

**BDK1-04**

# **Angry Bones**

**A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK®  
Bandit Kingdoms Regional Adventure**

Version 1

**by Tom Harrison**

A young boy's gift becomes a curse and now the most sinister forces of the Bandit Kingdoms want him for their own. But why? And what is the nature of the lonely shrine in his dreams? An adventure for character levels 1-6.

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This is an RPGA® Network scenario for the Dungeons & Dragons® game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for each round of this scenario, but the actual playing time will be closer to three hours. The rest of the time is spent in preparation before game play, and scoring after the game. The following guidelines are here to help you with both the preparation and voting segment of the game. Read this page carefully so that you know and can communicate to your players the special aspects of playing an RPGA scenario.

## **Preparation**

First you should print this scenario. This scenario was created to support double-sided printing, but printing it single sided will work as well. There is enough room along the inside margin to bind the adventure, if you desire.

Read this entire adventure at least once before you run your game. Be sure to familiarize yourself with any special rules, spells, or equipment presented in the adventure. It may help to highlight particularly important passages.

When you run an RPGA D&D adventure we assume that you have access to the following books: the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. We also assume that you have a set of dice (at least one d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20), some scrap paper, a pencil, an RPGA scoring packet, and your sense of fun. It is also a good idea to have a way to track movement during combat. This can be as simple as a pad of graph paper and a pencil, as handy as a vinyl grid map and chits, or as elaborate as resin dungeon walls and miniatures.

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 in the introduction.

Keep in mind that you must have at least four players (not counting the DM), for the game session to be a sanctioned RPGA event. As well, you cannot have more than seven players participating in the game.

Once you are ready to play, it is handy to instruct each player to place a nametag 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 (and the DM) to keep track of who is playing which character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying. That said, you as the DM can bar the use of even core rule books during certain times of play. For example, the players are not free to consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* when confronted with a trap or hazard, or the *Monster Manual* when confronted with a monster.

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 gray boxes. It's strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text instead of reading it aloud. Some of this text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

## **Scoring**

After the players have completed the scenario or the time allotted to run the scenario has run out, the players and DM score the game. The RPGA has three ways to score its games. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use for this scenario:

- **No-vote scoring:** The players write their names and RPGA 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.
- **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 event coordinator wants information on how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
- **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 the group, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes.

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. It's a good idea to have the players vote while you determine treasure and experience awards for the scenario.

After voting, give the Scoring Packet to your event coordinator.

This is a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure. As a Living™ adventure, it is expected that players will bring their own characters with them. If players do not have a LIVING GREYHAWK character generated, get a copy of the current LIVING GREYHAWK character generation guidelines, a character sheet, and a LIVING GREYHAWK log sheet from your convention coordinator or the RPGA Web site, and then have any players without a character create one. Once all players have a LIVING GREYHAWK character, play can begin.

Along with the other materials that you are assumed to have in order to run a D&D game, it is also recommended that you have a copy of the LIVING GREYHAWK Gazetteer.

### **LIVING GREYHAWK Tier Structure**

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK campaigns, this adventure is tiered. Basically, the challenges in this adventure are proportioned to the average character level of the characters participating in the adventure. To determine the tier that you will use to run this adventure, add the character levels of all the characters. In addition, add the levels of any cohorts or animals according to the values on their certificates. Cross-reference the total and the number of players participating in the game using the chart below to determine the tier used for this adventure.

	<u>4 players</u>	<u>5 players</u>	<u>6 players</u>	<u>7 players</u>	<u>Lvl Cap</u>
T1:	4-12	5-13	6-14	7-15	4 <sup>nd</sup>
T2:	13-22	14-24	15-26	16-28	6 <sup>th</sup>
T3:	23-32	25-35	27-38	29-41	8 <sup>th</sup>

The level cap indicated is the highest level of character allowed to play this adventure. Characters of levels higher than the highest level shown for the highest tier cannot be played.

### **Is it a Full Moon?**

Since the hazards of lycanthropy are a current part of the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign, it may be necessary to determine if this adventure takes place during a full moon. 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).

### **Lifestyle**

At the beginning of every scenario, each PC is required to pay upkeep costs matching the level of lifestyle they wish to maintain. The lifestyles, and the effects that each has on play, are:

**Destitute:** You have no living space, and must carry all your gear everywhere. You eat poor

quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, your only change of clothes.

**Poor:** You sleep in poor accommodations, and eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, and have two sets of clothing.

**Common:** You have common lodgings, and eat common quality food. You have normal clothing for your profession (adventuring); nothing fancy. You probably have two or three sets of clothing.

**High:** You stay in good quality lodgings, and eat good quality food. You wear anything in value up to courtier's outfits, and generally buy a new set of clothing every two weeks.

**Luxury:** You have luxurious accommodations (twice the cost of good accommodations), and you eat excellent foods. You can throw a banquet for your friends every day, and frequently do. You wear clothing up to the value of noble's outfit, and buy a new set of clothes every week.

Lifestyles come with bonuses or penalties to Diplomacy, Intimidate, Disguise, and Bluff skill checks. These penalties, shown below, should be applied at the DM's discretion, and can sometimes backfire—for example, a PC with a poor lifestyle would not have a penalty when talking to a beggar, but would when talking to a city official. A PC with a high lifestyle should have a penalty when dealing with a group of street thugs, where a PC with a destitute lifestyle might not.

DMs are encouraged to role-play these reactions whenever possible.

Lifestyle	Cost	Skill Modifier
Destitute	14 sp	-2
Poor	43 sp	-1
Common	12 gp	0
High	250 gp	+1
Luxury	500 gp	+2

## **DM's Background**

This scenario begins in the western fringe of the Earldom of the Tangles and leads the heroes into the Warfields and the infamous Steelbone Meadows. It continues the events begun in *The Bleeding Moon*, foreshadowing the awakening of *That Which Sleeps*. Participation in that previous scenario is not necessary to enjoy this one, however those players who have will gain additional clues as to the eventual fate of the Bandit Kingdoms.

The heroes are thrown immediately into the action, ambushing a group of riders they believe to be transporting messages between the mage, Cranzer of Riftcrag, and the garrison at Law's Forge. As always, appearances are not all they seem to be, and a discovery leads them north to

the poor hamlet of Briars End and from there to the infamous Steelbone Meadow!

## **Briars End**

Eking out an existence in the hard soil of this land, the people of Briars End have known almost a decade of suffering. Small enough to have gone relatively unnoticed, the farmers here paid a regular tribute to marauding bands from the Warfields to insure their protection. The villagers are simple people with meager lifestyles. Perhaps a dozen farms dot the landscape, centered on a tiny community of people who made their living off the few travelers who passed through. Still, the hamlet could produce enough to feed itself and make its tribute allotments. Their small garrison was enough to deter slavers and the smaller outlaw bands. And so, by a matter of luck and hard toil, the hamlet of Briars End has survived in this land where the might prey upon the weak.

And then the Old One came.

For nearly five years, the villagers lived in terror of roaming demons and humanoid bands. All protection they were once afforded was dashed with the massacre at Steelbone Meadow. The small militia proved completely ineffectual against these new threats. Many families were murdered for no more than the entertainment of the new masters of the Bandit Lands. Others had no recourse but to abandon their homes in hope of the secure towns of southern Redhand or even the Rift Canyon. Those that chose to remain were the toughest of the lot, true to the spirit that had forged this land so long ago. There was a day to day existence, never knowing if they might wake to find a demon feasting on their livestock or worse, their families.

Briars End's bartered peace became a tortured fear. Even after the Archcleric of Veluna invoked the Crock of Rao and banished the nether-beings from this world, the villagers' still found little comfort in their shattered lands. These pragmatic folk clung to their livelihood with ruthless perseverance. Devoid of hope, the hamlet of Briars End might have perished like so many other places before it. But then a miracle happened.

## **Nolas, the Boy Seer**

Nolas was the only surviving son of Roland of Briars End. A small and quiet boy, he heeded the cautions of his parents to a point. His only vice was the pony his father had bartered for in hopes of later selling on the market at Hallorn. The boy and the pony developed a special bond, and heedless of the risks, Nolas took great delight in riding the beast on the family's lands.

Then, one a cool day in Ready'reat, after the first snows had begun to fall, Nolas and his pony met with an accident. It left the horse lame and the boy unconscious. Nolas tossed in a feverish

state for three days thereafter, and his family's hopes grew dim. His recovery was nothing short of miraculous. Many in the weary hamlet praised Istus that day. But if the goddess had a hand in the boy's survival, she had left him a departing gift. From that point on, Nolas had the gift of the second sight. He could see the future in his dreams. A miracle indeed!

A glorious winter passed for the people of Briars End. Nolas and his gift had given them new hope. For the first time in seven years, the Needfest was held. Nolas and his family sat at the high table, honored by their neighbors for their good fortune and the promise of a new day. The hamlet welcomed the new spring with a zest they had not known for many years.

But the last night of Coldeven saw those hopes turned to horror.

## **The Steelborne Meadows**

In Autumn of 584 CY, after the signing of the Treaty of Greyhawk and the illusion of peace in the Flanaess, a priest of Hallorn called a gathering of the various bandit lords in the tall grasslands of the Warfields. Nearly ten thousand answered his call, both to celebrate the end of a year of war and to discuss new ventures and alliances for the following spring. While they slept in their drunken stoozers, the priest, Bernel, summoned a company of demons and orc assassins, loyal to Iuz, to slaughter these men who he feared would turn against the Old One. Over half of the gathered men were killed. Since that day, the Steelbone Meadows, as they have come to be called, have been the object of legend and fear. The stories survivors of that night tell are harrowing. The restless spirits of the betrayed roam the blood soaked earth there, it is said, lusting for revenge against their betrayers. Few are brave or fool-hearted enough to seek the truth of these legends, and none of these have returned unscathed.

And so, on the last night of Coldeven, Nolas restlessly tossed in his sleep. He awoke with a scream that chilled his parents' hearts. But when questioned about his dream, he could remember none of it. The nightmares would revisit him often in the coming weeks, and people began to fear the boy might slip into madness. Then, as if living fiDMents of these nightmares, creatures or rotting flesh with a lush for death descended upon the villagers in the night. Ghoulish agents, perhaps, of Nolas' madness. The miracle of Briars End had become its curse!

## **Adventure Synopsis**

The adventure begins with the heroes staging an ambush on a group of riders on the road from Riftcrag to Law's Forge. The heroes believe they are couriers, transporting instructions between Cranzer and the garrison at Law's Forge. What

better way to muck up the works than to eliminate the lines of communications? But the heroes soon find out their mistake as the riders turn out to be quite a match for them. Then, while pillaging the bodies, they find information on the leader of the riders pointing them not toward Law's Forge, but north to Briars End. Also among the loot is a silver pyramid, covered in arcane script. Its purpose is unknown but its value is certain.

Arriving in the hamlet, the heroes come across a mob gathered outside the farm owned by Roland of Briars End. They demand the farmer turn over his son, that the child has brought an unspeakable evil upon the villagers. Though strangers to this place, the heroes must dismiss the mob to save Nolas. Thus does Roland offer them the hospitality of his home and fills them in on the story of Briars End.

That night, while all are sleeping, Nolas sleepwalks out of the home and across the fields. When the heroes catch up to him, they hear the alarm bells ringing in the hamlet. A pack of ghouls have attacked one of the families and must be dispatched.

Nolas has been dreaming again, but this time he remembers more of it. These scenes lead him and the heroes to believe the answers to the horror descended on the hamlet do indeed lay within the Steelbone Meadows, and they must set off to answer them to save Nolas from an unfortunate end.

Amidst the meadows, pursued by the undead, the band arrives at a ruined temple, long ago sacked by fiends. It is a sight Nolas remembers from his dreams. At its heart, all are assaulted by the minions of a being known to the heroes only as *That Which Sleeps*.

## Prelude: Flies to the Spiders

The players begin this adventure in hiding, awaiting the arrival of several riders down a track of road that links Riftcrag to the western fortress of Law's Forge. The scenario assumes the heroes are already in position to spring their ambush. Begin by reading the following text:

***The mark is the dandy in the middle. That much you know. A herald, bearing the seal of Cranzer. He is dressed in fine clothes, and there is a glint of gold on his fingers and ears. The message he carries won't be the only treasure you deprive him of today. Travelling west down the road to Law's Forge, the mark is surrounded by hobgoblin outriders. These outriders are well armed and armored – enough to deter common bandits. Two of these are passing beneath you even now: point riders. But this is the finest site for miles, and you've made the best of it. They won't see you. Chaos is an art, after all. And you can think of no one more deserving than the mage of Riftcrag.***

At this point, offer the players Players Map #1: The Ambush. Make sure they understand the riders are traveling the central road, east to west. It is the month of Coldeven and the trees are lush with fresh growth. The trees are mostly thin and spidery, but their branches can support and conceal a single medium size being.

Give the players five minutes to place their heroes on the map and set their ambush. This section is meant to be played fast and furious, so keep them moving. Be as accommodating as possible. Do not let the table get bogged down in a discussion of tactics and strategy. If necessary, let the whole thing ride on a Hide check (DC 15) for each person. Remind them the ambush is a simple matter, and thus far the riders have given no indication of their awareness of the party.

The riders, which include a number of hobgoblins surrounding a single, ugly human, will travel at a steady trot to the main fork, where the players may have all reason to believe they will continue west toward Law's Forge. If they are allowed to reach the northbound fork, read the following aloud:

***The main body of riders pass beneath you as you prepare to spring the trap. As they reach the fork, however, a puzzling thing happens. They turn their horses north. Perhaps the snitch you paid was wrong about their destination!***

The surprise change in direction shouldn't hamper the players too much. After all, there appears much to be gained from attacking the troupe regardless of their intended direction. Give them a second to collect their wits and decide their course of action. This is also an ideal time to make some Spot checks for the hobgoblin outriders. If any members of the party are detected, there will be a shout of alarm and the hobgoblins will fan out from a central point, blocking all access to the human rider in their midst as well as preventing any straightforward flanking attacks.

The idea here is to engage the party in melee as quickly as possible.

**Tactics:** When attacked, the hobgoblins will immediately dismount, draw their weapons, and dismiss their horses. The human, Yanziv, is quite cowardly and paranoid and believes nearly everyone to be a spy. He doesn't even trust his own outriders. He will remain horsed within the circle, taking Attacks of Opportunity when possible, letting the hobgoblins do most of the fighting. However, if his support breaks, Yanziv will surrender unless an escape route is clear. He has no compunction about lying to his captors and exaggerating his importance if it will keep him alive.

## **Tier One (EL 4)**

**Yanziv: male human Ft3:** CR 3; Medium-size humanoid (5' 3" tall); HD 3d6; hp 15; Init +3 (Dex); Spd: 30 ft., AC 16 (Dex, leather armor, shield), Atks +5 melee (1d6 [crit 18-20/x2] scimitar); SA Sneak Attack +2d6, Evasion, Uncanny Dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +2.

Str 15, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Chr 8

**Skills:** Bluff +4, Escape Artist +2, Gather Information +3, Hide +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2, Ride +2, Sense Motive +3, Spot +2; **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility Weapon Focus (scimitar).

**Hobgoblins (4):** CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (6' tall); HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (scale mail); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield), Atks: +1 melee (1d8 [crit x2] longsword); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0.

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

**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3; **Feats:** Alertness

*Note: Two of these outriders will be taking point positions as the band passes, putting them some 60 yards ahead of the main body of riders.*

**Horse, Light (5):** Large Animal; HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 60 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +2 melee (1d4+1 hooves x2); SQ Scent; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2.

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

**Skills:** Listen +6, Spot +6

## **Tier Two (EL 5)**

**Yanziv: male human Ft3:** CR 3; Medium-size humanoid (5' 3" tall); HD 3d6; hp 15; Init +3 (Dex); Spd: 30 ft., AC 16 (Dex, leather armor, shield), Atks +5 melee (1d6 [crit 18-20/x2] scimitar); SA Sneak Attack +2d6, Evasion, Uncanny Dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +2.

Str 15, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Chr 8

**Skills:** Bluff +4, Escape Artist +2, Gather Information +3, Hide +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2, Ride +2, Sense Motive +3, Spot +2; **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility Weapon Focus (scimitar).

**Hobgoblins (6):** Medium Humanoid (6' tall); HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (scale mail); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield), Atks: +1 melee (1d8 [crit x2] longsword); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0.

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

**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3; **Feats:** Alertness

*Note: Two of these outriders will be taking point positions as the band passes, putting them some 60 yards ahead of the main body of riders.*

**Horse, Light (6):** Large Animal; HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 60 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3

natural); Atks +2 melee (1d4+1 hooves x2); SQ Scent; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2.

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

**Skills:** Listen +6, Spot +6

## **Tier Three (EL 6)**

**Yanziv: male human Ft3:** CR 3; Medium-size humanoid (5' 3" tall); HD 3d6; hp 15; Init +3 (Dex); Spd: 30 ft., AC 16 (Dex, leather armor, shield), Atks +5 melee (1d6 [crit 18-20/x2] scimitar); SA Sneak Attack +2d6, Evasion, Uncanny Dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +2.

Str 15, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Chr 8

**Skills:** Bluff +4, Escape Artist +2, Gather Information +3, Hide +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2, Ride +2, Sense Motive +3, Spot +2; **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility Weapon Focus (scimitar).

**Hobgoblins (10):** Medium Humanoid (6' tall); HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (scale mail); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield), Atks: +1 melee (1d8 [crit x2] longsword); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0.

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

**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3; **Feats:** Alertness

*Note: Two of these outriders will be taking point positions as the band passes, putting them some 60 yards ahead of the main body of riders.*

**Horse, Light (10):** Large Animal; HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 60 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +2 melee (1d4+1 hooves x2); SQ Scent; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2.

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

**Skills:** Listen +6, Spot +6

## **Tier Four (EL 7)**

**Yanziv: male human Ft3:** CR 3; Medium-size humanoid (5' 3" tall); HD 3d6; hp 15; Init +3 (Dex); Spd: 30 ft., AC 16 (Dex, leather armor, shield), Atks +5 melee (1d6 [crit 18-20/x2] scimitar); SA Sneak Attack +2d6, Evasion, Uncanny Dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +2.

Str 15, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Chr 8

**Skills:** Bluff +4, Escape Artist +2, Gather Information +3, Hide +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2, Ride +2, Sense Motive +3, Spot +2; **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility Weapon Focus (scimitar).

**Hobgoblins Ft1 (7):** CR 1; Medium humanoid (6' tall); HD 1d10; hp 10; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft. (scale mail); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield), Atks: +1 melee (1d8 [crit x2] longsword); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0.

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

**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +5; **Feats:** Alertness, Power Attack.

Note: Two of these outriders will be taking point positions as the band passes, putting them some 60 yards ahead of the main body of riders.

**Horse, Light** (13): Large Animal; HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 60 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Attk +2 melee (1d4+1 hooves x2); SQ Scent; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2.

Str 13, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6  
Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6

**Possessions:** In addition to their weapons and armor, each hobgoblin carries 26 sp on its person.

The horses are each branded with the seal of Cranzer and Riftcrag. These are magically enhanced, and require a dispel magic spell (level 3) before there is any hope of removing them. The presence of the mark will make selling the steeds difficult, but not impossible.

Yanviz carries only 15 gp, but wears an assortment of jewelry worth 120 gp. In his pack, along with some travelling clothes and assorted trinkets (10 gp value altogether), the heroes will find a rolled piece of parchment bound with the seal of the mage, Cranzer. It bears the likeness of what appears to be a young boy, sketched masterfully. In the lower left-hand corner, in hurried script, is written:

“Briars End...  
...Son of Roland...  
...Return to Riftcrag”

A Local Knowledge check (DC 13) will reveal Briars End as a small hamlet about a day's ride up the northern track. It is the closest real settlement for miles, the second nearest being Hallorn – which may not be an appealing choice to visit at this point!

Also included in the bag is a small silver pyramid, about 2 inches wide on all sides. If detected for, the pyramid will radiate magic, and its aura is tainted and black.

If Yanviz is still alive and questioned about either the parchment or the object, he will attempt to intrigue the heroes, hoping they will do his work for him. He will mix lies with true to achieve these ends. He will even go so far as to promise great fortunes on Cranzer's account, as well as the favor of the mage. Of the boy, he will tell the heroes:

- The boy lives in the hamlet of Briars End, less than half a day's ride north on the track. (T)
- The boy's father, Roland, is a spy for Cranzer, but has fallen into disfavor. (F)
- Cranzer will take the boy hoping to draw Roland to Riftcrag. (F)

He will insist his life will not be worth a copper coin if he does not return with the boy, thus hoping to spur the heroes on to the hamlet. If this tact does not work, or if the heroes are vehemently against Iuz, he will try a different

approach, telling the heroes Cranzer may have sent other agents, who may yet take the boy...or worse. He will play upon the heroes' worst visions with sadistic glee.

Of the pyramid, Yanviz will tell them, falsely, it is a minor magical trinket that will calm and quiet the boy so he can be returned, quickly, to Riftcrag.

## Part I: The Hamlet of Briars End

It is not unlikely the heroes may want to have a look about town during this adventure. There is some information to be had in doing so. For this reason, the hamlet is detailed herein to a modest degree. To any heroes who set off to explore the hamlet, provide their players with Players' Handout #2: Briars End. You should feel free to improvise a great deal of the exploration of Briars End.

What follows is a basic template of the hamlet and a listing of the most important buildings in it. These descriptions offer only the name of the proprietor, whether that person was part of the mob in Encounter 2, and any useful information that may be had there. Unless mentioned, only a Gather Information check (DC 13) is necessary, but in some special cases, other skills will be beneficial to the questioning hero. There are plenty of outlying farms not indicated on the map. You should feel free to improvise these undiscussed villagers.

**Briars End** (Hamlet): Conventional; AL CN; 100 gp limit; Population 90; Mixed (human 98%, halfling 1%, half orc 1%).

### 1) Roland Farm

Roland (farmer), Janna (wife), Nolas (son, 12 years old), Safra (daughter, 5 years old)

### 2) Stores

Proprietor: Jarom Fel

- Present at mob scene (encounter 1)
- Found a zombie in his store room 3 weeks ago.

Players can buy most adventuring gear here at 80% of PHB value.

### 3) Mill

Proprietor: Markus

- Present at mob scene (encounter 1)
- Lost friend to zombie attack 5 weeks ago.

### 4) Temple of Berei

Priest: **Corin**; male human Clr3, medium humanoid; HD 3d8-1; hp 20; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC

10; Atk +3 melee (1d8-1 [crit x2] warhammer); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +7

Str 9, Dex 9, Con 9, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 12

Skills: Listen +4, Religion +7, Spot +3; Feats: Iron Will, Leadership

Spells: 0—create water, detect poison, guidance, light; 1—magic stone, cure light wounds (x3); 2—produce flame, aid, cure moderate wounds.

Domains: Earth, Fire.

Acolytes (3): human Exp1; hp 3

- None present at mob scene (encounter 1)
- Corin is an elderly priest of Berei and has lived in Briars End for nearly 40 years.
- Corin is a friend of Roland and his family. He treated Nolas through his illness and has seen to him several times since then. His acolytes are completely loyal to him.
- Corin discourages the assaults on Nolas by the townsfolk, but as the trouble continues they listen to the old priest less and less.

### 5) Lortz Farm

Lortz (farmer), Helena (wife), Kurt (son, 17 years old), Garn (son, 16 years old), Eism (son, 14 years old)

- Garn is among the mob (encounter 1); very belligerent young man!
- Have seen zombies in the fields.

### 6) Werrem Farm

Werrem (farmer), Landy (wife), Rig (son, 15 years), Jon (son, 14 years), Kira (daughter, 12 years).

- Children are among the mob (encounter 1).
- Have seen zombies in the fields at night.

## Encounter 1: The Mob Rules

The Journey to Briars End is uneventful, with Yanviz (if he is to be ransomed), testing members of the party to see who is most sympathetic to his case. The track is clear and the weather fine, making for good time.

The heroes will hear signs of the hamlet before they actually come across it. Shouts and curses of both men and women, angry and shrill, can be heard. When the heroes reach the small bridge crossing the creek on the outskirts, read the following text:

***On the other side of the crooked brook is a large gathering surrounding a modest farmhouse. A mob of some thirty or more men and women shout angrily and raising forks and shovels at its walls in protest. You can almost make out a few phrases about the din. Someone shouts, "give up the cursed one!" Another screams, "he killed them***

***all! He is responsible." The tension is almost tangible in the writhing mass of bodies.***

***Then, from a hiding place behind a great oak tree near the house, you see a young brown haired girl break your way, crying out. A few in the mob turn to see her, but none follow. She runs toward you clumsily - she cannot be more than 5 years old. As she reaches the brook, you can hear her wailing, "Save him! Please! Strangers! You must! They are mad!"***

The little girl is Roland's daughter, **Safra**. She is quite young with a dingy dress a few sizes too big for her and dirt stained cheeks. She will not cross the bridge (her father won't allow it) but will continue to beg the heroes for aid. Tears strain from her eyes as she calls out to them.

The mob will not take notice of the heroes until they have crossed the bridge, and will only quiet when the party is upon them. They will eye them with obvious suspicion and anger, telling them to "begone," that this is a hamlet matter. A Diplomacy check (DC 15), or an Intimidate check (DC 20) are necessary to calm them to any sane degree. This done, the heroes may ask questions, the answers to which will come in disjointed shouts from various agents of the mob.

### ***Who lives here?***

*It is the home of farmer Roland.*

### ***How long has Roland lived here?***

*For nearly 20 years. Before the wars with Molag and then some,*

### ***Why are you here?***

*We want him to turn over his son, who is possessed by demons!*

### ***Why doesn't Roland turn him over?***

*The man is foolish with grief! He lost two sons years ago. He will see us all dead before he surrenders his son.*

### ***Has a priest seen the boy?***

*Yes, but he is old and has lost his wits. The boy has brought death upon our village! That much is certain!*

### ***Who has died?***

*Twelve this far. Sturdy farmers and long friends, cut down in the night by the evil summonings of the boy.*

### ***How is this boy involved?***

*The boy is cursed. He claims to dream the future, but instead he brings demons - the restless spirits of the Meadows!*

### ***What Meadows?***

*The Steelbone Meadows! Are you daft?*

(Note: A Local Knowledge check (DC 13) will reveal a great the basic info on Steelbone Meadows.)



### ***How long has this been going on?***

*It began last winter, but the curse didn't take until the thaw. Probably because those corpses lay frozen in their graves.*

You can improvise as you will from the DMs Background above. The mob, while angry, is obviously poor, superstitious, and fearful. Fear, more than hate, seems to be feeding their rage. If the heroes offer to help, they will be cheered and quickly ushered to the fore of the farmhouse. They may also try to dismiss the crowd, though doing so will be difficult (DC 20 for any reasonable skill, +1 to 5 bonus for roleplaying, +1 bonus for each point of standing (if any) with the Freedom Fighters of the Tangles). A word of warning: attempting to intimidate the mob unsuccessfully, and in a provocational manner will certainly get the party attacked.

### **Briars End Mob, mixed male and female humans**

**Com1** (30): Medium-size humanoids, HD 1d4+1 (Con); hp 3; Init -1; Spd 30; AC 10; Atks +0 melee (1d6 [crit x2] spear or 1d6 [crit x2] club); AL LN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -1

Str 10, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +1, Spot +1

Unless the mob has been dismissed, the farmer, Roland, will be hesitant to open the door for anyone! He will be suspicious of the heroes' motives either way. Any exchange will be short and tense, though in truth Roland is more interested in protecting his son than interrogating the heroes. If the exchange is positive, and his daughter is with them, the farmer will open his home to the heroes.

Roland will have no reaction to seeing Yanviz, and a Sense Motive check (DC 10) will reveal the farmer honestly has never seen the man before. Yanviz will, of course, claim a great reverence for Roland, much to the farmer's confusion.

Yanviz will exploit any advantage the mob gives him. He will not speak to the heroes during this encounter unless questioned directly. If left unattended, he will use the opportunity to escape, or excite the crowd even further if it plays to his advantage.

## **Encounter 2: The Wonder Child**

Once (if) Roland is convinced the heroes are not here to harm his son, he will invite them into his home. He will ask them to leave their weapons in the front room, including knives and daggers, which he will see as a test of good faith – a promise that his boy will not be harmed. He will half-heartedly scold for talking with strangers and introduce his wife, a weary looking woman named Janna.

If Roland's farm looks modest on the outside, it is doubly so inside. There are few trappings,

and those there are appear old and worn. But the house is warm and not drafty.

Asked about the mob, their son, and the curse, they will give the heroes an abbreviated story of the events depicted in the DMs Background section of the adventure:

***"It began last Ready'reat. Nolas was riding his pony in the north fields when something happened. My son fell and hit his head on a stone. We weren't sure if he would live, he lay asleep for three days. The priest did what he could to make him comfortable. When he awoke that morning, we thought it was a miracle, a gift of Istus. Our neighbors celebrated his recovery at the Needfest.***

***"But something happened to my boy. When he woke up, he began to claim he could foresee the future in his dreams. He dreamt of the breech birth of the Lortz' calf this spring and it came to pass. He's dreamt of storms that have come within days.***

***"These days he can't remember what he's dreaming. It's a nightmare, I think. Janna has comforted him when he's sleeping, tossing and moaning in his dream. When he wakes up he can't remember any of it. And since the spring came, we've been seeing strange things come to the hamlet in the night. The folk here think his dreams are bringing them. I don't know about that, but I'm not letting them take him."***

Roland and Janna are very worried for the safety of their son, Nolas. During their tale, the boy himself will creep out to see the heroes. He is a lean, shy boy of about 12 years, with a mop of mousy brown hair and baggy clothes. He has a deep, penetrating look to him, and almost appears to look through whomever he is speaking to.

If asked about his gift, Nolas will respond:

***"I can't explain it, really. I see things in my dreams. Sometimes they come to pass. I don't know why it happened to me. The priest says it's the blessing of Istus, but I don't see why she'd bother with a scrap like me."***

If asked about the undead, he will respond:

***"I told my mother and father. I've been having these dreams, see, but when I wake up, I can't remember them. Mother has woken me a few times. She says I'm pitching and screaming in my sleep. I wish I could remember what happens in them. It must be something really scary. But I don't know about these things that are coming to the village now. They all happen when I'm asleep. The villagers say I have to know something about it because I can see the future. They say my dreams are bringing the monsters. I don't know. Maybe they do. I wish I could remember."***

Discussing these dreams and the villagers' anger toward him is very tough on Nolas, and his

mother will often put a hand on him to steady him and add to his confidence. If the heroes coach him along, he'll tell on. He feels alone because he can't relate to anyone. As you might imagine, he will feel a strong attachment to any Diviners in the party.

Assuming the heroes are a pleasant sort and do not abuse Roland's hospitality, the farmer will invite them to rest themselves in his home this night. He fears the mob may return near dark and will value the heroes' aid in defending his son. For their help, he will offer them food and shelter for the night, as well as for their mounts. This is, the players might imagine, about the only things Roland can offer them.

If Yanviz is with the party, he will be very cautious await his next move. If the party has bought his lie about Roland, he will try to get sympathetic heroes alone to reinforce those lies. Otherwise, he will bide his time until he can escape. He may even try talking with Nolas if he can get the child alone, filling his head about the wonders of Riftcrag and how there are people there who can help him with his gifts.

If the heroes should question Roland on his involvement with the mage, Cranzer, he will honestly deny all of Yanviz's lies. A Sense Motive check (DC 13) will confirm the sincerity of these denials. His cover blown, Yanviz will become even more desperate to escape. Should the players request a good place lock them man up, Roland does have some rope in the cellar of the house.

### Encounter 3: The Sleepwalker

The crowd does not return to Roland's farm, and the day turns to dusk with a cloud of tension hanging over the place. The night sky is peppered with a few small clouds that flow lazily on a westward course. Luna and Celene both shine in the night sky, giving a mercurial glow to the fields about the farmstead.

The heroes may wish to set a watch, if for no other purpose than to watch Yanviz if he remains with the party. Roland will gladly take a watch if asked. If the party does organize a watch order, read the following text to the hero on the third watch:

***In the moonlight, you see a small form walking north across the fields.***

The form is Nolas. He is sleepwalking and in no hurry, but still a minute's run distant.

If the heroes do not set a watch, read the following text to them:

***Warm dreams are stripped away as a woman's scream rattles the farmhouse. Jarred from slumber, it takes a moment to realize the voice is***

***of Janna, Roland's wife. "He's gone," she screams. "Roland, he's gone! We've got to find him!"***

A look out of any of the windows facing the fields will reveal Nolas, headed for the tall sheaves of wheat that rock gently in the night wind.

The heroes should move to catch the boy, though they may want to don armor and gather weapons before hand. Keep a careful note of the time it takes to do this. If the heroes take more than 5 minutes to go after the boy, he disappears into the wheat field. Then, as the heroes emerge, they will hear a scream from therein!

It will take only a minute or so for any hero to catch up with Nolas. He is completely unaware of his surroundings and makes no move to escape them. When caught, a simple Sense Motive check (DC 10) will reveal the boy is sleepwalking. When awakened, he will simply look at the heroes and say, "I was dreaming,"

At this moment, all present heroes must make a Listen check (DC 18). Those who succeed will hear a distant rumble moment's before the ground beneath them trembles and erupts. Those who fail are completely surprised by the ankheg's attack.

#### Tier 1 (EL 3)

**Ankheg (1):** CR 3 Large Beast; HD 3d10+9; hp 25; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.; AC 18 (-1 size, +9 natural); Atks +6 melee (2d6+7 [crit x2] bite); SA Improved grab, acid, spit acid; SQ Tremorsense; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2.

Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +4

#### Tier 2 (EL 4)

**Ankheg (1):** CR 4; Large Beast; HD 4d10+9; hp 30; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.; AC 18 (-1 size, +9 natural); Atks +6 melee (2d6+7 [crit x2] bite); SA Improved grab, acid, spit acid; SQ Tremorsense; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2.

Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +4

#### Tier 3 (EL 5)

**Ankhegs (2):** CR 3; Large Beast; HD 3d10+9; hp 25; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.; AC 18 (-1 size, +9 natural); Atks +6 melee (2d6+7 [crit x2] bite); SA Improved grab, acid, spit acid; SQ Tremorsense; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2.

Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +4

#### Tier 4 (EL 6)

**Ankhegs (3):** CR 3; Large Beast; HD 3d10+9; hp 25; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.; AC 18 (-1 size, +9 natural); Atks +6 melee (2d6+7 [crit x2] bite); SA Improved grab, acid, spit acid; SQ Tremorsense; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2.

Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +4

If the heroes are late coming after the boy, they will find the ankheg(s) looming over him among the wheat fields, prepared to strike. Nolas will be easy to locate from his screams.

#### **Encounter 4: Unwelcome Guests**

Nolas will still mean rather dazed as the last of the ankhegs fall. Almost oblivious to the fight, he will turn to the heroes and say, "I was dreaming...and I remember!" This is an exciting moment for the boy, a clue to the source of the nightmares he has suffered since late winter. In an excited, hurried manner, he will blurt out to the heroes:

*"I was walking on a windblown plain of high grass. There was nothing about me, but an old building. Like a shrine, maybe. It looked very old. The sky was angry." Then he stops and shivers. "There was blood. From the earth. Each step I took, it rose like water." Nolas looks at the whole of you, pleading. "What does it mean?" he asks.*

*From a distance, a bell begins to chime.*

The bell is the town alarm, usually reserved for summoning fire brigades or to alert the townsfolk of a storm. This time, however, the reason for the alarm is the violent, bloody deaths of a family of farmers who live not far from the Roland farmstead. People from the town rise from their sleep and go to the source of the bell, the temple tower. By the time the heroes arrive, a good sized mob has already gathered.

Corin, the hamlet's cleric, rings the bell. He is there with Helena, wife of the now deceased farmer, Lortz. She is terrified, telling her tale to everyone as they arrive, which is quickly dispensed as wild, fantastic exaggerations. If asked, Helena tells the heroes:

*"It happened so quickly. I woke when Lortz was leaving. There was trouble in the barn, the horses were worrying. He and my sons went down there to quiet them down. That's when I heard the screams! I ran for the barn and saw...something...drag my son back into the shadows behind the door. He reached for me! Berei help him, he reached for me!"*

**Note:** Helana grows more and more hysterical as she recounts her story.

The mob will quickly move to Lortz's farmstead. Several of the horses have kicked out the walls of their pens and escaped. As they arrive, the heroes will see the barn looms in darkness, its great doors open just slightly. A Listen check (DC 15) will reveal soft ripping and smacking sounds from within. The mob will not go closer than 50

feet to the barn, and will grow silent with fear as the stand about it.

If the heroes do not move to enter the barn, Corin will do so, his holy symbol gripped in his white knuckled hands. The priest of Berei is no match for the creatures within, and if allowed to enter unaccompanied, the feasting ghouls will be on him in a matter of minutes. Those outside might here (Listen check, DC 15) a sharp intake of breath and then louder ripping sounds. The few in the crowd who hear this will cry out and run in horror.

**Note:** Take the time to play up the horror of this scene. The villagers are horrified and their terror can be infectious. Images of pale faces, cold stares, tears, and shudders should dance through the players imaginations at this point. Visual imagery is KEY! Describing the reactions of the crowd rather than the sounds from within the barn will produce a much more horrific effect.

#### **Tier 1 (EL 2)**

**Ghouls** (2): CR 1; Medium-sized Undead; HD 2d12; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atks +3 melee (1d6+1 and paralysis [crit x2] bite); +0 melee (1d3 and paralysis [crit x2] claws x2); SA Paralysis, create spawn; SQ Undead, +2 turn resistance; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5.

Str 13, Dex 15, Con -, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Climb +6, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +7; Feats: Multiattack, weapon finesse (bite).

**Special Attacks: Paralysis (Ex)**—those hit by a ghouls bite or claw attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be paralyzed for 1d6+2 minutes. Elves are immune to this paralysis.

**Special Qualities: Undead**—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

#### **Tier 2 (EL 3)**

**Ghouls** (3): use stats above.

#### **Tier 3 (EL 5)**

**Ghouls** (2): use stats above.

**Ghast** (1): CR 3; Medium-sized Undead; HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural); Atks +4 melee (1d8+1 and paralysis [crit x2] bite) and +1 melee (1d4 and paralysis [crit x2] claws) x2; SA Stench, paralysis, create spawn; SQ Undead, +2 turn resistance; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +6.

Str 13, Dex 15, Con -, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Climb +6, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +8; Feats: Multiattack, weapon finesse (bite).

**Special Attacks: Paralysis (Ex)**—those hit by a ghoul's bite or claw attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be paralyzed for 1d6+2 minutes. Elves are immune to this paralysis.

**Stench (Ex)**—The stink of death and corruption surrounding these creatures is sickening. Those within 10 feet must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be wracked with nausea, suffering a -2 circumstance penalty to all attacks, saves, and skill checks for 1d6+4 minutes.

**Special Qualities: Undead**—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

## **Tier 4 (EL 5)**

**Ghouls (3):** use stats above.

**Ghast (1):** use stats above.

**Tactics:** The ghouls will have drawn their victims, 3 farmers (and Corin, if he has been taken), into the deepest shadows to feed upon them. Upon the entrance of any sizeable group, they will leave their kills, climb into shadows beneath the loft (Climb and Move Silently checks, DC 13) and wait for prey to come to them. All will attack as once, leaping down upon the heroes and hoping to paralyze them with their claw attacks.

The heroes have a few things going in their favor. They know something is in the barn already, and thus surprise is not likely. Allow all those who enter the barn to make Listen or Spot checks (DC 15, or 10 if the creatures failed either their previous checks) to detect the movements of the ghouls. For higher tiered parties, the stench of the ghasts will be a dead giveaway as to the nature of these creatures, though ghouls are none too pleasant smelling themselves.

When cleric heroes succeed in turning the ghouls, use the three-dimensional build of the barn to their advantage. The ghouls are not likely to huddle in corners when they can escape into the rafters. Also remember the ghouls are not stupid. A failed turn attempt is likely to attract the attention of all the ghouls.

Finally, and what makes this perhaps the most dangerous encounter of the adventure, is the fact the ghouls will not move to a different opponent once if their prey is reduced to zero hit points. Unless another hero is within the ghoul's Threatened Area, allow it one additional attack on the downed victim. This will almost always hit, but damage is certainly variable. **DO NOT ALLOW INSTANT KILLS HERE!** After the first such attack, the other heroes will learn to beat back ghouls the instant one of their friends go down, promoting a sort of selfless sacrifice that should exist in all heroes.

When the heroes emerge from the barn, the mob will be full of questions. Curiosity turns to grief and then to rage. Many will rally to take the

cursed child this night, and begin to move toward Roland's farmstead. The heroes must once again act to dissolve the tension and dismiss them, or the mob will torch the farmstead, killing all within!

If Corin lives, he will support the heroes' endeavors, playing on the obligations owed them. Once things have quieted down, he will offer to heal their wounds.

**And last, a word on Yanviz:** The herald of Cranzer has no intention of staying put until the heroes conveniently release him, nor is he confident a ransom would be paid. Thus, while the heroes are off fighting ghouls in the hamlet, Yanviz will be making his escape.

You have a few options here. If the heroes have no real idea what to do with Yanviz at this point, you can either:

- Let him escape amidst the confusion.
- Let him try to escape, only to be killed by Roland (a shovel blow to the head)
- Let the heroes foil his attempt as they return from Lortz's farmstead.
- Yanviz's attempts fail and are obvious when he is next checked upon, though he will deny them profusely.

Use option C only if there is plenty of time remaining! A and B should be used only if the captured herald is becoming a hindrance on the storyline, and the heroes are focusing on him more than the fate of Nolas and Briars End. This is a sort of ultimate DM fiat, so be confident of your choice. Yanviz is meant to be a distraction and an obstacle, but there is a potential reward in keeping him.

## **Part 2: Journey to the Old Shrine**

The heroes return to Roland's farmstead to find the whole family huddled around Nolas. Roland will immediately question them if the mob is coming for his son again, ready to sacrifice himself to save the boy. Janna and her daughter are in tears. Nolas, on the other hand, is in a state of feverish glee. He has been remembering more about his dream.

*"It was a long walk. I really wasn't sure where I was going, until I saw a man in the field. He was wearing tattered armor and his clothes were soaked in blood. A crow was pecking at his neck while he stood. I asked him where I was going. He shooed the crow the flew off into a sky of angry clouds. 'The raven shows the way,' he said. Then he turned and walked away. I asked him where I was. He shouted back, 'on the graves of the betrayed, where souls are vengeful and their bones are angry.'"*

If the scenes from Nolas' dream haven't made the location clear enough, allow anyone listening a Local Knowledge check (DC 12). Success will point them toward the Steelbone Meadows. Any mention of the fell place will draw glares from Roland, who will immediately whisper a quick prayer to Berei.

Nolas has convinced himself that this has been his nightmare all along. That somehow, the answers to all his questions lie in this old shrine on that evil plane. His parents will dismiss this as lunacy and part of a child's dream and nothing more. Nolas has other intentions however.

When the house quiets down again, Nolas will sneak from his room and come to speak with whichever hero has been kindest to him this last day. The boy wants the heroes to take him to the shrine. He will beg if necessary, saying that this premonition must be fulfilled if the roaming undead are to be stopped. If Corin has died, he will be even more desperate, claiming that no one remains who can stop these creatures. If rebuked, he will vow to go himself. Nolas will even offer to pay the heroes (3 cps, all he has saved in his young life) to take him.

Sure enough, before his father rises for the day, Nolas will be prepared to set off. Leaving now is important, he stresses, as his father will never let him go.

Should the heroes decide to seek out the shrine without Nolas, he will protest, claiming only he will be able to discern the way. Furthermore, if he is meant to go, there is no telling what fate might befall the heroes if he does not accompany them. If the heroes insist, Nolas will simply sneak away and follow them, revealing himself only after a day or so of travel.

## Encounter Five: The Trip to the Meadows

Read the following text aloud:

*The journey to the Steelbone Meadows takes two days and three nights. The plains of Abarra and the Warfields are flat and rocky, with small clusters of thorny scrub growth. The track you follow seems long unused, and can barely be called a road at all. But the land here is not abandoned. The remains of large camps, probably hobgoblin patrols, lie scattered along your path. The smoldering campfires leave you looking over your shoulders and scanning the horizon. Luckily, your worst fears go unfulfilled.*

*On the third morning, and unsettling and unnatural fog descends upon the plain. Thick and heavy, the damp seems to stick to you uncomfortably. Only Nolas has anything to be happy about, as he talks constantly about a dream he has had of a great broken pyramid on a desolate plain.*

*By mid-morning, the fog has not lifted. Worse, you can make out movement in the distance. Vaguely humanoid shapes shuffle through the fog, never coming close enough for you to see them clearly.*

Visibility within the fog bank is only about 60 yards, with everything beyond that being only a hazy shadow. At this point, the heroes have entered the plains of the Steelbone Meadows. There are no signs of passage here, from patrols or otherwise. Any track the heroes are following becomes overgrown from disuse.

The moving figures are skeletons. They will keep their distance from the party, never approaching closer than 60 yards. They will not attack the heroes, only follow them with an almost strange sense of curiosity. Turning attempts will have no lasting effect against these creatures. If charged and engaged, the skeletons will fight, but will make no attempt to pursue their attackers if the fight is broken off.

**Skeletons** (30): CR 1/3; Medium-sized Undead; HD 1d12; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); hp 6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atks +0 melee (1d6 [crit x2] rusty swords); SQ Undead, immunities; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 10, Dex 12, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 11

Feats: Improved Initiative

Shortly after the skeletons are sighted, a random raven, flying low in the sky, can be seen headed west.

Finally, about mid- or late-afternoon, the fog will lift enough for the heroes to see the ruin of an old temple just on the fringe of visibility. Nolas will immediately recognize it as the shrine from his dream.

## Encounter Six: The Old Shrine

Read the following text to the players:

*The old temple is countless years old and appears long abandoned. The remains of an old crumbled wall lay about it. The temple itself is covered in thorny ivy vines, making it almost indistinguishable from the landscape at a distance. Nolas begins to fidget in childish anticipation and fear. "This is it," he whispers. "This is the place in my dreams."*

Nothing hinders entrance to the old temple. The old doors that once barred the entrance have rotted and fallen away from their rusted hinges. On the highest point of the temple, a bell tower from the look of it, perches a single raven. It caws and takes flight the moment you see it, soaring up into the gloom and out of sight.

A Religion check (DC 15) will indicate this is a temple of Celestian. The deity is not commonly worshipped in the Combination, or the

Warfields, whose people are far more concerned with material matters than star-gazing. A close examination of the stonework shows the temple is indeed very ancient.

If there are any priests of Celestian or Fharlaghn among the party, have them make a Wisdom check (DC 15) as they approach the temple. If they succeed, they receive an ill feeling from the temple. Something about it is simply not right, as though the ground is no longer consecrated.

**Note:** Of all the encounters within the old temple, only that in the Inner Sanctum (#7h) is essential to the scenario. The rest are provided to breathe some life into the forgotten place. You have the discretion to ignore the majority of these encounters if time is limited. Simply narrate the heroes through to the Inner Sanctum.

## 7a) Vestibule

*This entrance hall is wide and tall. Cracks line its walls where vines have rooted themselves to it. Along the inner wall rest two sconces, lined with algae and filled with a foul looking water. Behind these, in cracked and faded mosaics, is the likeness of the god, Celestian. His arm is outstretched, and a flurry of stars fly from his palm to fill the night sky.*

The water in the sconces is old and stagnated. It was once likely holy water, but any consecration has long since been dispelled.

On the south-eastern side of the vestibule lie the scattered remains of animal bones, notably those of large rats. Anyone who investigates these, or passes through the archway there, will be subject to attack by the assassin vine. A Wilderness Lore check (DC 18) will distinguish the plant from the rest of the tangled ivy.

## Tier 1 (EL 3)

**Assassin Vine** (T): CR 3; Large Plant; HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init +0; Spd 0 ft.; AC 15 (-1 size, +6 natural); Atks +7 melee (1d6+7 [crit x2] slam); SA Entangle, improved grab, constrict 1d6+7; SQ Camouflage, electricity immunity, cold and fire resistance 20, blindsight, SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 20, Dex 10, Con 16, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 9

**Special Attacks: Entangle (Su)**—An assassin vine can animate plants within 30 fet of itself as a free action. The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise similar to entangle as cast by a 4<sup>th</sup>-level druid.

**Improved Grab (Ex)**—To use this ability, the assassin vine must hit with its slam attack.

**Special Qualities: Camouflage (Ex)**—Since an assassin vine looks like a normal plant when at rest, it takes a successful Spot check (DC 20) to notice it before it attacks. Anyone with Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (plants or herbs)

can use those skills instead of Spot to notice the plant. Dwarves can use the subterranean version.

## Tier 2 (EL 4)

**Assassin Vine** (T): CR 4; Huge Plant; HD 6d8+30; hp 57; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 0 ft.; AC 16 (-2 size, -1 Dex +9 natural); Atks +11 melee (1d6+9 [crit x2] slam); SA Entangle, improved grab, constrict 1d8+9; SQ Camouflage, electricity immunity, cold and fire resistance 20, blindsight, SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 28, Dex 8, Con 20, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 9

**Special Attacks: Entangle (Su)**—An assassin vine can animate plants within 30 fet of itself as a free action. The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise similar to entangle as cast by a 6<sup>th</sup>-level druid.

**Improved Grab (Ex)**—To use this ability, the assassin vine must hit with its slam attack.

**Special Qualities: Camouflage (Ex)**—Since an assassin vine looks like a normal plant when at rest, it takes a successful Spot check (DC 20) to notice it before it attacks. Anyone with Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (plants or herbs) can use those skills instead of Spot to notice the plant. Dwarves can use the subterranean version.

## Tier 3 (EL 6)

**Assassin Vine** (T): CR 4; Huge Plant; HD 8d8+40; hp 76; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 0 ft.; AC 16 (-2 size, -1 Dex +9 natural); Atks +12/+7 melee (1d6+9 [crit x2] slam); SA Entangle, improved grab, constrict 1d8+9; SQ Camouflage, electricity immunity, cold and fire resistance 20, blindsight, SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 28, Dex 8, Con 20, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 9

**Special Attacks: Entangle (Su)**—An assassin vine can animate plants within 30 fet of itself as a free action. The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise similar to entangle as cast by a 8<sup>th</sup>-level druid.

**Improved Grab (Ex)**—To use this ability, the assassin vine must hit with its slam attack.

**Special Qualities: Camouflage (Ex)**—Since an assassin vine looks like a normal plant when at rest, it takes a successful Spot check (DC 20) to notice it before it attacks. Anyone with Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (plants or herbs) can use those skills instead of Spot to notice the plant. Dwarves can use the subterranean version.

## Tier 4 (EL 8)

**Assassin Vine** (T): CR 6; Huge Plant; HD 10d8+50; hp 95; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 0 ft.; AC 16 (-2 size, -1 Dex +9 natural); Atks +13/+8 melee (1d6+9 [crit x2] slam); SA Entangle, improved grab, constrict 1d8+9; SQ Camouflage, electricity immunity, cold and fire resistance 20, blindsight, SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 28, Dex 8, Con 20, Int –, Wis 13, Cha 9  
**Special Attacks: Entangle (Su)**—An assassin vine can animate plants within 30 fet of itself as a free action. The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise similar to entangle as cast by a 10<sup>th</sup>-level druid.

**Improved Grab (Ex)**—To use this ability, the assassin vine must hit with its slam attack.

**Special Qualities: Camouflage (Ex)**—Since an assassin vine looks like a normal plant when at rest, it takes a successful Spot check (DC 20) to notice it before it attacks. Anyone with Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (plants or herbs) can use those skills instead of Spot to notice the plant. Dwarves can use the subterranean version.

### 7b) Belfry

*High above you rises the open tower. At its highest point, you can still make out the rusty bell. A rope dangles down, easily within reach.*

Ringling the bell will bring the inhabitants of the belfry down upon the heroes.

## Tier 1 (EL 3)

**Stirges (4):** CR 1/2; Tiny Beast; HD 1d10; hp 5; Init +4; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft.; AC 16 (+2 size, +4 Dex); Atks +3 touch (1d3 touch); SA Attach, blood drain; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1.

Str 3, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +14; Feats: Weapon finesse (touch).

**Special Attacks: Attach (Ex)**—If a stirge hits with a touch attack, it uses its eight pincers to latch onto the opponent's body. An attached stirge has an AC of 12.

**Blood Drain (Ex)**—A strige drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of temporary constitution damage each round it remains attached. Once it has drained 4 points of Constitution, it detaches and flies off to digest the meal.

## Tier 2 (EL 4)

**Stirges (5):** use stats above.

## Tier 3 (EL 5)

**Stirges (7):** use stats above.

## Tier 5 (EL 6)

**Stirges (10):** use stats above.

## 7c) Cloak Room

These closets contain a few tattered remains of priestly vestments and robes worn by the clerics who once served here.

## 7d) Meditation Chamber

These chambers are sparsely decorated. The ceilings bear faded paintings of Oerth's constellations.

## 7e) Dormitory

One of many similar chambers, this room once housed the clerics that resided at the temple.

## 7f) Infested Dormitory

One of many similar chambers, this room once housed the clerics that resided at the temple.

*The door to this one is still mostly intact, but a large section of the door has been destroyed. Closer examination makes it appear gnawed. Within, a rustling sound can be heard.*

This room contains a nest of dire rats. They will attack any who invade their nest, or who dally more than a minute at the door. To anyone foolish enough to stick their hand through the gnawed hole, allow a rat a free attack and an automatically successful hit!

## Tier 1 (EL 2)

**Dire Rats (5):** 1/3; Small Animal; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., Climb 20 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Atks +4 melee (1d4 Bite); SA Disease; SQ Scent; 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).

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

## Tier 2 (EL 3)

**Dire Rats (7):** use stats above.

## Tier 3 (EL 4)

**Dire Rats (10):** use stats above.

## Tier 4 (EL 5)

**Dire Rats (15):** use stats above.

## 7g) Spider Hive

*This passage from the dormitories is filled with thick, sticky webs. The dried husks of many large rats can be seen wrapped within it.*

Putting a torch to it will burn away the webbing and kill the spiders.

## **Tier 1 (EL 2)**

**Small Monstrous Spider** (3): Small Vermin; HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +3 (Dex); Atks +4 melee (1d4-2 and poison bite); SA Poison, web; SQ Vermin; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0.

Str 7, Dex 17, Con 10, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +14, Jump +2, Spot +7; Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).

**Special Attacks:** **Poison (Ex)**—DC 11, Initial and secondary damage 1d3 Strength.

**Special Qualities:** **Vermin**—Immune to all mind-influencing effects.

## **Tier 2 (EL 3)**

**Small Monstrous Spider** (4): use stats above.

## **Tier 3 (EL 4)**

**Small Monstrous Spider** (6): use stats above.

## **Tier 4 (EL 5)**

**Small Monstrous Spider** (8): use stats above.

## **7h) The Inner Sanctum**

When the heroes reach this chamber, read the following text aloud:

*Though the main entrance to this immense domed altar room is collapsed, the rest of the chamber appears unscathed. The floors are smooth and set with mosaic tiles of blue, white and green colors. In the center, upon a raised dais, is a statue in the likeness of the god, Celestian. Large, open spaces in the domed ceiling, which once may have supported great stained glass constellations, stand out to the sky above. Tangles of vines pour through them and into the temple.*

If the foulness of this place has not already been detected, allow any priest in the party to make a Wisdom check (DC 15) at this point. Those who succeed will immediately know something impure and tainted has settled here, and this place is no longer holy to Celestian.

Nolas will begin to act strangely upon entering this chamber, regressing into an almost trance-like state. He will begin to slowly walk into the chamber and climb the dais, where he will lay his hand upon the statue of Celestian. He will move with a higher purpose, and will strike out violently at those who try to keep him from his goal. Only restraints or knocking him unconscious will keep him from trying to reach the statue.

*Suddenly, the ground beneath the temple begins to quiver. Bits of debris tumbles from the ruined down to crash across the tiled floor. Nolas seems to regain his senses suddenly and cowers as the statue itself cracks asunder. A strange, evil*

*colored vapor rises from the crumbled remains, taking on a ghoulish face high above the dais. The visage is vaguely draconic, with wispy tufts of hair and vaporous scales. It gazes down upon you, fixing its eyes on Nolas. Its leering smile is horrifying to behold.*

*"So it is done," it hisses. "The Boy of Dreams has come to the Bleeding Fields to wake That Which Sleeps. So it was for told in ancient times, so it has come to pass. Now, with the Blood of Innocence, let the world shudder as the servant of eldritch evil stirs!"*

The entity floats about ten feet from the floor and is wholly insubstantial. Finishing its brief speech, three tentacle-like tongues snake from its wide maw to strike Nolas. They wrap around his torso and envelop him in a smoky haze. The boy screams as the tongues touch his flesh.

The tongues are draining Nolas' life energy. The heroes have five rounds remove all three of them before the boy dies. They can do this by destroying the individual tongues.

**Phantom Tongues** (3): AC 15 (+5 Dex), hp 20, SQ Incorporeal, SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4

Being incorporeal, the tongues may only be struck with magical weapons or spells. Nolas can also be ripped from their grasp, but doing so requires a Strength check (DC 23) as part of a grappling action. When all three tentacles are destroyed, the entity will fade from this plane.

The entity will not confront the heroes directly. Instead, it will roar:

*"Fools! You dare to interfere! Behold the minions of That Which Sleeps and know your place!"*

The phantom then seems to vomit forth a number of large, cat-like skeletons, about the size of a tiger. They move with grace and ferocity. At their core, wrapped along the spinal column, is a ghostly serpentine presence winding from the skull to the end of the skeletal tail. Though skeletal, these creatures fight as wights, and have similar capabilities, but lack the ability to create spawn.

## **Tier 1 (EL 4)**

**Cat-Serpent Wight** (1): CR 4; Large Undead; HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 Dex, -1 size, +2 natural); Atks: +2 melee (1d6+2 and energy drain claws) x2; SA Energy Drain; SQ Undead, immunities; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +5.

Str 14, Dex 16, Con -, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 15

Skills: Climb +5, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +16, Search +7, Spot +8; Feats: Blind-Fight.

**Special attacks:** **Energy Drain (Su)**—Living creatures hit by a wight's claw attack receive one



negative level. The Fortitude save to remove the negative level has a DC of 14.

**Special Qualities: Undead**—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

**Immunities**—these wights have cold immunity. Because they lack flesh or internal organs, they take only half damage from piercing or slashing weapons.

## Tier 2 (EL 6)

Cat-Serpent Wight (2): use stats above.

## Tier 3 (EL 7)

Cat-Serpent Wight (3): use stats above.

## Tier 4 (EL 8)

Cat-Serpent Wight (4): use stats above.

## Epilogue

Read the following aloud:

*Leaving the crumbled temple the way you entered, you find the fog has lifted. The plain lays clear in all directions as far as you can see. A chilly, unfettered wind blows down from the north, unseasonable for Coldeven. On the horizon, a line of angry clouds gather, full of cold rain. Lightning dances within them.*

*Putting the ruin behind you, you set off back to Briars End, ahead of the storm.*

## Alternate Ending

In the off chance the heroes do not explore the old temple and instead return Nolas to Briars End, you can use this alternative ending to the scenario:

*There is a certain sadness in Nolas' eyes as you gather your things to leave the hamlet. Roland and his wife have marveled at your story and given you their thanks. Setting off from the farmstead, you turn back to see the family as you cross the river. All wave their goodbyes except for Nolas, whose eyes are planted firmly to the north where dark clouds gather.*

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.

### Prelude

Defeating the Hobgoblins	25 xp
Capturing Yanviz	50 xp
Removing the brand from the horses	10 xp

### Part One

#### Encounter 1: The Mob Rules

Dismissing the mob	25 xp
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#### Encounter 2: The Wonder Child

Correctly discerning Roland is a farmer	10 xp
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#### Encounter 3: The Sleepwalker

Defeating the ankheg(s)	50 xp
Remaining behind to watch Yanviz	50 xp

#### Encounter 4: Unwelcome Guests

Being the first to enter the barn	10 xp
Destroying the ghouls	50 xp

### Part Two

#### Encounter 6: The Old Shrine

Discovering the desecration of the temple	10 xp
Defeating the assassins vine	10 xp
Defeating the stirges	10 xp
Defeating the dire rats	10 xp
Defeating the giant spiders	10 xp
Defeating the skeleton-wights	70 xp
Rescue Nolas	50 xp

Total experience for objectives	450 xp
Discretionary roleplaying award	50 xp

Total Possible Experience	500 xp
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## 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 250 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. 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.

### **Prelude**

*Hobgoblins:*

- 9 or 12 longswords, worth 7 gp each\*
- 9 or 12 suits of studded leather, worth 12 gp each\*
- 9 or 12 small wooden shields, worth 1 gp each\*
- 234 sp or 312 sp

\* *The Hobgoblins equipment is well used and worth around half of its PHB value.*

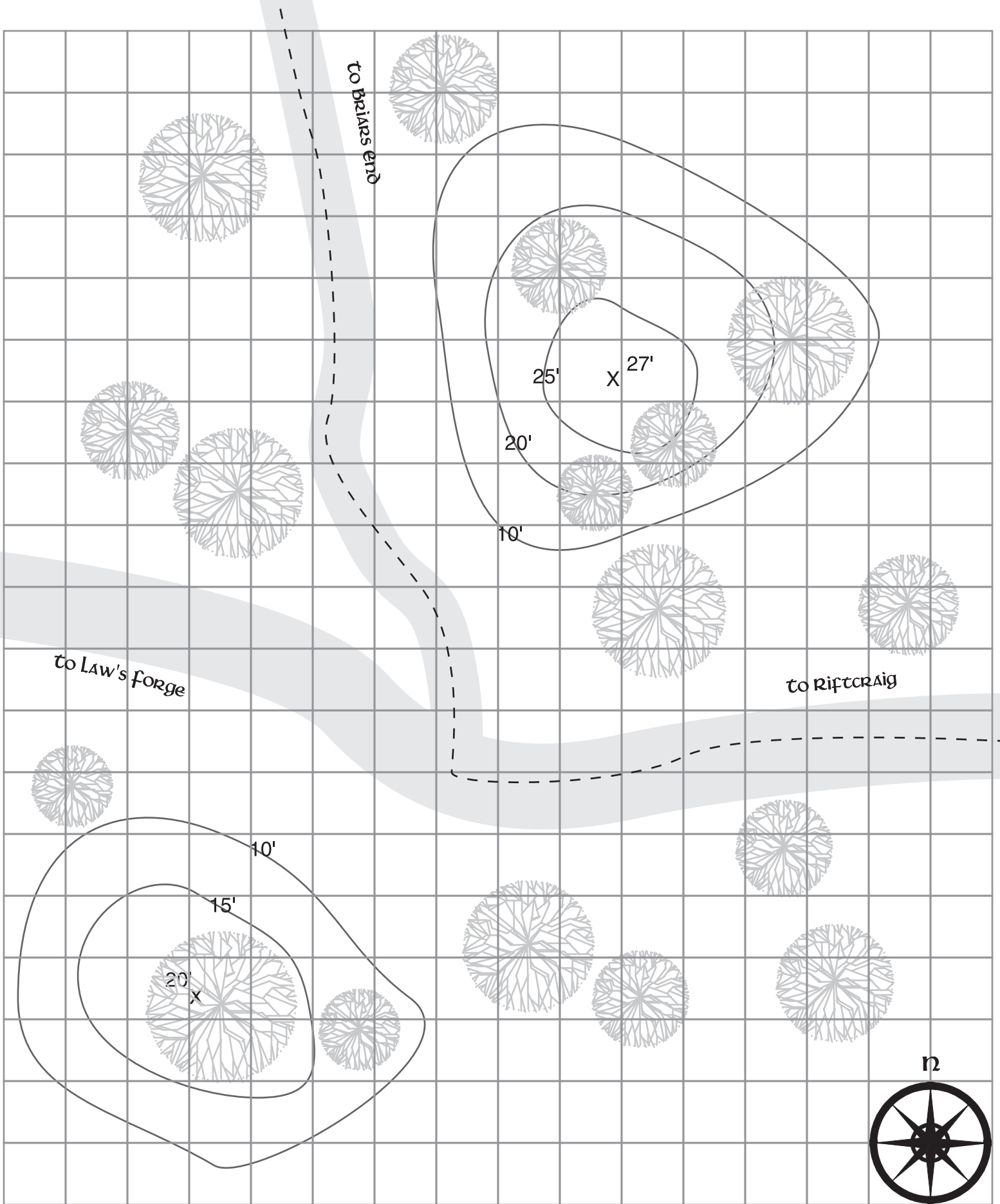
*Yanviz:*

- 15 gp
- assorted jewelry (rings, earrings, bracelets), worth 200 gp in all.
- Personal trinkets, worth 10 gp in all.
- Silver Pyramid: Undead Thudestone (cert)
- Ransom (cert): 500 gp, costs 1 TU

*Mounts:*

- 10 or 13 light horses, worth 18 gp each (22 gp if the brand is removed)
- 10 or 13 bits and bridles, worth 1 gp each
- 10 or 13 riding saddles, worth 5 gp each

[etc]

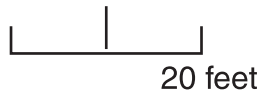
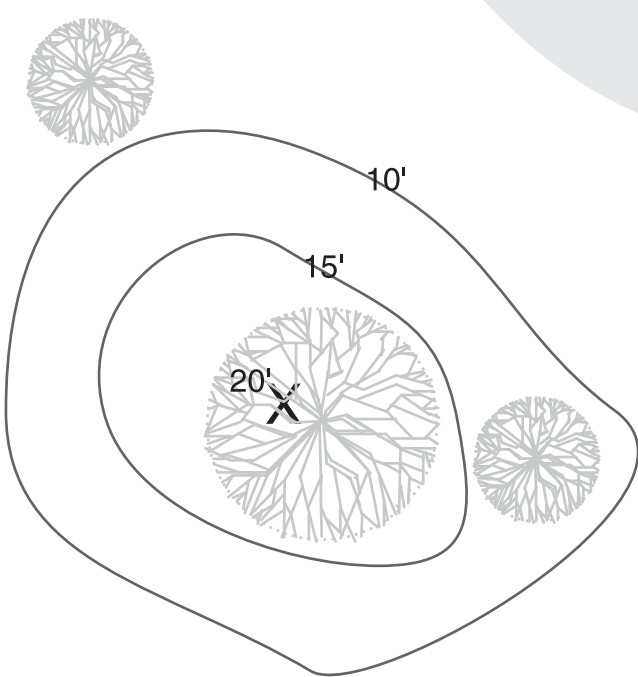
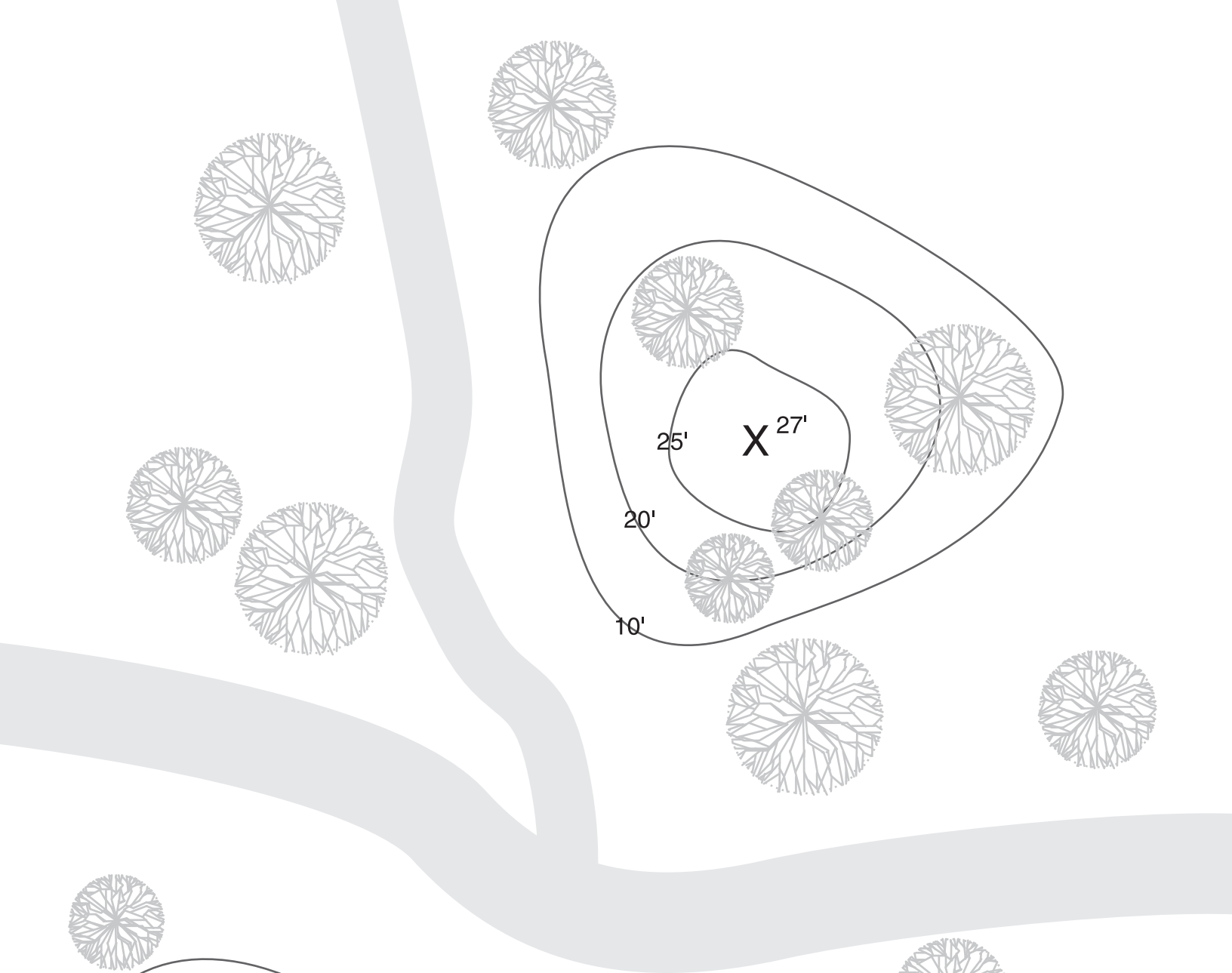


1 square = 10 feet

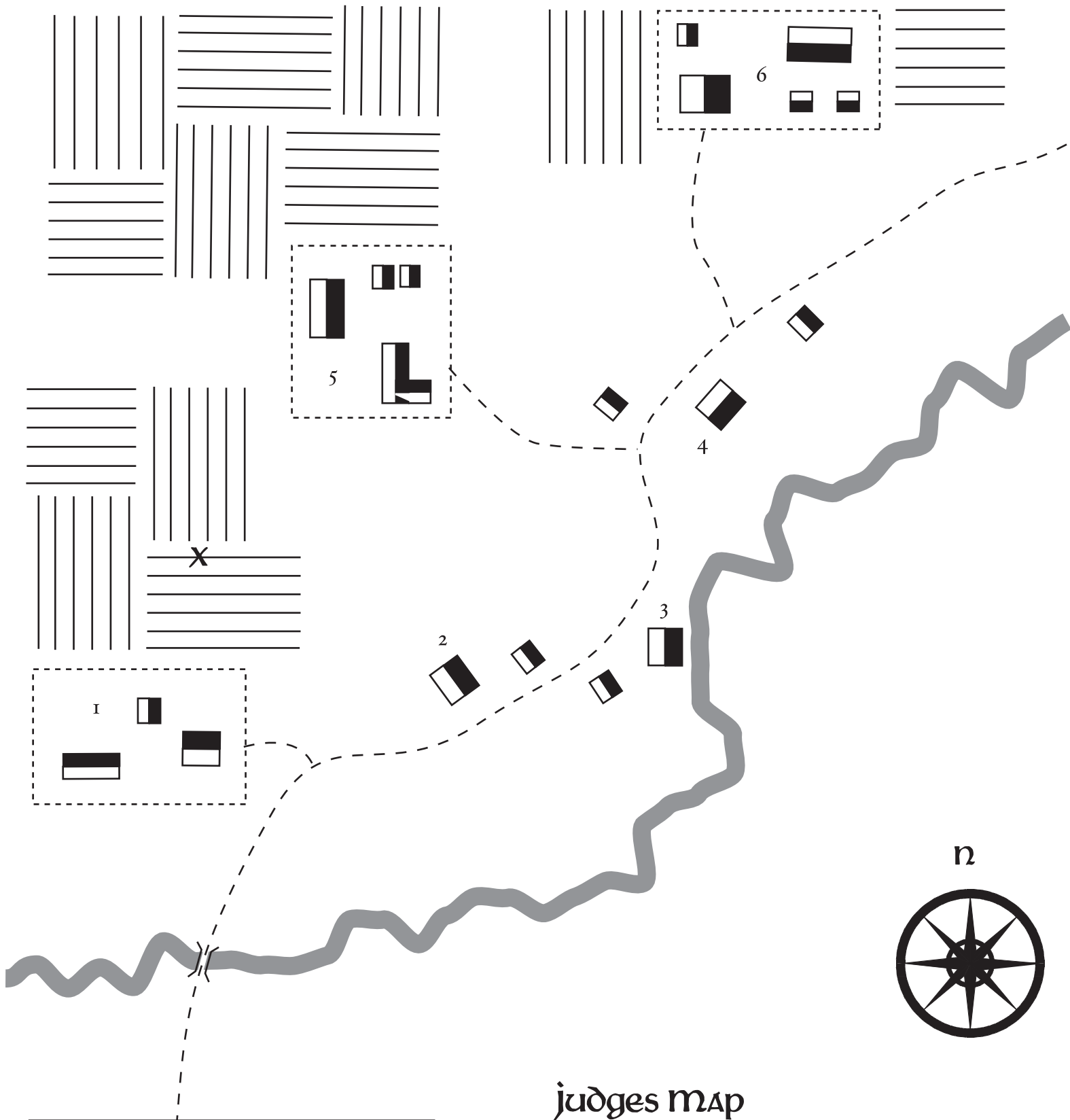
- - - Riders' Route

Judges Map

The Ambush



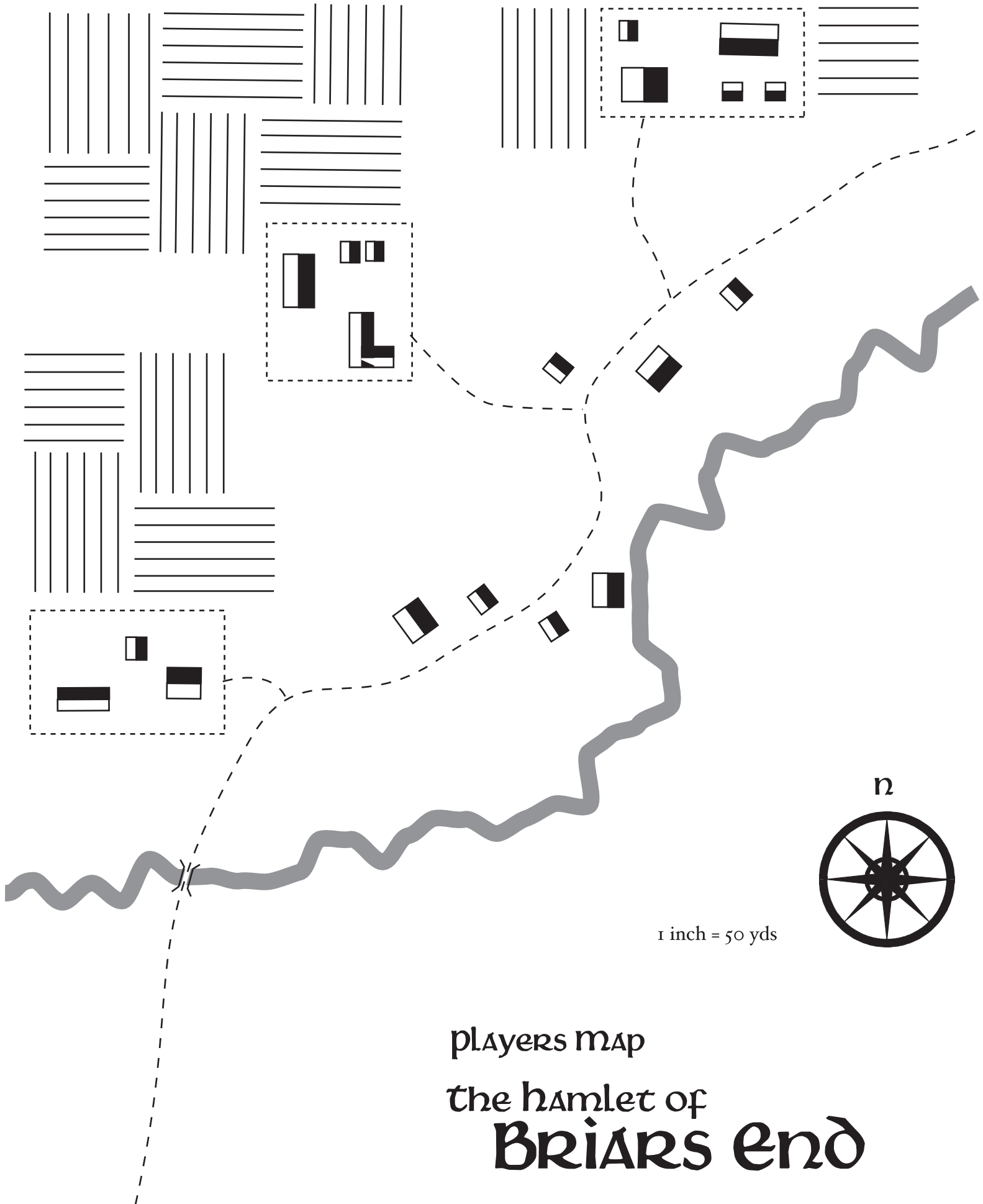
players map  
**The Ambush**



**Legend**

	bridge		ankheg attack
	road		river
	wall	1 inch = 50 yds	

judges map  
 the hamlet of  
**BRIARS end**



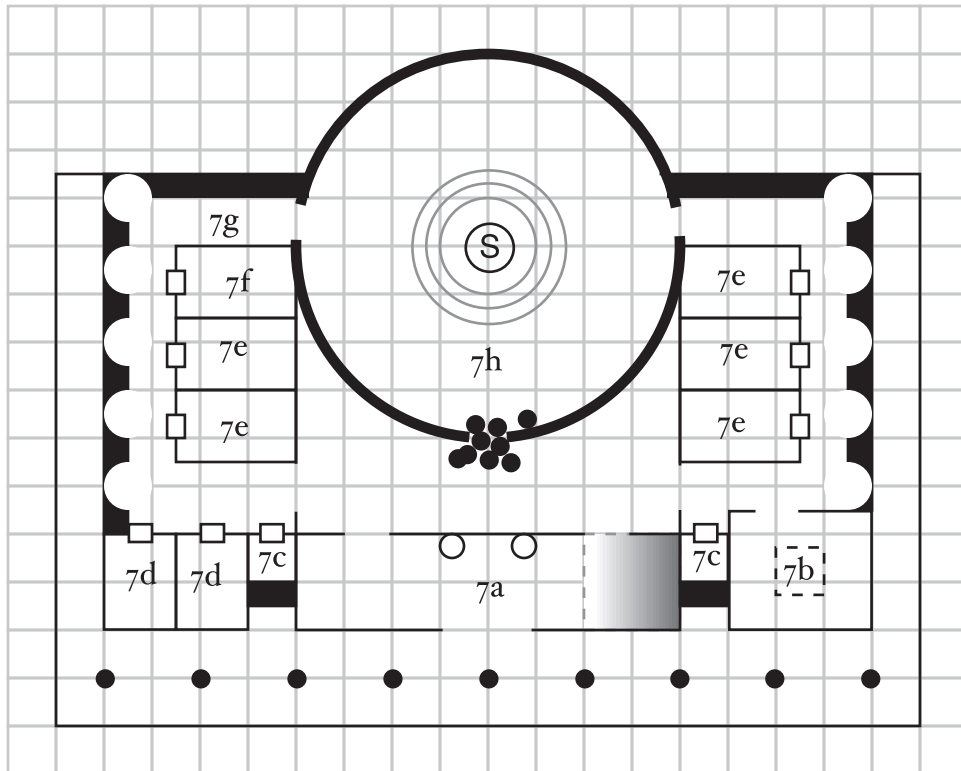
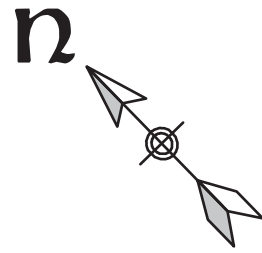
1 inch = 50 yds



players map  
the hamlet of  
**BRIARS end**

# Legend

- door
- ⊙ statue
- ⋯ bell chute
- pillar
- rubble
- ▨ assassin vine reach
- ||| raised dais
- 10 feet



judges map

# The Old Shrine

## Critical Event Summary

Please fill out the information below based on the events that occurred during the scenario play and return this form to the Region 4 Triad:

Tom Harrison  
265 E. Corporate Dr. #528  
Lewisville, TX 75067

The input from this form will help to determine future campaign events. Thank you for your assistance.

**Did the PCs kill Yanziv, or did they capture him for ransom later?**

**Did Yanziv manage to escape during the adventure? Was he killed?**

**Did the PCs take Nolas to the shrine in the Steelbone Meadows?**

**Did they explore the ruined shrine, or return him immediately to Briars End?**

**In the confrontation in the Inner Sanctum, did the PCs manage to save Nolas, or was he slain by the creature therein?**

**Did any interesting situations arise that were noteworthy to the PCs success or failure in regards to the scenario? Please explain.**