do you a favor in the future.
- *Magical iron key* (value 10 gp, common): This small key-like object does not open any normal locks. It is

made of iron, vaguely cylindrical, about 2 inches long. It has points on both ends, and some grooves cut in the circumference. It detects faintly as magical, but the emanations are so faint that you cannot determine the type of magic.

- *Tome: The Death Saga of Molaho Khem* (value 75 gp, 3 lbs.): This worn tome measures seven inches across the spine and six inches across the top and bottom. It is two inches thick, and contains 100 pages of pliable parchment. The book contains five printed woodcuts, each signed with the monogram "E.M." The illustrations depict the saga's hero overcoming various challenges, and finally being laid to rest. The text is written in the Common tongue.

*The Death Saga of Molaho Khem* reveals the final days of the great hero of legend, when he returned to Dar-Kesh Anam, the city of his birth, to combat an alien menace. The book's conclusion suggests that Khem defeated a group known as the HiveCouncil, but was poisoned by their ebbing lifeblood. His body was magically preserved at the moment before death in the Kushkava, the city's highest tower.

Tales of Molaho Khem are relatively common in the Flanaess, and seem to date since before the Migrations. Every culture stakes a claim on him, and many explorers seek out the fabled city of Dar-Kesh Anam, seeking to draw truth (and perhaps a bit of fortune) from the ancient stories. Thus far, the city remains undiscovered.

- *Tome: Travels of the Far Wanderer* (value 50 gp, 2 lbs.): This small leather-bound devotional tome contains 45 pages of aphorisms and devotionals to the god Celestian. The text is not illuminated, but an intricate star-shaped design has been worked into the leather cover. The cover's tips are bound in sturdy silver (accounting for half the volume's worth). A priest of Celestian might pay up to double the book's "street value" to acquire it.
- *Tome: The Poems of Thalac Jiwo* (value 30 gp, 2 lb.): Written by Thalac Jiwo, also known as Thalac the Sighted, this is a collection of prophetic poems. Although his prophecies are thickly buried in riddles, word-play, and vague descriptions, scholarly wizards agree that Thalac was an amazingly talented seer. The volume is written in Old Oeridian.  
A poem near the middle of the book has been circled in blood red ink. Entitled "The Lowborn," the poem contains the following passage:  
When the mystic device doth shine  
o'er broken basalt walls  
And nameless echoes sound  
within the Dreadful halls  
We've come upon the date  
of the Gathering of Eight.

- *Potion of love* (value 150 gp): This potion causes the character drinking it to become charmed with the first creature he or she sees after consuming the draft (as *charm person* spell—drinker must be a humanoid of Medium-size or smaller, Will save, DC 14). He or she actually becomes enamored if the creature is of similar race. Charm effects wear off in 1d3 hours, but the enamoring effect is permanent. The flask storing the potion is made of ceramic, with a wooden cap.

**Lycanthropy**—Curse of the Wererat (not tradable): The above-named PC has been cursed with lycanthropy from a wound inflicted by the wererat Veralian Took. On the next night of the full moon (this must occur in play), the PC involuntarily changes into dire rat form and becomes a ravaging beast, forgetting his or her own identity. The character remains in animal form, assuming the appropriate alignment, until dawn and remembers nothing about the incident (the PC retains his or her original alignment when in "normal" form).

Thereafter, the character is subject to involuntary transformation under the full moon and whenever damaged in combat. He or she feels an overwhelming rage building up inside and must succeed a Control Shape check (see below) to resist changing into animal form.

Any character who has contracted lycanthropy and is aware of his or her condition can learn Control Shape (Wis) as a class skill. This determines whether the afflicted lycanthrope can voluntarily control his or her own shape.

Check: The afflicted character must make a check at moonrise each night of the full moon (Luna) to resist involuntarily assuming animal form. An injured character must also make a check for involuntary change after accumulating enough damage to reduce his or her hit points by one-quarter and again after each additional one-quarter lost (save DC same for a full moon).

| Task  | DC |
|---|----|
| Resist involuntary change/return to humanoid form (full moon*)    | 25 |
| Resist involuntary change/return to humanoid form (not full moon) | 20 |
| Voluntary change (full moon)                                      | 10 |
| Voluntary change (not full moon)                                  | 15 |

\*For game purposes, the full moon lasts three days of each month. For a given scenario that does not state the phase of the moon, roll 1d10 before play begins. On a result of 1, the first day of the scenario is a night of the full moon (roll 1d3 to determine where in the sequence of three nights it falls).

Retry Restrictions: Check for an involuntary change once each triggering event occurs. On a failed check to return to humanoid form (see below) the character must remain in animal or hybrid form until the next dawn, when he or she automatically returns to humanoid form.

When returning to normal form after an involuntary change, the character attempts a Wisdom check (DC 15) to realize what has happened. If the check succeeds, the character becomes aware of the affliction and can now

voluntarily attempt to change into animal or hybrid form, using the appropriate DC. An attempt is a standard action, and may be made each round. Any voluntary change to animal form or hybrid form permanently changes the character's alignment to LE, removing him or her from play.

An afflicted character who is aware of his or her condition can also try to return to humanoid form after assuming animal or hybrid form, using the appropriate DC. Only one attempt is allowed, however, as described above.

When the character involuntarily assumes animal or hybrid form (flip a coin), he or she becomes a (temporarily) LE NPC, to be run at the behest of the Dungeon Master. See the Monster Manual for details on the wererat's animal and hybrid forms (during the two months of 2000 in which that reference is not yet in print, the curse is considered to be dormant).

The PC does not gain the Curse of Lycanthropy feat (as described in the MM), and hence cannot pass the disease to others.

Lycanthropy can be cured in one of two ways. A *remove disease* or *heal* spell cast by cleric of at least 12<sup>th</sup> level cures the affliction, provided the character receives the spell within 3 days of the attack (any good temple with a ranking priest will cast this spell for a donation of 360 gp or 720 gp, respectively).

The only other way to remove the affliction is to cast a *remove curse* spell on the character during one of the three days of the full moon. After receiving the spell, the character must succeed at a Will save (DC 20) to break the curse (the caster knows if the spell works).

## DM Reference One: River of Blood Timeline

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 3 weeks ago: | Veralian Took and company arrive in the city of Greyhawk   |
| 17 days ago: | Took discovers secret passage to caves below the house of Sir Bluto  |
| 14 days ago: | Took's xvirt allies escape the caves for the first time and enter the city   |
| 13 days ago: | Erdan Pakiss' body discovered on the banks of the Millstream, in the Slum Quarter<br>Erdan's sister, Dena, who was with him when he disappeared, cannot be found |
| 8 days ago:  | Caran Meratan goes missing   |
| 7 days ago:  | Tenha vagrant beaten to death in the Slum Quarter by an angry mob  |
| Today:       | The PCs enter the city by carriage, and encounter a frightened Caran Meratan   |

## DM Reference Two: The Xvart

### Xvart

#### **Small Humanoid**

**Hit Dice:** 1d8+3 (7 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 13 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 shield)

**Attacks:** Short sword +0 melee; or dagger +2 ranged; or net +2 ranged

**Damage:** Short sword 1d6-1; dagger 1d3-1; net entangle

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft., speak with animals

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8

**Skills:** Hide +2+4size, Move Silently +2+2 racial, Spot +2

**Feats:** Toughness

**Climate/Terrain:** Any forest and underground.

**Organization:** Gang (4-9), band (10-100, plus 1 leader of 4th to 6th level and 1 3rd-level net-using sergeant per 20 adults), or tribe (40-400, plus 1 leader of 6th to 8th level, 1-2 lieutenants of 4th to 5th level, 1-4 clerics of 1st to 5th level, 1 3rd-level net-using sergeant per 20 adults, and 3-30 giant rat guards)

**Challenge Rating:** 1/4

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Usually chaotic evil

**Advancement Range:** By character class

Xvarts are small humanoids living primarily in the Bandit Kingdoms, former lands of the Horned Society, the Bone March, the Pomarj, near Verbobonc, and the Vesve. Although xvarts have a primitive society compared to humans, it serves them well and allows them to support large tribes on limited resources. As a whole they are not a threat to civilization, as they fear humans and prefer to occasionally take out their aggression on kobolds. Goblins often use xvarts as spies for warbands, and xvarts often act as mediaries between goblins and kobolds.

Xvarts have bright blue skin and vivid orange eyes. Tolerant of most weather extremes, they dress in little more than loose cloth doublets. Xvarts of both sexes are mostly bald, having only a fringe of wiry black hair on the back and sides of the head that connects with their eyebrows. Their ears are large. Xvarts' claws look impressive but are insufficient for combat, and their teeth are no larger than those of a human child.

Xvarts speak Goblin; those with Intelligence scores of 12 or above also speak Draconic.

### **Combat**

Xvarts prefer to ambush and overwhelm their opponents, resorting to superior numbers instead of fairness. Although they fear humans and only attack them if they have a tremendous edge in numbers, xvarts hate halflings and almost always attack them, even if their numbers are equal.

Xvart officers sometimes have better armor (preferring a chain shirt to anything more cumbersome). Sergeants are trained in the use of the net, and other officers learn the net or Two-Weapon Fighting with a dagger or another short sword. Hunting parties use scouts to drive prey toward a readied net, and ambushes usually involve at least one net and enough xvarts to pile upon every person in a group.

**Speak with Animals (Sp):** Once per day a xvart can *speak with animals* as a 1st-level druid to communicate with rats or bats, including dire varieties.

**Skills:** Xvarts gain a +2 racial bonus to Move Silently checks and a +4 size bonus to Hide checks.

### **Xvart Characters**

A xvart's favored multiclass is fighter; xvart leaders tend to be fighters or fighter/clerics. Xvart clerics can choose two of the following domains: Animal, Evil, and Trickery. Xvart clerics prefer spells that summon rats and bats or create fire.

#### **Xvart Society**

Xvarts are tribal. Their leaders are generally the strongest and most clever creatures in the tribe. They live in a communal existence, with hunting parties leaving the lair daily to bring back food for the entire tribe. If hunting is poor, they sometimes resort to stealing livestock or crops from farms. They war with enemy humanoids for territory but never with their own kind, preferring to move or eliminate a common foe when the population grows too high. Xvarts rarely raid unless a powerful leader has driven them to a cause, such as avenging many deaths by adventurers or the

encroachment of humans. When they take prisoners, it is only for torture and ransom, as the xvarts have little need for laborers.

These creatures live in caves underground or in deep and remote portions of forests. Their camps are well-patrolled by xvarts, bats, and rats, and are kept reasonably clean, particularly when compared to goblins. Often a tribe is allied with one or more wererats, with the tribe providing shelter in emergencies and the wererats ferrying ransom notes. Xvarts with lycanthropy are greatly respected by their peers. Other tribes form close alliances with goblins, although these pairings never involve worg mounts, as the canines tend to eat the rat guardians.

Xvarts worship the god Raxivort, who teaches that xvarts will eventually come to dominate and rule all of the small creatures of the world, aided by rat and bat allies and using the tools of fire and the sword as their means to this goal.

### **Raxivort (Lord of Xvartkind, Master of Rats, Night Flutterer), CE lesser god of Xvarts, Rats, Wererats, and Bats**

Raxivort (RAKS-ih-vort) is the god of xvarts, once the greatest general of his race, taken in by the demon lord Graz'zt, and granted abilities by his lord. After centuries of serving as Graz'zt's Master of Slaves, Raxivort was able to loot the demon's armory and claim his own Abyssal realm. While he can take the form of a great rat or bat, his natural form is that of a strong but ugly xvart wearing silken garments over blue mail. He carries the falchion Azure Razor, favors throwing blades of various sizes, and creates fans of acidic fire from his left hand (his symbol is a blue flaming hand). He combats most other nonhuman gods and avoids demons entirely.

*Xvarts are the inheritors of the world. They and their rat, wererat, and bat allies will destroy their enemies, particularly the goblins and kobolds. With cunning, numbers, and small allies, the xvarts will overwhelm all opposition. Like Raxivort himself, fire and knives are the tools of the xvarts against their hated foes. Those that can take the shape of rat or bat are doubly blessed.*

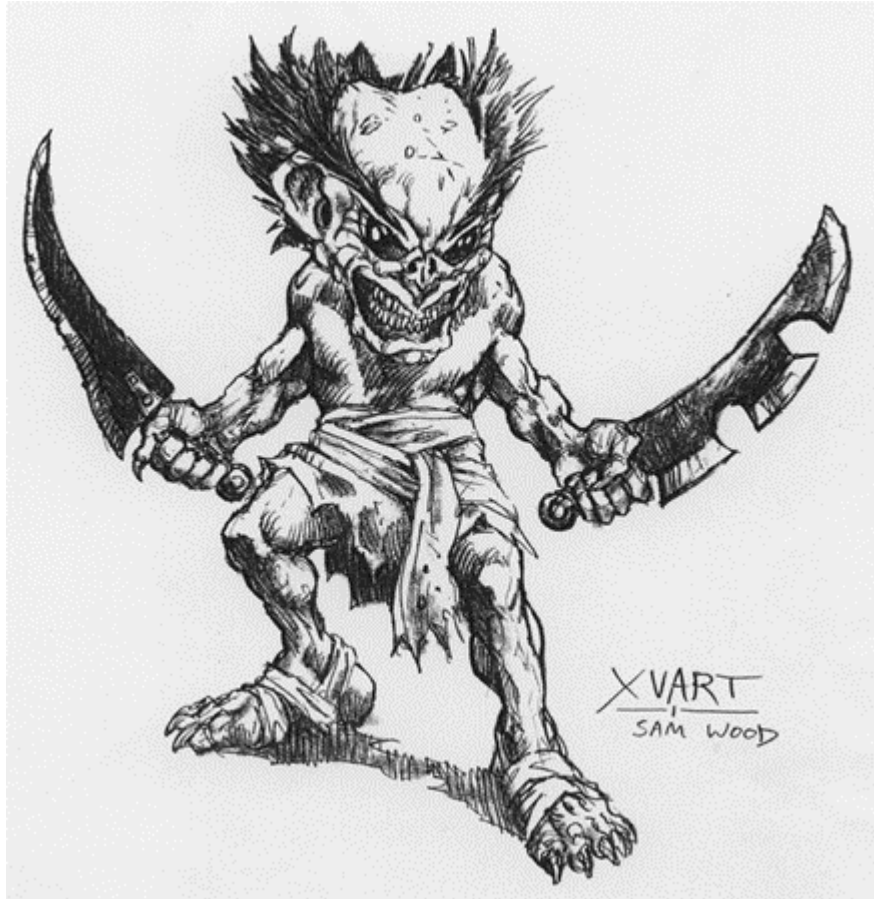
Most clerics of Raxivort are xvarts, although some rat- and bat-creatures worship him as well. The less militaristic clerics search out old ruins to find stores of magic and weapons that can be brought back for their tribe. His clerics are more open-minded about and less fearful of humans than other xvarts, and take the role of negotiator or diplomat when humans are encountered.

**Domains** Animal, Evil, Trickery; **Weapons** falchion (m), dagger.



## DM Reference Three: A Picture of a Xvart

(illustration by Sam Wood)



## **Handout One: The River of Blood Murders**

An investigation at the Great Library of Greyhawk reveals a fair amount of information about the River of Blood murders, which haunted the city back in 565 CY. The murders began as a series of abductions of upper class children, many of whom were apparently snatched from their own homes. The children ranged in ages from six to thirteen. Both boys and girls were abducted. No matter how hard you look, however, the identities of the children cannot be ascertained.

Suspicion immediately fell upon the Thieves Guild, triggering press gangs of hired “vigilance committee” members (working at the behest of the families of the abducted) poking their noses south of Black Gate, in Old City, the haunt of thieves and the deathly impoverished. As might be suspected, these searches and accusations led to violence and the destruction of property, and what had begun as an affair of the well-to-do soon spread through Old and New city alike, affecting the lives of both the rich and poor.

The searches turned up nothing, and after two weeks, even the watch threw up their hands in frustration. Then, the criminal behind the abductions made himself known in a hideously violent act of confession. Merchants traveling east on High Street from the High Market to the Duke’s Gate noticed it first. The waters of the Millstream, the thin creek that runs throughout nearly the entire city, ran red with blood.

Tracing the blooded river north, investigators came upon an iron gate set against a steep hill, atop which stood the lordly manor of Sir Bluto, knight bachelor of the city of Greyhawk. The Millstream, according to city records, emerged from the ground in a natural cave beyond the grate. The key to the grate, according to those same records, was held in trust by none other than the knightly Sir Bluto himself.

By the time investigators pried open the grate, Sir Bluto had wandered into the High Quarter watch station, where he confessed to his grisly crime. Though imprisoned, he soon escaped his captors. Some say he fled across the Nyr Dyv with a band of renegade Rhennee bargemen. Reports of adventurers more than a decade later placed him within the storied edifice known as White Plume Mountain. He has never been brought to justice. Before fleeing Greyhawk, however, Sir Bluto had left a farewell present, of sorts.

The investigators discovered that the caves below Sir Bluto’s estate had been refined, most likely by some long-dead tenant. Ancient wooden doors and walls divided the caves into a number of different chambers. One of these chambers clearly had been used as a holding pen for the children, as it stank of sweat and filth. A thin, dark flight of stairs led from the caves to the house above, allowing the passage from the world of the city to the underworld without risk of being seen.

And an underworld it was. Near the center of the cavern, where the stream bubbled up from a natural spring, investigators discovered the naked, mutilated bodies of the eight missing children, which had been hanged from barbed chains from the cavern’s ceiling, their lifeblood draining from the quasi-mystical symbols carved into their flesh to the flowing water beneath them. Conventional (though, after the fact, fiercely covered-up) wisdom suggested that the vile Sir Bluto had worshipped fiends in this hidden sanctum, and that the eight dangling corpses had been the culmination of his devotion to his infernal masters. The official story was that Bluto was a madman which, of course, he must have been. The people, with the help and urging of the government, put the killings behind them, for the most part remembering them only by the sobriquet they had picked up thanks to the lurid image first espied by the merchants on High Street: The River of Blood murders. Sir Bluto’s home, within the shadow of the Guild of Wizardry, has remained vacant all these years. The key to the grate, ever since the day the bodies were removed from the caves, has been in the care of the city watch.

## **Handout Two: Took's Letter**

Aspohar of Erybend,

I have been told that I am to report to you, now, ever since our unfortunate accident. Well, fine. I'm reporting to you. After fruitless searches in Perrenland, we've been led to the city of Greyhawk, of all places. S. believes that an old murderer, a pompous knight named Sir Bluto, might have been on the same trail we follow some 20 years ago. I'm to toss his old house, looking to see if he was onto something.

It's been a hell of a search. My xvarts are complaining they've been cooped up in the basement for too long. They're afraid they're going to miss Raxivort's Orgy, their holy mating ritual that's coming up real soon. When we left we didn't expect to stay for so long, so there aren't any females in the band. I imagine they're bouncing off the walls down there. I get a chuckle just thinking about it.

I'm working with too humans. Furtok is a big man who would break my neck the instant he found out that I think he's an easily used buffoon, but since he's completely illiterate, I don't have much to fear of him reading this letter! I think I'll have him deliver it, tomorrow.

My other assistant is a Houndsman. Garoth by name. I've met a lot of killers in my day, but this one is as stone-faced as any of them. Which is why it's so damn odd that he gets on so well with his dogs. Makes you wonder, eh?

Like I said, things were going nowhere until I took another look at the building from the outside and from the first floor, and noticed that there had to be more to the second floor than you can see. Sure enough, one of the walls up there is plaster. There's a chamber beyond the hole we've poked through, but we haven't yet had a chance

### Handout Three: Bluto's Letter

All is prepared and in full readiness. The subjects are secured below my home, and everything has been set according to the ancient traditions. ~~No one suspects~~—The city has turned upon itself looking for the children, but as yet no one has come calling. They do not suspect me.

I have cause to believe that but ~~three~~ two beings in all of Greyhawk guessed at my plan. Divination must have played a role, for I have been silent and efficient in all my dealings. My inquiries at the Great Library set me on the path of Hendicarr, an agent of our enemy in Urnst, who had consulted some of the same tomes I requested. I had the assistant librarian who helped me murdered. The thugs I hired to beat Hendicarr to death, regrettably, failed, but they left the man with a crushed leg and on the first boat back to Leukish. I trust he shall not bother us again in the future.

The second man, a Caballist named Merrok, was heard in a local inn to predict that eight children of high birth would be abducted before the crimes were solved. This was at the time of the fifth abduction. I have reason to believe this is the same Merrok who gave your agents trouble in Exag last year, and there can be little doubt that he too sought the Octych, no doubt to keep it from the hands of your Dread and Awful Presence. In any event, one of my servants was able to sneak poison into his cup, and his body now rots at the bottom of the Selintan.

~~I hesitate to mention the third, who for all I know may be a spectre of my fearful imaginings. I confess that the stress of this task has at times proved greater than my resolve, and I fear that I have more than once fallen prey to visions. On Starday last, after I had secured the last of the sacrifices in the caverns below my home, I took a leisurely stroll to a local establishment known as the Patrician's Club. I find the food there pleasing, and sought to keep up normal appearances so close to the final night. It could not have been later than midnight when I ventured there, but as I walked through the High Market, I was accompanied only by the echoes of my own footsteps. The streets of the High Quarter were barren that night.~~

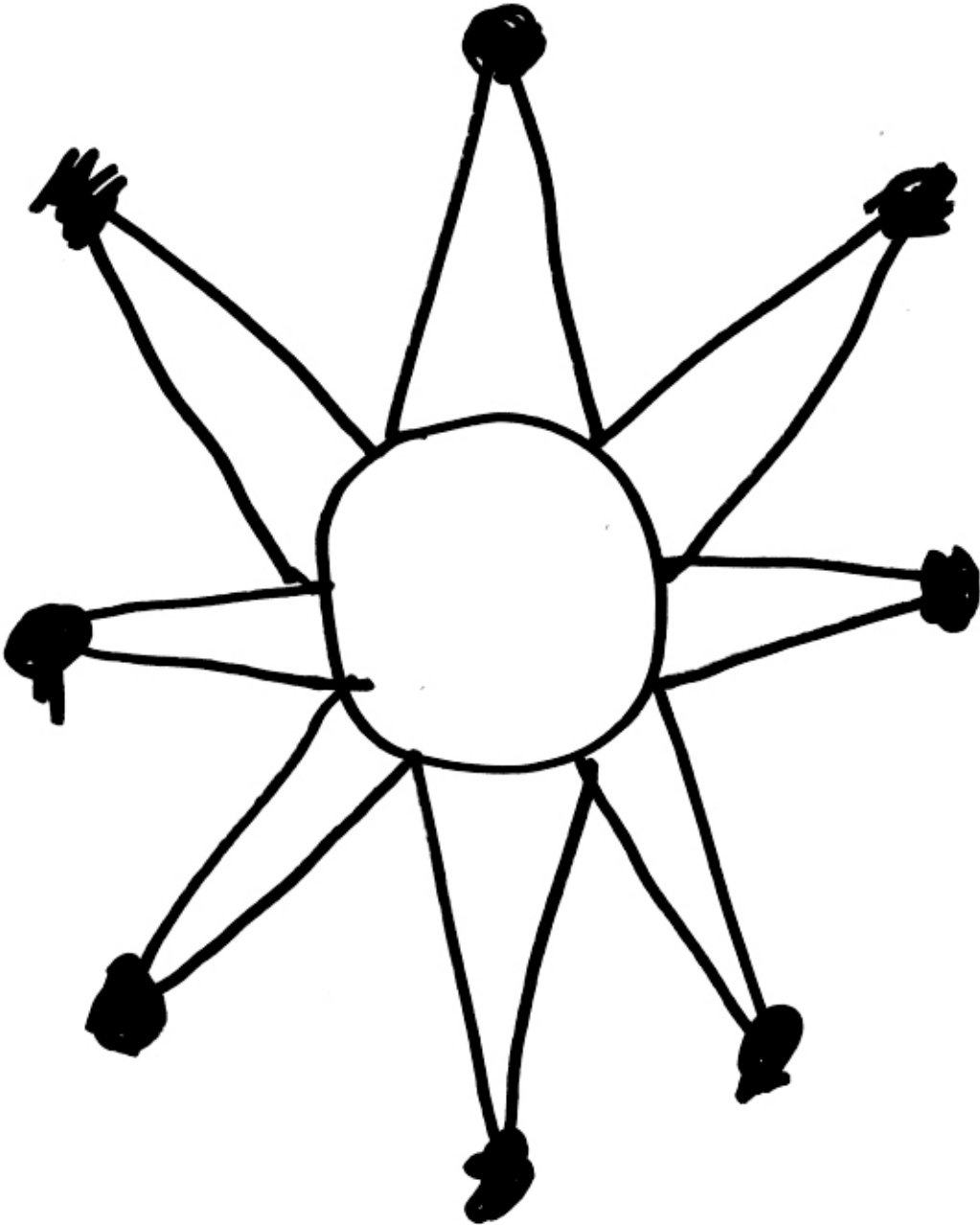
~~—And there, at the center of the empty marketplace, stood a tall, fair skinned being in regal red robes. The figure beckoned to me, and I approached. As I did so, I realized that the being was human, but was neither man nor woman. The sexless thing's eyes were a dull black that almost seemed to glow with the light of the moons. It extended long, bony fingers tipped with ragged nails, silently counting. When it reached the number eight, the thing threw back its head, smiling widely, revealing a mouth of needle like teeth. Could it have been the Lowborn? Could an apparition from the past appear in this very city, so close to our triumph? I ran. Ran from the thing, and from the square, and I did not stop running until I was behind the locked doors of my bedchamber.~~

A part of me, I must confess, weeps at what I am about to do. In years past, no doubt I would have stood with the so-called "vigilance committees" who scour the streets in search of clues to the whereabouts of the missing children. But that was before my induction into our unholy order. Before the revelation on the shores of the Veng that has dictated my path since the day it happened, some fifteen years back.

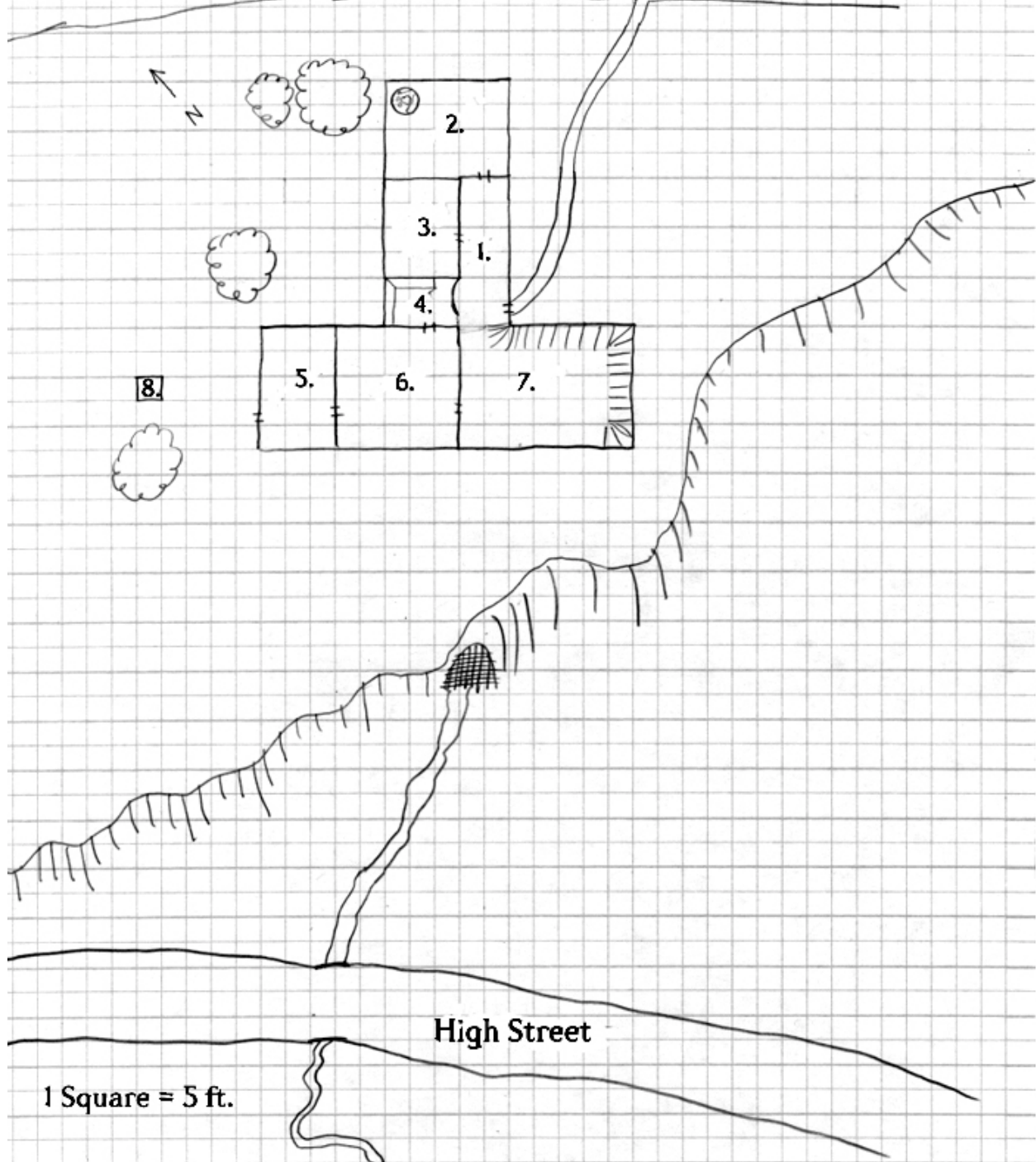
Blessed be the Reaper of Life. Blessed, too, be the Thirteen, and the kindred of Hades, of Gehenna, and of Tarterus. Blessed be all those honored in the Hall of Dread with the wretched stains of innocent sacrifice and the crush of sacred bone against unholy pestle. Within days, I will carve the blood symbiology into innocent flesh. I will trace the flow of deathblood against the Octych rune. The path to the first gate shall be laid clear!

Your servant,  
Bluto  
Flocktime, 565 CY

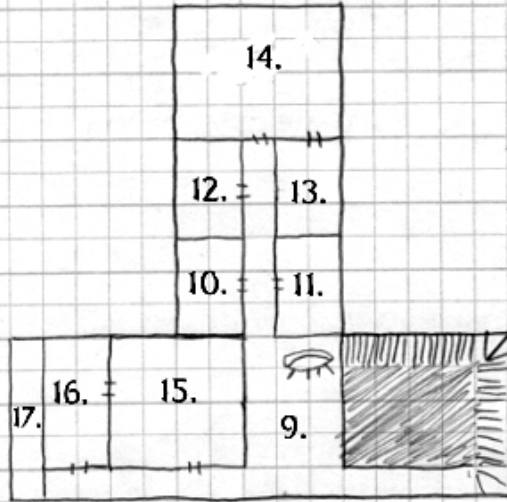
Handout Four: The Symbol on the Ceiling



# River of Blood Map 1: Bluto House, 1st Floor

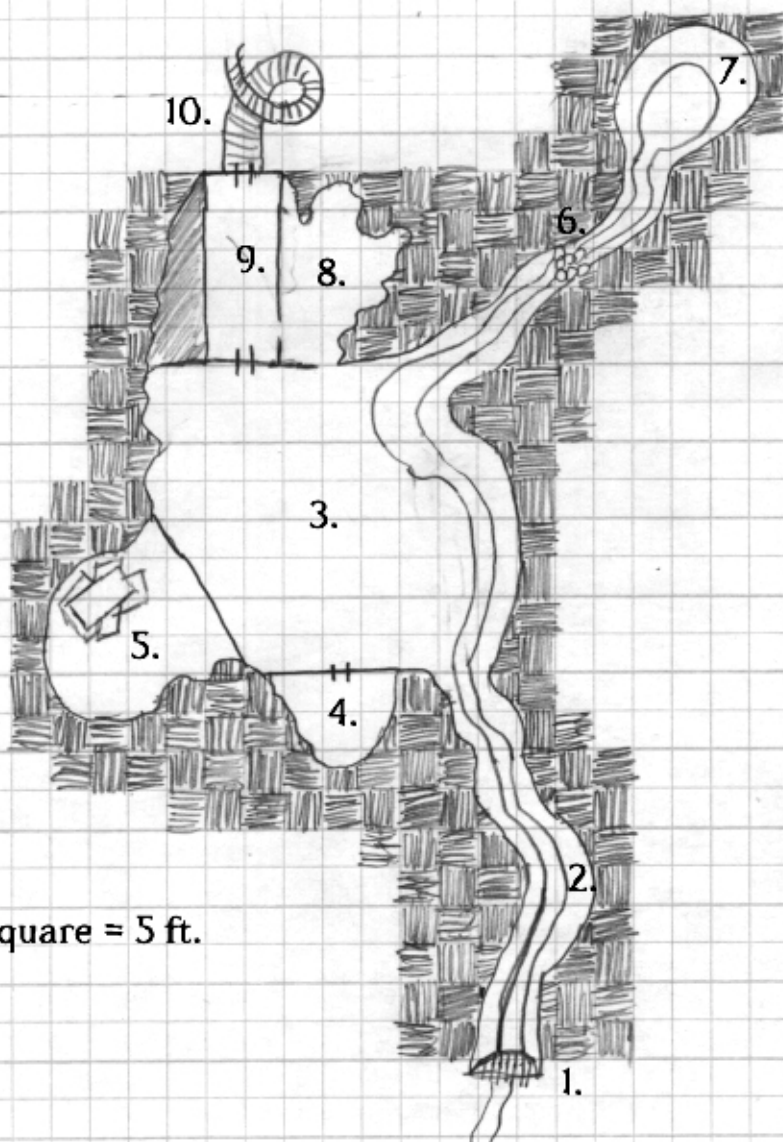


# River of Blood Map 2: Bluto House, 2nd Floor





# River of Blood Map 3: The Caves



1 Square = 5 ft.



# Path of the Millstream

(Map by Denis Tetreault)

