

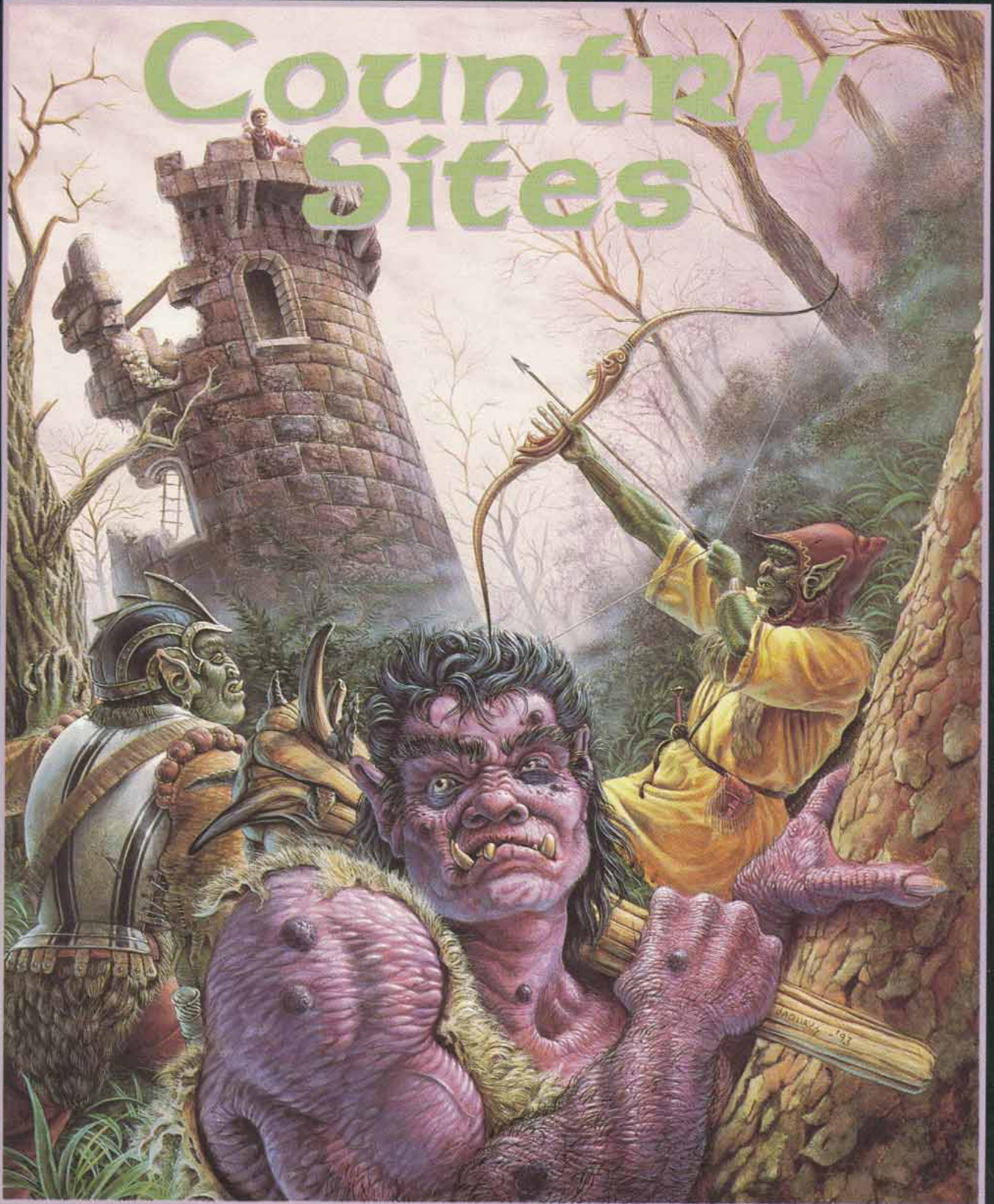


# Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

Official Game Accessory

For All Character Levels

## Country Sites



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# Introduction

*Country Sites* is the third in a series of AD&D® game accessories with similar purposes. Like *City Sites* and *Castle Sites*, this book provides you, the Dungeon Master, with a collection of places and people that can be easily inserted into an ongoing campaign. Each entry in this book summarizes a specific location in the medieval countryside, providing background and history, location descriptions, maps, NPCs, and adventure ideas.

*City Sites* focused mainly on buildings, since they are obviously what fills most towns. You'll find other sorts of locations in this book—including some that are nontraditionally "country" (such as "The Mariners' Graveyard" and "Sanctuary in the Sand"). You'll also find a few scenarios that aren't traditionally western in setting. Vary them as you like to fit your campaign or to appeal to your players' entertainment needs.

## How to Use *Country Sites*

The opening section in a site's description provides history and background, explaining how this location came to be and what its current condition is. Also often found here is some basic information about a site's appearance at first glance (as PCs first come upon it). The entry continues with a room-by-room or area-by-area breakdown of the site, mentioning items and characters that are likely to be found in each place. Details on the most important nonplayer characters (NPCs) connected with the site appear next. Finally, one or more "adventure hooks" offer ideas to help you use the site in adventures you create.

It's important to keep in mind that although some of these descriptions are quite detailed, what's provided here is intended to be used as a framework. To be incorporated into an existing campaign, any of these entries will have to be modified and adapted, whether you use one of TSR's published worlds (such as the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting) or have a world created by your

own imagination. Specific names for people and places are used throughout this book, because it gives a sense of milieu and context, and makes the text more fun to read. Use these names if they suit your taste, or substitute elements from your own campaign world. This book is yours to use as you see fit!

## Nonplayer Characters

The NPCs in this book are designed for campaigns with player characters (PCs) of at least 6th level but no higher than 9th level. If your players have less powerful characters, you need not make any special adjustments—but be aware that most of the sites will prove dangerous places for aggressive PCs of relatively low level.

If most of your players have characters higher than 9th level, you should increase the experience levels of the NPCs in many of these locations. Major NPCs should be at least as powerful as individual PCs. The same holds true of NPCs with whom the PCs might tangle: Emil Gant and Bel Amaric in "Island of Lost Souls," for example. Because these characters have a good chance of getting involved with a party, and the party should be suitably challenged if this does happen, keep them a level or two above the campaign's average PC experience level.

Those NPCs whom the PCs have little chance of dealing with have no listings in this book; consider them 0-level NPCs (see chapters 3 and 12 in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.) Brief statistics appear for NPCs with which a party may have some interaction.

Vital NPCs have individual write-ups. This information, while largely self-explanatory, does call for a few clarifications:

**Armor** includes ordinary or magical armor normally worn by the character, and mentions a shield if the character typically carries one.

**Weapons** lists ordinary or magical melee or missile weapons the character normally carries. (Any NPC can have additional or different

# Introduction



weapons if you like.) Offensive magical items (such as wands) are listed under "Equipment." If you are increasing NPC levels to match powerful PCs, you may want to increase the power of an NPC's magical weapons. For instance, if your PCs average 12th level, you might want to have Bel Amarc possess a *sword* +3 rather than a *sword* +1.

**Equipment** mentions magical items (except weapons and armor) and ordinary items the NPC possesses and/or typically carries. You can give NPCs additional items. Potions, scrolls, and other limited-use items are ideal for beefing up the power of an NPC without unduly rewarding the player characters if they win a confrontation.

**Spells** (for NPC priests) or **Spellbook** (for NPC wizards) lists the magic that a character will typically memorize and use. For wizards, the complete contents of the character's spellbook are given, with asterisks indicating the spells the NPC most often memorizes. Of course, you can substitute any other spells you want an NPC to have in place of one or more of the spells listed in the text.

Minor NPCs have a condensed and truncated version of the longer NPC listing (not including separate listings for armor and weapons, for instance), but in any case all the information you need to properly run an NPC in the scenario is at your fingertips.

Monsters are described in standard fashion, giving all or most of the statistics necessary to play out an encounter with the creature(s). Each monster entry concludes with an "MM/####" entry, where "####" is the page number of the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ book where that monster is fully described. You may need to refer to that book from time to time for details.

## Using the Sites in Play

Study a site description thoroughly before trying to use it in play. Effective use of this book requires familiarity with its contents; the materi-

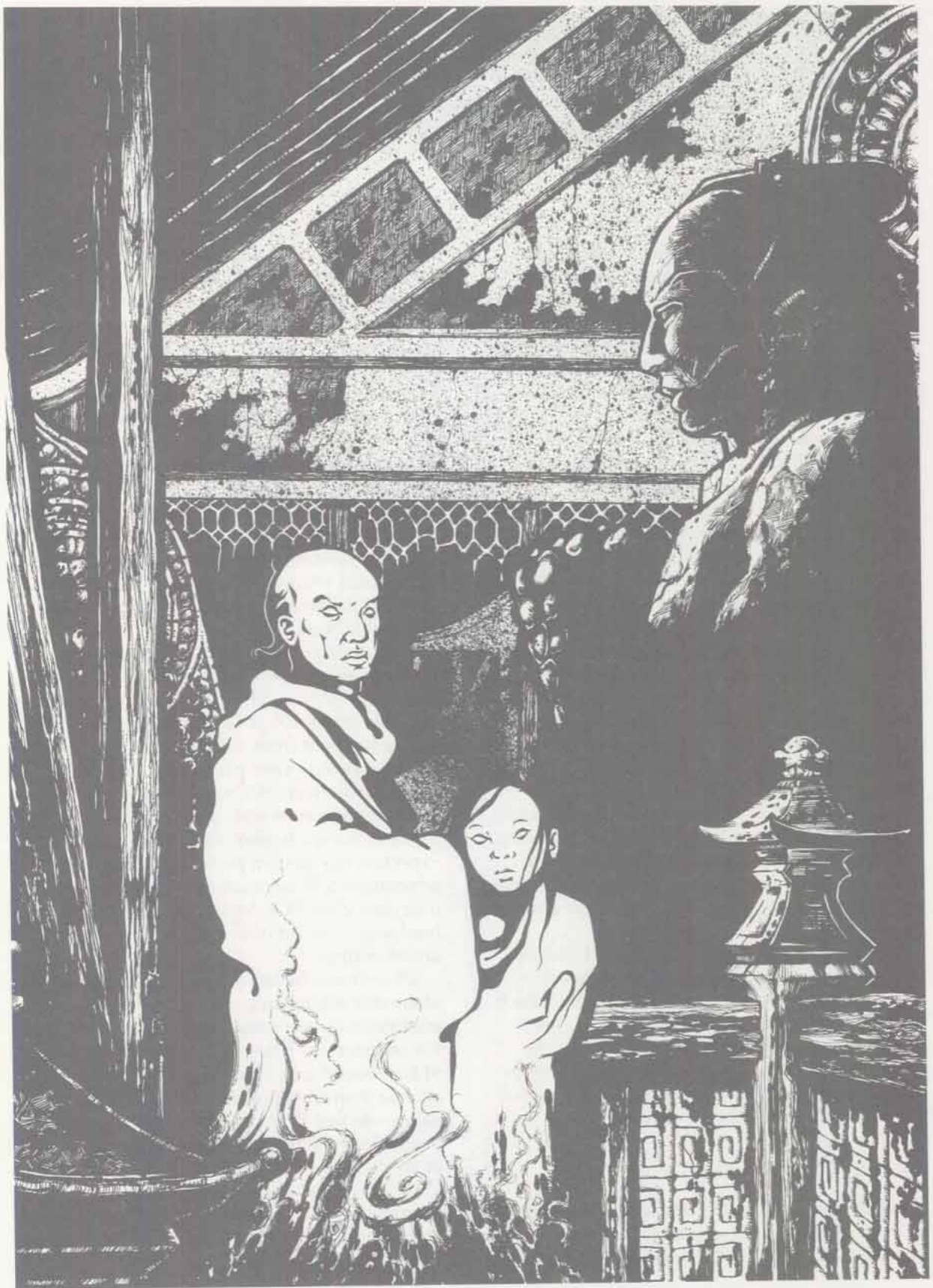
al is all laid out for you, but you need to know what's available and where to find it. Read the text thoroughly in advance of a playing session, as this enables you to present the site as a vital place where life goes on even when the PCs aren't present.

Remember that *Country Sites* is intended to add depth and color to cities in your campaign—this is not a collection of lairs where monsters lie in wait for a party to slay them and loot their treasures. For the most part, the NPCs do not act hostile initially, though they may make demands that do not please the PCs (e.g., collecting tolls), and they certainly will become defensive if the PCs exceed what they consider the bounds of civilized behavior. Even if you adjust the characters in this book to fit your campaign, a group of PCs determined to treat the NPCs (and their homes) like monsters and rooms in a dungeon probably will have little difficulty slaying everyone they attack. Do your best to discourage that sort of behavior from your players' characters.

To make sure your players get the most out of each of these scenarios and settings, urge them not to read or even scan the contents of a section before it is used in play. Each place, as should be expected, has its own particular secrets, and the adventures will be much more fulfilling for everyone if the PCs discover those secrets "the hard way" instead of by reading about them ahead of time.

Of course, whether or not players have looked at the text beforehand, you are free to make any modifications you want to any of these settings. For instance, the priest Fiela Bonaspar in "Island of Lost Souls" may have an entirely different agenda than what is described for him in these pages—so that PCs (players) who might have been expecting him to behave a certain way will be surprised when he does the opposite!

No matter how you use this material—right from this book or adapted in any way—we hope that what's here will give you and your players hours of fresh enjoyment. Read on!



# The Haunted Temple



This rural temple has not been visited by any local residents for more than 50 years. Many people believe the ancient place is cursed by Liu, the Chinese god of agriculture. Others say the decrepit shrine is haunted by the spirit of an *e-kuei*, or "hungry ghost," who appears in the form of a little girl. Still others maintain that the temple grounds are haunted by the spirit of an unjustly executed acolyte.

## Overview

Early settlers in the Valley of Fertile Fields found the place a perfect environment for growing wheat and rice, for raising livestock and building the foundations of a prosperous rural community. To show their appreciation, the sojourners built the Temple of Three Wells in homage to Liu, whom they considered responsible for providing the lush, green landscape.

The Temple of Three Wells is more than 500 years old. It was built around three wells that were dug by first-generation settlers. For years, the wells were used by several families. Eventually they were given to the valley's priests as a tribute to the benevolent god. For centuries, the shrine brought religious and cultural stability to the region. Several generations of farmers attended the shrine. Under the protective roofs and wings of the temple, they celebrated religious and secular holidays, engaged in spiritual rituals, and paid their respects to Liu. The valley's early inhabitants lived happily and died peacefully in the Valley of Fertile Fields, and many are buried in the cemetery that adjoins the temple.

Years of prosperity ended, however, in horror and disaster.

## Trouble in Paradise

The following information is historical background of a more specific nature—factual data that can be presented to players as it becomes important. Question-and-answer sessions be-

tween PCs and locals will uncover most of the following information. Think of this setting as a mystery scenario, and present it as an adventure locale that requires investigation by the players.

Just over 50 years ago, a series of related events transpired—events that brought pain and hardship to the valley. The first event was the disappearance of Wen-Mei, the five-year-old daughter of Wen-Huan, a hard-working farmer and widower. Wen-Huan's wife died while giving birth to Wen-Mei, an event that devastated Wen-Huan but made him and his daughter extremely close.

Wen-Mei and her father were popular figures in the valley. Their lives epitomized the cheerful stoicism that symbolizes strong religious devotion. This devotion was no better exemplified than in the life and spirit of Wen-Mei.

Every day while her father worked the fields, Wen-Mei went to the shrine. The temple priests devoted much time and effort to her religious education. One acolyte in particular, the young Lao Ch'ien, took a special interest in Wen-Mei's learning. He taught her to read and write, and gave her the benefit of his knowledge and compassion. Locals found their friendship endearing. Lao Ch'ien treated Wen-Mei like a younger sister, teaching her the simpler devotions and involving her in the many religious ceremonies in which he participated.

Lao Ch'ien spent most of his time with Wen-Mei. The temple priests viewed her presence as a godsend, and supported their friendship whenever possible. Each morning, Wen-Mei spent her time learning simple rituals. In the afternoons she visited her mother's grave, burning incense and paper devotions, reciting prayers, and providing the ceremonial meals that sustained her mother's soul in the afterlife. The situation was idyllic, a spiritually giving, rewarding friendship that strengthened the temple parishioners and the community at large.

Then, one day, Wen-Mei didn't come home.

Thinking she had stayed late to continue her



## The Haunted Temple

studies, her father went to the temple to look for her. There, he discovered that Wen-Mei had left at her usual time. The last person to see her was Lao Ch'ien, who explained to Wen-Huan that his daughter had left early that afternoon, shortly after she had conducted her daily devotions at her mother's grave. Lao Ch'ien agreed to help look for her. By nightfall, there was still no trace of the child.

The second sad event unfolded as ill rumors began to circulate in the village of Wu Tang. At first, people suspected that Wen-Mei had simply gone for a walk and become lost in the hills that surrounded the valley. After a fruitless search of the entire area, the village folk began to speak in whispers, casting aspersions and making vague accusations.

Nothing like this had ever happened before, and the townsfolk were determined to uncover the truth (or what they thought was the truth). They began to talk more suspiciously as each search party returned emptyhanded. "What do we know of the temple and its priests?" the villagers asked, and more directly, "What do we know of Lao Ch'ien?"

By the morning of the third day after the girl's disappearance, a group of villagers had assembled at the temple. A brief search of the grounds turned up nothing. A heated exchange of accusations and protests followed. The villagers refused to believe that Lao Ch'ien knew nothing of Wen-Mei's whereabouts. After all, they reasoned, he admitted to being the last person to see her alive. The townsfolk jumped to conclusions and began to formulate ideas about what unspeakable crime had transpired. The priests tried to reason with the villagers, explaining that Lao Ch'ien would not admit he had been the last person to see the girl if he had in fact done something wrong to her—but the farmers were not in the mood for a debate.

The confrontation ended without a resolution when the head priest of the shrine ordered the unruly villagers off the temple grounds. The vil-

lagers vowed they would return, once they had proof enough to hang the acolyte.

When they returned later that evening, the villagers had no more proof than before—but the group had turned into a mob of armed and angry vigilantes. They ransacked the temple and set it aflame. They beat the priests severely and chased them from the shrine; then they dragged Lao Ch'ien to the foot of a nearby tree. In the light of the burning temple, they tossed a thick rope over a sturdy limb, made their vile condemnations, and hanged the young man.

For days the acolyte's body went unattended, dangling from the tree. Many villagers saw the body, the rope still tight about its neck, as they passed near the temple on their way to and from their fields. Then one day it was gone, presumably having been taken down and buried by a sympathetic villager (though no one in the village would admit to having touched the body) or a wandering monk.

### The Hauntings

In the following weeks, the locals began to notice strange occurrences at the temple. Night travelers told of ghostly lights that swirled about the grave markers in the cemetery. The lights became more numerous as time went on. Then some people reported seeing the spirit of Wen-Mei in the temple and at her mother's grave. Others said they saw the ghost of Lao Ch'ien lurking near the tree where he was hanged. One farmer claimed the acolyte's spirit chased him as he wandered home from the fields late one evening.

At first these reports were disregarded by many people as superstitious, wild imaginings. As the incidents became more frequent, however, and the nature of the hauntings grew more violent, the villagers were forced to take notice.

Misfortune befell the valley at the same time the hauntings became prevalent. That autumn, the wheat harvest was destroyed by heavy rains

# The Haunted Temple



that bloated the valley streams with muddy water and swift currents. Fields became swamps as the rivers overran their banks. Grazing land for livestock was scarce.

To alleviate the shortage of grazing land, some villagers set their livestock loose in the abandoned temple grounds for feeding. That practice was discontinued when several of the animals were found gutted and mangled, their shattered carcasses drained of blood. The villagers could no longer deny the obvious—the temple grounds were haunted. Most people believed they were being punished by Liu for their rash, sacrilegious behavior.

When yet another harvest season produced poor yields, the villagers turned to other sources for assistance. The locals begged the priests of several nearby shrines to exorcise the haunted temple, but none would assist them. Stories of the villagers' harsh treatment of the temple priests had ranged far in a short time. An attitude of unconcern for their plight prevailed beyond the valley: the villagers deserved the punishment they were receiving. The will of greater powers was at work.

The hauntings took a violent turn with the disappearance of two young brothers. Both vanished one night on their way home from running an errand out to their parents' field. It was known that their route took them near the outskirts of the temple grounds. As with Wen-Mei, their bodies were never found.

Since that day, for the last several decades, none of the locals has approached within several hundred yards of the temple. Their harvests are no longer beset by calamities, but the villagers are convinced that if any of them come too close to the temple, Liu and the temple ghosts will rise up against them once again.

## Oriental Ghosts

Oriental ghosts may appear not only as vaporous spirits, but also as corporeal entities. It

is in these corporeal forms that the ghosts do much of their evil.

There are several kinds of Oriental ghosts: the *e-kuei*, *li-kuei*, and *ku-hun* are but three forms. The Temple of Three Wells, its grounds, and cemetery are inhabited by all three varieties. These ghosts are all undead creatures, able to be hit only by weapons of +1 or greater enchantment and able to be turned by clerics capable of doing so. They normally remain invisible and immaterial (noncorporeal). Their physical attacks are only effective when they are in corporeal form, and they can switch from one form to the other once per round as often as desired.

## The E-kuei

A spirit who is not fed with ceremonial meals becomes an *e-kuei*, or "hungry ghost." This spirit takes revenge on those who fail to feed it by finding its own meals, attacking animals and humans, and feeding on the victims. The spirit of Wen-Mei is an *e-kuei*.

**E-kuei:** AC -4; MV 12 (Fl 18 (A) when noncorporeal); HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; SA *charm* power; SZ S to M (3' to 6' tall); ML fearless (19); Int average (8); AL N; XP 420

Player characters may be able to communicate with an *e-kuei* that is not in corporeal form; determining whether this occurs is a two-step process. First, all players must roll a Wisdom ability check for their characters. (To better sustain the sense of mystery in this setting, you may choose to make these die rolls yourself.)

Characters who succeed in the check see and hear nothing; those who fail the check are aware of the nearby presence of the spirit. If at least one PC fails the Wisdom check, you should then briefly separate the players into two groups. Once the players of the PCs who failed their Wisdom checks are out of earshot of the other players, describe to those players what their





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characters see (a ghostly form resembling the once-living body of the spirit) and hear (a low but distinct moaning voice).

If any member of the PC group makes contact with the spirit, the second step occurs. PCs who failed the Wisdom check must now attempt a saving throw vs. spell. Those who fail the save fall under the control of the spirit, as if they were affected by a *charm person* spell.

### The Li-kuei

The li-kuei, or "vengeful ghost," is the spirit of a man, woman, or child killed or executed unjustly. This spirit exacts its revenge by attacking all who cross its path. The spirit of Lao Ch'ien is a li-kuei.

**Li-kuei:** AC -4; MV 12 (Fl 18 (A) when noncorporeal); HD 6; hp 32; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d12; SA *charm* power; SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML fearless (19); Int very (11); AL N; XP 1,400

The characteristics and abilities of the li-kuei are similar to those of the e-kuei, but it is generally more powerful. Wisdom checks and saving throws related to the li-kuei's *charm* power are made with a -2 penalty.

### The Ku-hun

The ku-hun, or "orphaned soul," is a spirit whose needs were not attended to at burial or have not been attended since. Since the temple's desecration, the souls lodged in the cemetery have gone unattended. As a result, their spirits haunt the temple grounds and will continue to do so until their graves are once again properly tended.

The ku-hun as portrayed below is similar to the "Neglected Spirit, Ancestral" described on page 85 of *Legends & Lore* (1990 edition). Each spirit appears in the basic form of the person from which it was created, and can thus be identified by someone who knew the person in life,

but possesses long fangs and claws that it uses for its attacks.

**Ku-hun:** AC -2; MV 12 (Fl 18 (A) when noncorporeal); HD 8; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d8/1d8/1d12 (claw/claw/bite); SA poison; MR 10%; SZ M (6'); ML fanatic (18); Int high (13); AL CE; XP 5,000

Victims hit by the claw attack of a ku-hun must save vs. poison or lose 1d6 points of Constitution, which are regained at the rate of 1 point per day.

### Putting the Spirits to Rest

Once the PCs determine what they are up against, they should realize (or be persuaded by you to realize) that destroying the spirits that haunt the temple should not be their main intent; saving them should be. Any resident of the area whom the PCs speak to will tell them in no uncertain terms that the only way to restore and resanctify the temple area is to first make sure the spirits are given their proper consideration and respect.

Ridding a site of vengeful spirits is a process similar in many ways to a Western-style exorcism. The first step is to subdue the spirit. Several magical items or magical means may be employed to this end. Magical items that provide protection from undead are useful, as are items that allow *true sight* or speaking with undead. A *mirror of life trapping* will not be useful in this instance. (Use your discretion with regard to the successful use of magic items, rewarding players for ingenuity.)

Wizards may use *hold undead*, *control undead*, *binding*, or *trap the soul*. Priests may use their skills to turn undead, or employ *exaction*. Other priest spells such as *protection from evil* and *forbiddance* may be used as long as their limitations are regarded.

Since all these ghosts are strongly tied to the

# The Haunted Temple



places where they died or were buried, any magic that sends one of them back to its own plane of existence (such as *banishment*, *abjure*, or *dispel evil*) succeeds only in forcing the spirit to disappear for 1d8 rounds, after which time it reappears in its previous location.

*Raise dead* and *reincarnate* are useless because of the length of time the spirits haunting the temple have been dead.

Once the spirit is bound, the second step is for the party to discover the nature of the spirit's haunting and the location of its body. Again, this may be accomplished by the use of magical items or spells that allow discourse with the spirit. Wizard spells such as *true seeing* and priest spells such as *speak with dead*, *speak with monsters*, and *stone tell* (using one of the temple's wells as the target of the spell) may disclose this important information.

Finally, the grave must be located, and the body exhumed and attended. Last rites must be performed and the body must be given a proper burial. A priest may then perform a *remove curse* or *dispel evil* spell to finalize the burial. From there, it is up to the relatives of the dead to provide annual ceremonies and attention to the graves of their dead relations.

## The Valley and the Village

Neither of these locations plays a part in this adventure other than as background setting. You may use any similar setting in your own campaign as the locale surrounding the temple environs. In choosing a location for the Valley of Fertile Fields, pick a temperate, multiseasonal climate similar to that of the upper Midwest United States or the interior of China. The village of Wu Tang is a small farming community with a population of 500 to 1,000.

The village provides a good starting point for the scenario. Conversations with villagers will provide as much of the information given herein as you feel the party should obtain through

interrogation. Most of the locals are reluctant to talk of the valley's curse, though they may be coerced to do so with small incentives (payment, promise to help, etc.). The average villager knows only the basic background of the haunted temple. It is unlikely the PCs will find someone who actually witnessed the hauntings, though some people may brag of having done so. You may tailor the accuracy of the account of the individual(s) questioned according to how difficult you want the adventure to be.

A good source of information is Wen-Huan, Wen-Mei's father. Now in his early seventies, he is a veritable shadow of the man he once was. The elderly farmer lives alone in a small cottage one-half mile outside the village—the same house he has lived in since his birth. He never remarried and has seldom been seen in the village since the disappearance of his daughter.

Like most of the villagers and the other inhabitants of the valley, Wen-Huan has a generally morose, dejected demeanor because he feels cursed by Liu. Wen-Huan believes his people are still being punished for their sacrilegious behavior against the temple and its priests—even though not all of them took part in the desecration, and the burning of the temple happened half a century ago.

Wen-Huan is a loner. He has no interest in socializing with the villagers. All he desires is to operate his modest farm (providing barely more than the food he needs to survive) and live out his days on this plane of existence, hoping for forgiveness in the afterlife. He is pessimistic about his ultimate fate, however, because he knows there is no one left to tend to his grave once he is gone.

Wen-Huan is naturally reluctant to discuss the subject of the temple hauntings, and even more disinclined to speak on the matter of his daughter's disappearance. A genuine interest in his plight, however, and perhaps a promise to help rid the valley of its curse, may prompt him to speak freely on both subjects.

# The Haunted Temple

## Wen-Huan

A 1st-level male human fighter

**Alignment:** Lawful good  
**Move:** 12  
**AC:** 8  
**THAC0:** 20  
**Hit points:** 4

<b>Strength:</b>	10	<b>Intelligence:</b>	12
<b>Dexterity:</b>	10	<b>Wisdom:</b>	15
<b>Constitution:</b>	12	<b>Charisma:</b>	9

**Proficiencies:** Dagger, short sword; agriculture (12), animal handling (14), hunting (14)

**Languages:** Common, gnomish, halfling

**Armor:** Leather

**Weapons:** Dagger, short sword, fauchard (scythe), military fork (pitchfork)

**Equipment:** Clothes, farming tools, horse, tack and harness, cart, cottage and furnishings, various personal effects

**Age:** 71

**Height:** 5'5"

**Weight:** 105 lbs.

**Hair/eyes:** White/brown

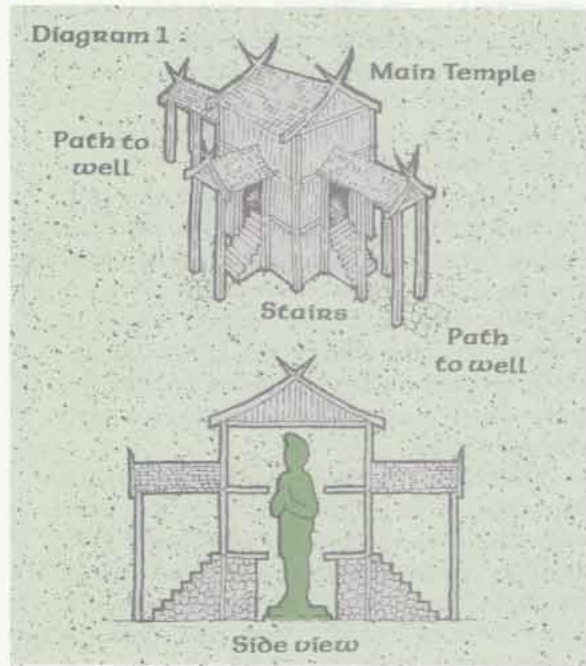
Wen-Huan's fighting ability is minimal—understandable, since he has been a farmer all his life. Like most locals in the valley, however, Wen-Huan has acquired a basic knowledge of self-defense against wandering rogues and other itinerants.

Wen-Huan will use his weapons only in self-defense. His worldly belongings are virtually nonexistent; all he possesses beyond the bare essentials are his memories, a few family mementos, and the pain that has burned within his heart since his wife and daughter died. The cottage still contains the meager belongings of his wife and daughter. On the mantel of his fireplace, Wen-Huan keeps a picture of each; these are sketches he made during his extended period of grief.

Though he may have little to offer in terms of material goods, Wen-Huan is the only person in the Valley of Fertile Fields who knows the whereabouts of Lao Ch'ien's body; it is he who buried the young acolyte, not far from the tree where he was hanged (and carefully replaced the turf over the gravesite so no one else would notice it). Wen-Huan is also one of the few people in the valley who thinks Lao Ch'ien was not involved in Wen-Mei's disappearance. These facts, along with his detailed account of the tale, should be useful to the PCs in piecing together part of the puzzle. Solving the rest of it requires a visit to the Temple of Three Wells.

## The Temple of Three Wells

The main temple is a small shrine built in the architectural style of the Chinese religion. The building and its adjacent cemetery are located less than a mile outside the village, just off an old road that leads to the many fields and paddies the village farmers work. A small access road



# The Haunted Temple



connects the temple grounds to the old village road. After the hauntings began, the villagers started taking a new road to the fields—a path nearly a mile away from the old road and the haunted shrine. Secluded within a grove of cypress trees that shield it from view, the temple has been strictly avoided for decades and is now all but forgotten.

Three wells, each of which represents a different aspect of existence, are located inside small pagodas on the perimeter of the temple complex: the Well of the World to the west, the Well of Minds to the east, and the Well of Souls to the south. Surrounding the Well of Souls on three sides is the temple graveyard. Every building is overrun with vegetation; the temple grounds are likewise thick with wild grass and brambles. Though the roofs over the main temple and the smaller shrines still exist, they are scorched in several spots.

**1. Main Temple:** The main temple is a shrine three stories in height with two archways leading off the east and west sides to the Well of the World and the Well of Minds. The building has two principal stairways on the north and south sides that ascend to a second-story wooden balcony surrounding the center of the shrine. A railing runs around the inner perimeter of the balcony (see the overhead view on Map 1). Most of the balcony flooring has been burned away, making movement along the second floor somewhat precarious. Two other sets of stairs on the east and west sides lead from the archways to the second-floor balcony of the main temple.

The first floor of the shrine was built without walls, and is open to the outside on all sides. Several thick timbers, sunk into a strong stone foundation, still support the remains of the balcony; they are charred, but sturdy and in no danger of collapsing. The ground inside the first floor is strewn with several damaged religious implements and the rotting spines of several religious books. Braziers, censers, and other reli-

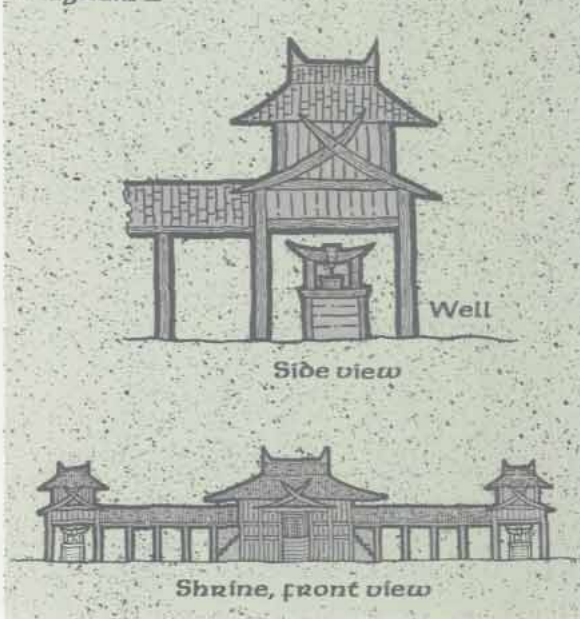
gious items lay half-buried in the dirt and weeds that cover what was once the temple floor.

In the middle of the ground floor is the base of a stone statue that represents Liu, the god of agriculture. It stands nearly three stories tall, extending through openings in the ceilings of the first and second floors and reaching up into the temple rafters. The statue is covered with moss and soot, and is cracked in several spots due to extreme heat damage.

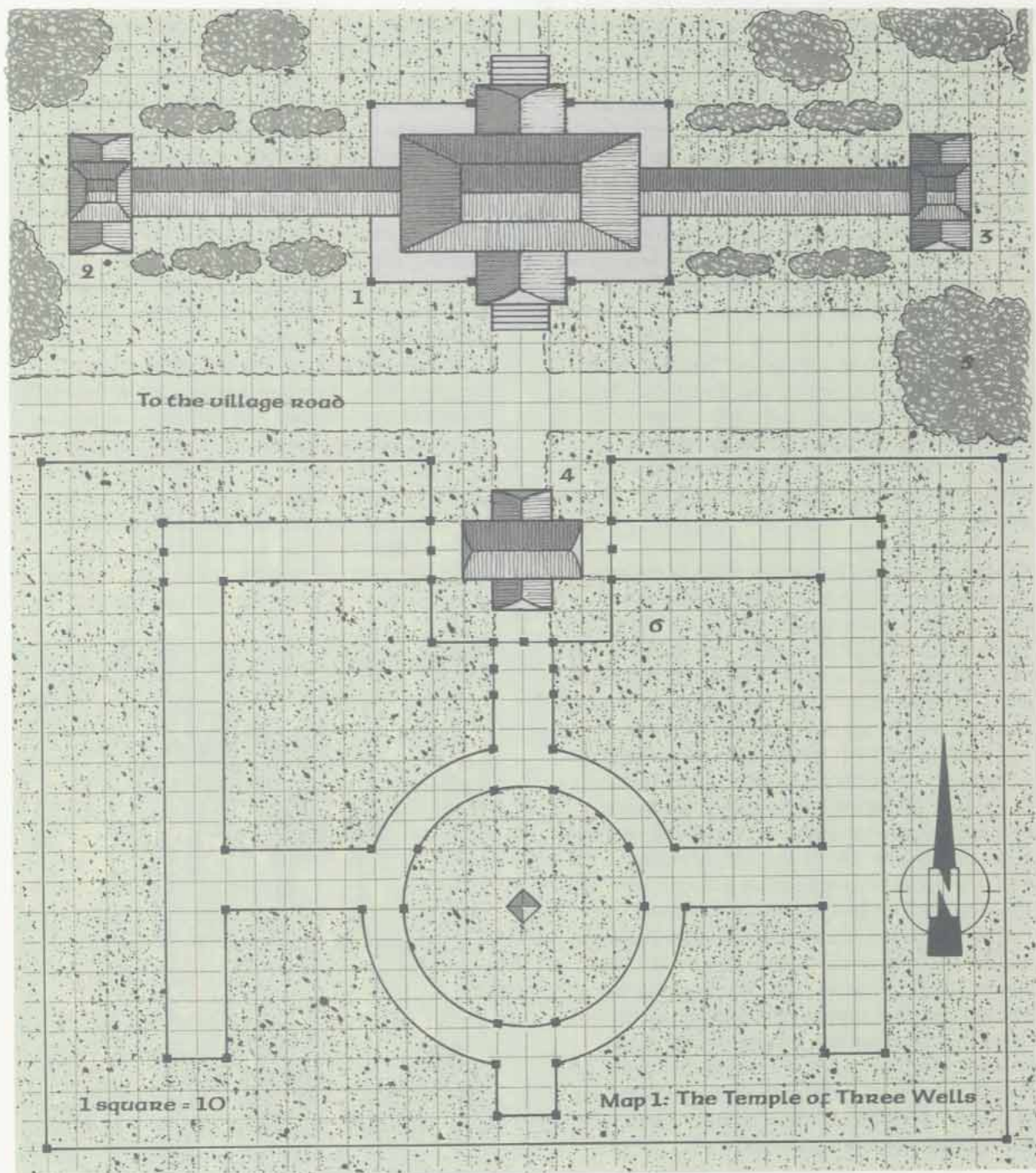
The insides of both the first floor and second floor are open. There are no interior dividing walls in the main temple.

The second story of the temple was once enclosed. Now there are many holes in the walls; the boards are charred and splintered at several intervals, making the second story nearly as open-air as the first. In the center of the second floor is a 20-foot-square opening surrounded by a railing. The statue of Liu pokes through this hole. A large crack has appeared around the waist of the statue, and birds have taken to roost in the many nooks and gaps. As on the first floor,

Diagram 2



# The Haunted Temple



# The Haunted Temple



the second floor is strewn with several damaged religious implements.

The third story is not accessible by a stairway, and can only be reached by scaling one of the timbers that form the framework of the building. (Pegs are hammered into the timbers at intervals, serving as the rungs of a ladder.) The third floor is where the priests of the temple conducted their devotions to Liu; other people were not allowed on this level. It contains nothing other than the same sort of damaged flooring that is typical of the second story.

**2. Well of the World:** The well in the center of the western pagoda is a religious font that was used in ceremonies celebrating the physical plane of existence. The stone structure of the well is circular, 3 feet high, with a wooden crank assembly built over the opening. This crank has a ceremonial vessel tied to it at the end of a rope, which is lowered into and raised from the well by means of the crank. The well shaft goes down 20 feet before it hits water. The water therein is 10 feet deep.

Four benches are built into the corners of the pagoda. The smoke and fire damage is relatively light in this small shrine. Aside from the furnishings, there is nothing in this small pagoda.

**3. Well of Minds:** The well in the eastern pagoda was used in ceremonies celebrating the intellectual plane of existence. It is identical in all respects with the Well of the World.

**4. Well of Souls:** The southern pagoda is a free-standing building similar in design to the structures housing the other wells, though it is not connected by an archway to the main temple. This well is larger than the others—the stone wall is 4 feet high and has a step up to the rim built around its base—but similar in other respects, except that the water within it is 15 feet deep. Also, no damage has been done to this pagoda; aside from accumulations of weeds and

dust, it is as solid as it was when the shrine was desecrated.

At the bottom of this well rests the body of Wen-Mei, which has been here since the young girl fell into the shaft 50 years ago. Unable to gain handholds or footholds on the slippery sides of the well shaft, Wen-Mei struggled as best she could to stay afloat in the ice-cold water. Her cries for help went unheard, however; the young girl drowned within moments, and her body sank to the bottom of the well. Without proper burial or religious attention, her spirit is forced to haunt the well and the pagoda around it.

Wen-Mei's spirit in corporeal form looks like that of a beautiful girl. She carries books under one arm and holds paper devotions in the other hand. The child maintains her distance, hiding behind the well until the PCs come close. She appears first shy, then more courageous if coaxed or addressed directly. Once the PCs have approached within 20 feet (10 feet at night), they see that the little girl's clothes and hair are damp. They also see bits of moss and mud on her hands.

If she is encountered in noncorporeal form, Wen-Mei's spirit will quickly exercise control over the PCs who succumb to her *charm* power. (Any *charmed* victim remains under her control even if she becomes corporeal; whether or not she physically attacks a *charmed* character is up to the DM.) She tries to separate them from the others by crying and saying she has lost her doll in the well, telling them the doll was the only gift her mother left behind before the gods took her away. She begs them to rescue it from the Well of Souls.

PCs who try to help the child (which they will automatically do if they are *charmed*) find themselves in immediate danger. Wen-Mei coaxes the PCs to look over the side of the well, pointing as if to show the location of the doll. When a character looks over the side, the spirit attacks with enough force to push the PC into the well, doing minimal damage (1 hp). Other *charmed* PCs who



## The Haunted Temple

witness this happening will simply think their comrade voluntarily entered the well. Wen-Mei's attack causes the *charm* to be dispelled, so that any PC who unwittingly finds himself at the bottom of the well will once again be in control of his actions. Note that the sides of the well are slick with moss, providing no handholds or footholds. Any PC who remains in the well without magical aid or the help of others will drown within five rounds.

How the PCs handle this situation is up to them. The best course is to subdue the spirit long enough to investigate the well. Wen-Mei will dispel her *charm* on any character(s) if she can be convinced that the PCs mean her no harm. Once the girl's body is discovered, it can be given a proper burial by any priest character. A priest of high enough level may *exorcise* the well of its ghost. If no character in the party possesses this ability, you may declare the well to have been exorcised once the body has been given a proper burial.

**5. The Hanging Tree:** This large cypress tree is well over 50 feet tall. Its trunk is 8 feet in circumference at the base, with its lowest limbs branching out 10 feet above the ground. One of these thick, sturdy limbs is the branch from which Lao Ch'ien was hanged. All of the tree's limbs are draped with cypress strands, the longest of which hang down to the ground. In any other setting, this tree would look lush, pleasant, and pastoral. Anyone knowing its history, however, would likely see the tree as dark and foreboding, an evil sentry standing guard over the desecrated temple and its grounds.

Lao Ch'ien is buried in an unmarked grave 10 feet from the base of this tree. The exact location is known only to Wen-Huan, who secretly interred the acolyte's body after it seemed to him that no one else was going to make the effort.

Lao Ch'ien's spirit is bound to this tree by virtue of his unjust execution at this spot. It will remain here as long as the location of the grave

is unknown and until the body therein receives the last rites of burial. Lao Ch'ien's spirit haunts and attacks anyone near the tree, but may go no farther than 100 feet from its base.

Lao Ch'ien's spirit exacts its revenge on all those who enter its territory (including the Well of Minds and the northeast corner of the graveyard). The spirit appears as the wispy figure of a young man, trying to lure passersby to within its range of attack. You may employ the same system of checks as with Wen-Mei's spirit to determine which PCs are affected by Lao Ch'ien's *charm* power and determine thus what they see. Lao Ch'ien's spirit tries to separate the party and lure the characters apart. The spirit then descends upon its victims one by one, attacking and trying to suck the life force from them.

**6. Graveyard:** Beyond three vine-covered, rust-encrusted iron gates lies the old temple cemetery. The graveyard is all but forgotten now—thick with vegetation and virtually indistinguishable as a cemetery from a distance, except for the moss-covered pillar that serves as its centerpiece. The graveyard is covered with tall grass and weeds of several varieties. It has fallen into severe disrepair in the 50 years since its abandonment. Many of its wooden grave markers have broken in two and are overgrown in the tangle of weeds and briars. Statuettes and fences have become substructures for thick vines and wiry bushes. Everywhere, the look is the same: natural elements now control the realm of the dead.

Prominent in the cemetery's layout is a 20-foot-tall stone obelisk in the center of a small mound surrounded by a 5-foot-tall fence. The mound and the obelisk contain nothing of interest; this is merely a decorative knoll.

A 10-foot-tall wrought iron fence runs around the entire cemetery grounds. Each wooden grave marker carries the name of the grave's occupant, the date of his or her death, and his or her age at death. Many of the graves have fallen into disre-

# The Haunted Temple



pair over the past 50 years. As a result, the spirits herein also haunt these graves. The residents of the graveyard are ku-hun. Their exact number and locations should be determined by you, depending on how challenging you want to make this part of the adventure.

These spirits are violent ghosts who attack hungrily, directly, and without trickery. Clearing the spirits of the graveyard should be conducted with the same delicacy and in the same manner as described earlier.

## Adventure Hooks

In each of these hooks, highlight the sense of duty and honor the PCs must bring to the task. The village is small and has little to offer as a reward. Note that this setting is not intended to be a PCs-vs.-spirits slugfest. The spirits here are malevolent due to some injustice or inattention to their sustenance in the afterlife. They are ancestors of the villagers. As a result, though the villagers would like to see the temple rid of its hauntings, they would not appreciate seeing their ancestors' neglected souls treated with violence or disrespect. Thus, the PCs must undertake the adventure with the goal of laying not only the matter, but the spirits themselves, to rest.

- The PCs encounter the temple while en route to another location. From a distance they see the spirit of Wen-Mei, or that of Lao Ch'ien. At your discretion, the party may be attacked by either spirit, although a better approach is to allow a brief sighting to whet the characters' curiosity. To learn more of the temple's secret, the PCs must visit the village. At this point, the locals may implore the PCs to rid the place of its ghosts.
- In their travels, the PCs encounter an old man who was one of the temple priests before the villagers burned the place and forced him and

his fellow priests to flee. His attitude toward the village has softened over the years, and now he is looking for a band of adventurers who can help relieve the villagers from their troubles. He knows about Wen-Mei's disappearance and what happened to Lao Ch'ien, and can provide the characters with a map to the village.

- The characters come into possession of a crude map showing the location and a sketchy layout of the temple (but not the wells or the graveyard) and emphasizing the statue of Liu (using a statement such as "The deity is the key," or something like that), which will entice them to investigate and perhaps be misled into thinking that the statue is important for some reason.
- For a twist on the situation as presented here, arrange for the PCs to come upon the village and the temple within a short time (a few days, or at most a few weeks) after the death of Lao Ch'ien. The temple has only recently been desecrated, which means that looters from the village have not yet carried off everything of value from the site. As such, PCs who investigate the place might discover some minor magical items (of a sort usable by priests) or other useful materials. The hauntings have begun recently, with people claiming to have seen the spirits of Wen-Mei and Lao Ch'ien in the vicinity, but the ku-hun have not yet risen in the cemetery because not enough time has passed for their graves to fall into disrepair.  
In this scenario, Wen-Huan is still distraught with grief over the disappearance of his daughter, and as a result he will be of practically no help to PCs who try to get information out of him. All the characters have to go on as they try to unravel the mystery are the many diverse tales the villagers will tell about what each of them thinks is going on.





## Sanctuary in the Sand



Ak'Ridar, "the City of Hope," is an Arabic tent city built inside a dormant volcano. Located within a burning desert, it is the only sign of civilization for dozens of miles in any direction. At the center of the city is a small but plentiful oasis at the bottom of the volcano's crater.

### Overview

The desert that surrounds the City of Hope is named Addakar, popularly known as "Hell's Furnace." The landscape around Ak'Ridar is typical of equatorial deserts: dry, sandy, and inconstant. The climate is always hot and windy. In placing this setting within your campaign world, choose a location similar to the deserts in Iraq. The closest city to Ak'Ridar should be at least 30 miles away and out of the desert.

As in all desertscapes, the land is an ever-changing environment. Due to the shifting sand that makes it difficult to distinguish one dune from another, Ak'Ridar is a difficult city to locate. High winds and swirling sands make the route to Ak'Ridar unclear and inconsistent. Within the crater and thus shielded from casual observation, Ak'Ridar is hidden from all but the most experienced desert travelers. Many caravans have unknowingly bypassed the City of Hope only to find themselves deep within the mutable sea of sun and sand. This seclusion makes Ak'Ridar a virtual sanctuary in the sand.

### The Cradle of the Gods

Ak'Ridar is nestled in the crater of a prehistoric volcano, a landform known as the Cradle of the Gods. Once a solitary mountain in the desert, the volcano is dormant, and has been since the dawn of recorded civilization. Oral history tells of a catastrophic explosion that covered the world in darkness and befouled the air for 20 days and nights. Local mythology tells a colorful variation of this account: several tales describe the mountain god blowing its top in anger at the

irreverent state of the world. In either tale, that mountain is believed to be the dormant volcano now occupied by Ak'Ridar. For this reason, Ak'Ridar is also known as "the cradled city."

The Cradle of the Gods is a rock formation worn smooth from constant blasting by the wind-blown desert sands. The floor of the crater is covered, as is everything in the city, with a thin layer of sand. Inside, the crater has a flat plain at its center. The plain slopes upward at a gradual slant as it approaches its eroded cusp, with the incline becoming as steep as 20 degrees when it gets close to the perimeter. The inner edge of the cusp slopes up at an angle of 45 degrees until it reaches the top of the cusp 50 feet above the crater floor.

Outside, the cusp of the crater juts suddenly up from the desert sands at an 80-degree angle. The top of the outer wall of the crater is 30 feet above the floor of the desert. Two breaks in the crater wall, on the northeast and south edges, are gated and guarded by 24-hour sentries. These breaches provide the only mounted or wheeled access to the city.

### Ak'Ridar, City of Hope

A "city"—actually, no more than a large village—of some 2,000 residents, Ak'Ridar is a young community apparently gifted by the grace of the gods; it has suffered no attacks by outside forces in its 200-year lifetime. The village has never been stricken by famine and has only occasionally struggled with pestilence and social unrest. Despite its seclusion, Ak'Ridar is a city of hopeful attitudes and stoic perseverance.

There are few caravan trails through the desert, and only one within riding distance of the village. Nonetheless, Ak'Ridar is a popular caravan stop. A source of precious metals and valuable art forms, it has a lively economy. Raw metals such as gold and silver, and trade goods such as jewelry and statuettes, have made Ak'Ridar a valued partner in the commerce of several cities—some as distant as the ocean shores. Ak'Ridar



## Sanctuary in the Sand

is a way station for travelers intent on saving time by crossing the burning Addakar instead of going around the desert.

In an arid landscape seemingly devoid of water, Ak'Ridar owes its existence to its volcanic setting. A fissure at the base of the crater cleaves directly through the water table, creating the central oasis and making possible the wells that sustain the tent village. The oasis belongs to the caliph of the city, Ali Bahn-Hassad, and is surrounded by his estate. There are five wells at various spots around the city and a small pool in the southern quadrant of the crater, in a place where an early mining effort dug too deep and yielded water instead of valuable minerals. All six of these water sources are open to the public.

Two main routes lead into the crater from each of the city's gates. Both routes wind through the Miners' District before branching off into other avenues closer to the center of the city, in the Merchants' District and the Dwellers' District. The main routes are only wide enough for camels and small carts to travel through comfortably in single file. When one of these routes has to accommodate two-way traffic, the descending traffic has the right of way. Both routes are somewhat steep for wheeled or mounted transport, so that runaway carts and stumbling pack animals are potential problems. The village has handled the issue of runaway carts by requiring that all vehicles traveling on either of the main routes into or out of the city be accompanied by wheelblocks. (A wheelblock is an individual hired for the purpose of rushing in to thrust large, wooden blocks against the wheels of a cart at the first sign of a runaway. Residents willing to perform this service, for a fee, are never in short supply; they linger around each of the gates and at every major intersection of roads within the city.) Accidents involving animals that stumble are limited by requiring all riders to lead their mounts by the reins when traveling anywhere in the city.

The side streets in Ak'Ridar streets are nar-

rower than the main routes; some are one-way avenues barely wide enough for a camel or a small cart. Many of these avenues shift abruptly from streets to footpaths to staircases and then back again, making fast transit through the city difficult and dangerous, even on foot. The equivalent of livery stables and storage sheds are strategically located at many of the places where the roadway suddenly changes size, giving visitors and residents alike a place to stow their carts or animals if they are traveling to a location where those items cannot go.

The city is divided into four quarters: the Dwellers', Miners', and Merchants' Districts, and the Estate of the Caliph at the center. All the structures in the Dwellers' and Miners' District are tents. (In the latter area, tents are used simply as covers for mine shafts; none of them is large enough to serve as a permanent residence.) The Merchants' District is composed mostly of tents but also has a few stone buildings. The Estate of the Caliph is a combination of tents and stone structures, all ringed by an 8-foot-high stone wall.

Tents in Ak'Ridar are one-story structures made of canvas sturdy enough to withstand the buffeting and sandblasting of the desert winds. The few stone structures in the city are squat, one-story habitats using a great deal of mortar between stones.

Basements are virtually nonexistent in Ak'Ridar. Those that do exist are from the city's formative years. An increase in mining activity made basement-building a hazard to building owners: settling stone and undermining caused many a sinkhole that destroyed several buildings in Ak'Ridar's early years. Now, it is illegal for anyone other than representatives of mining interests to dig beneath the crater's surface, and then only in the Miners' District.

Space limitations make Ak'Ridar a confined environment. Narrow streets crowded with people, stone quarters and tents built one on top of another, a dearth of open-air common areas and public squares—all these factors contribute to

# Sanctuary in the Sand



Ak'Ridar's claustrophobic setting. This closeness may be at first disconcerting to PCs accustomed to the wide-ranging spaces of the open desert.

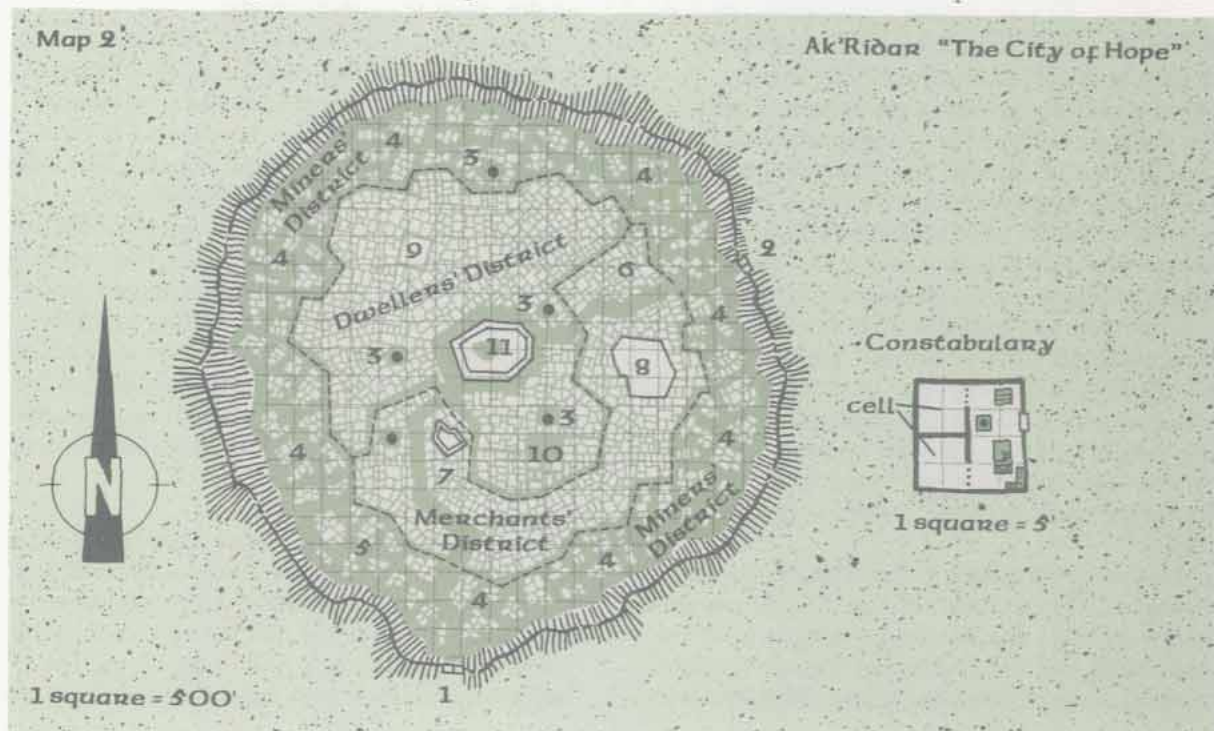
**1. South gate and guardhouse:** The fissure that breaches the crater wall is 15 feet thick at the point of entry. At the outer edge of the fissure is a gate and a guardhouse. This gate is closed except when visitors are being allowed to enter the city. Another gate on the inner edge of the fissure 100 feet away is normally left open, but can be closed quickly if the outer gate is breached by a hostile force. Each gate, made of oak and banded metal, is 2 feet thick, 8 feet high, and 5 feet wide, and has a sliding door through which documents and small objects can be passed.

The guardhouse adjacent to the outer gate is no more than a cubbyhole dug into the side of the crater. It has no door and contains only a chair, table, chest, weapons case, and small cot. The space is 6 feet square and 7 feet high.

**2. East gate and guardhouse:** This gate and guardhouse are identical with the south gate and guardhouse described above. Three guards, all 1st-level fighters, are on duty at each location at all times.

**Guards (6):** AC 7 (leather + shield); MV 12; HD 1; hp 6 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (scimitar), 1d6 (spear), 1d4 (dagger), or 1d6 (bow & arrows); SZ M (6' tall); ML steady (12); Int average (9); AL NG; XP 35 each

The gate guards are generally a loyal and honorable group. The three who are not—Dayan, Rupert, and Willis—have arranged to work the same shift together at the east gate. They are on duty from midnight to 8 a.m., which is a busy time because most travelers move through the desert at night (when it's cooler) and rest during the day. Honest guards will not admit anyone into Ak'Ridar who fails to prove that he has busi-





## Sanctuary in the Sand

ness in the city, and they do not collect an entry fee from persons they admit. The three dishonest ones will let anyone through the gate for a price (which they pocket) of 5 gp per person and/or pack animal.

**3. Public wells:** These wells are simple 3-foot-high stone cylinders. Tied to a ring embedded into the base of each well is a 25-foot rope with a small wooden bucket on the other end. The well shaft is 15 feet deep and 2 feet in diameter. A canvas sheet is used to cover the well when it is not in use. Any resident or visitor is free to take water from a public well at any time, so long as the privilege is not abused. Anyone who is seen wasting water, or taking more than he needs, or who fails to replace the cover after using a well may be reported to the authorities.

### Miners' District

There is more to Ak'Ridar than meets the eye. Below the crater's surface, winding down to depths of 20 or 30 feet, are the city mines. Mining is allowed only in the Miners' District, the roughly circular area on the outer edge of the city. The reason for this restriction is simple; any hole that is dug near the city's center ends up hitting the water table within 5 or 10 feet. Early experience with flooding and water damage made zoning a crucial element of city planning.

The miners of Ak'Ridar live in miserable conditions. Single-family "homes" are rare; most residents of this district live in tattered tents and cheap shanties, sometimes 10 people per dwelling. Multifamily quarters are common, as are "miners' accommodations"—tent communities that offer uncomfortable, broken cots for daily rent.

Disease is prevalent in this district, but major outbreaks of pestilence are rare. The crime rate is relatively high, and the area is not patrolled by authorities, but residents have their own (often violent) ways of obtaining justice. Half the city's

population lives in the Miners' District; these people are common laborers with no special skills who spend their days below ground. Some of their time is spent searching for deposits of metal or other useful rocks; most of the time they work on shoring up the mine tunnels with ordinary stones to keep the tunnels from collapsing. The mines are of little consequence to most of the residents of the Dwellers' District, who have scant concern for the hardship that Ak'Ridar's lower-class citizens endure.

**4. Mine entrances, tool sheds, and mine tunnels:** There are eight entry shafts to the mines. These vertical shafts are traversed with the help of ladders and elevators. The more elaborate mines (the three northernmost ones) use elevators operated by hand winches and controlled by ratchets and brakes, and are 60 feet deep. The simpler shafts (the other five) employ ladders only and go no deeper than 30 feet. Several tunnels branch out in all directions from these shafts.

Aside from man-sized sleds, ordinary tools, and small piles of raw metal ore, the tool sheds at each mine entrance hold nothing of interest.

The mine tunnels are a chaotic grid of crisscrossing horizontal and vertical shafts. Many are dead ends; others are extensive and connect with more than one entry shaft. Some of the tunnels are waterlogged; others have collapsed from lack of maintenance. A few shafts extend under the outside wall of the crater, ending in sand-blocked breaches. Maps of the mines are left for development by the DM and for exploration by the PCs. (If cleared of sand and debris, the tunnels leading to the outside could serve as secret passages to and from the city. . . .)

**5. The caverns:** The remains of a series of mining tunnels that didn't pan out, these makeshift hovels are underground living chambers that have been scooped out of the soft volcanic rock in the volcano floor and inner wall of the crater. The tunnels themselves serve as a means of entry and

## Sanctuary in the Sand



exit; hollowed out of the tunnel walls are dozens of small alcoves barely large enough to hold one person. These hollows serve as worst-case housing in Ak'Ridar. Most of the residents in this complex are newcomers to the city who find themselves destitute. By day, they prowl the nearby Merchants' District begging for food or a menial job; by night, they retreat into their holes to avoid being beaten or robbed.

### Merchants' District

You may populate the tents and rare buildings of the Merchants' District as desired. Keep in mind the main staples of Ak'Ridar's economy: precious metals and art pieces made therefrom. Also prevalent in this district will be the various stores, liveries, and caravan stops that mark a city of active trade. Hotel tents, taverns, restaurants—all the various shops and services needed to sustain this city of 2,000 people are located here. Be creative, but don't go overboard: Ak'Ridar is a small village, and is unlikely to have a magic shop on every corner.

**6. Catacombs entrance:** This small structure is maintained by the city; its heavy door is locked, and access to what lies beyond it is restricted except when a recently deceased resident is being interred. To the best of anyone's knowledge, this is the only way into the catacombs.

The catacombs are a network of small tunnels and chambers that have been carefully surveyed and excavated to avoid hitting any underground water source. Nearly all of the city's early inhabitants lie in state in the catacombs—the only exceptions being ancestors of the caliph, Ali Bahn-Hassad. (Ancestors of royalty lie in state in aboveground mausoleums within the caliph's walled estate.) Only law-abiding city residents are buried in the catacombs. Others, including visitors, itinerants, criminals, and other undesirables, are left on simple wooden pyres outside the city in the desert.

**7. Public oasis:** This public oasis is ringed by a 2-foot-high stone wall intended to keep people from wading into the deceptively deep water (the bottom is 30 feet beneath the surface). Two buckets tied to ropes are fastened to a nearby post. At one end of the oasis is a small trough used for watering animals. As with the public wells described above, access to the water is not restricted for anyone who does not abuse the privilege. The oasis, unlike the wells, is not covered with canvas to protect the water from the elements. This makes it relatively easy to dispose of objects by throwing them into the water—but anyone caught polluting the oasis (or any of the wells, for that matter) will be summarily thrown out of the city with nothing more than the clothes they are wearing.

**8. Open market:** This area is a place for merchants to sell goods and conduct trade. The quarters here are cramped and somewhat stifling in the midday heat. Sales stalls occupy every spot of open space except for the path that runs through the middle of the market and the narrow walkways that branch off the main path. PCs may find any variety of common goods for sale here. With its economy based entirely on imported and exported goods, Ak'Ridar's prices are naturally inflated. PCs will pay at least twice the normal rate for any goods sold in the open market, and at least three times the standard rate in merchant shops throughout the rest of the district.

### Dwellers' District

Like the Miners' District, this district is composed almost entirely of tents, but these residences are far better facilities than those found in the poorer area. The city's merchants and nobles live in this district, as do many other people of simpler means (servants, shop proprietors, etc.). Homes range in size from large-tent complexes to single-tent units. This district is cleaner and somewhat more spacious than the others—not



## Sanctuary in the Sand

much of a distinction considering the overall cramped condition of the city.

Garbage removal is a concern in Ak'Ridar, particularly in the Miners' and Dwellers' Districts. Most trash is taken out daily and dumped in the desert, but some gets by the collectors, managing to tumble about the streets, collecting in corners, and adding its stench to the other odors floating about the closed confines of the city. Rats and dogs may be seen at night rooting through the refuse. Though useful for helping to keep the village clean, public latrines add to the city's aroma.

**9. City constabulary:** This 20-foot-square structure contains the office of the city constable plus two 10-foot-square jail cells. The constable's office holds a small table, two chairs, a weapons cabinet, a stove, and a bed. The cells are primitive, furnished only with straw, which doubles as litter and bedding.

**10. Public square:** Since space is at a premium throughout Ak'Ridar, the public square is small and often overcrowded. This location serves as a meeting place for villagers who rest in the open air, gamble at cards or dice, or chat with neighbors. The square has stones placed randomly about to serve as seats and tables.

### The Estate of Caliph Ali Bahn-Hassad

This elaborate estate is essentially a collection of tents built around a central element (the oasis) and interspersed with blockhouses, storage buildings, and animal pens. The caliph's estate is designed in the ancient style and tradition of the nomad's oasis. Tents that have stood for two centuries ring the bubbling oasis at the center of the compound, leaving enough room for people and animals to access the font. The estate is ringed by an 8-foot-high wall made of stone and mortar. The wall has two gates, north and south. They are closed at all times and monitored by two pairs of guards.

### Ali Bahn-Hassad

*A 6th-level male human fighter*

<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral good
<b>Move:</b>	12/18
<b>AC:</b>	7
<b>THAC0:</b>	15
<b>Hit points:</b>	38

<b>Strength:</b>	16	<b>Intelligence:</b>	16
<b>Dexterity:</b>	13	<b>Wisdom:</b>	14
<b>Constitution:</b>	12	<b>Charisma:</b>	14

**Proficiencies:** Dagger, scimitar; animal handling (13), artistic ability (14), etiquette (14), gaming (14), singing (14)

**Languages:** Common, elvish, halfling

**Armor:** Leather + shield

**Weapons:** Dagger, scimitar

**Equipment:** Fine clothes, turban, signet ring, camel, saddle, tack and harness, all furnishings found in his estate

**Age:** 41

**Height:** 6'1"

**Weight:** 210 lbs.

**Hair/eyes:** Black/brown

Ali Bahn-Hassad is a man of great stature in the city. Relatively young and in extremely good health, he is a popular leader—well liked (or at least tolerated) by the citizens of Ak'Ridar and their partners in trade. Ali Bahn-Hassad is often seen outside his estate, mingling with the people of the city. He is fond of making public appearances and takes a great interest in city festivals and celebrations.

In times of difficulty, the caliph has proven a strong and unerring ruler. Slow to anger, he keeps a level head in times of trouble, slowly weighing his options. If need be, he is capable of handing out severe punishment, and he will always act first in the interest of his family and their estate—which he considers to include not only his residential area but the entire city.

# Sanctuary in the Sand



## Adventure Hooks

- The PCs lose their way in a sandstorm and are forced to take refuge in Ak'Ridar. During their stay, Ari Kaddah, a local metals merchant, is murdered on his way home from negotiations with his competitor, Hati-Aman. Footprints near the body suggest two assailants. Ari's missing money pouch indicates robbery was the motive. At your discretion, two of the PCs may be considered the most likely suspects. They are taken prisoner by city constables and housed in the local jail where they await the justice of the Caliph.

Create a chance for players to test their subtler skills by conducting their own investigation into the murder. Too much snooping could result in additional arrests; however, a smooth, noncombative approach may uncover several clues. One such clue is a document indicating that Hati-Aman proposed to sell his business to Ari Kaddah for a princely sum—which contrasts strangely with a rumor that Hati-Aman's business is about to go bankrupt. This information and other facts lead the PCs to the real assailants: two local thugs who were hired by Hati-Aman.

**Thugs (F4):** AC 8 (leather); MV 12; HD 4; hp 32, 26; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+1 (scimitar + Str bonus) or 1d4+1 (dagger + Str bonus); SZ M (each 6' tall); ML steady (12); Int very (12); AL NE; XP 120 each

These thugs will do all they can to keep their involvement in the murder secret, including trying to kill nosy PCs. They keep a low profile in the Miners' District, waiting until a couple of innocent people (such as a pair of PCs) are convicted of the murder so that they can no longer be picked up as suspects.

**Hati-Aman, a dealer in precious metals:** AC 8 (leather); MV 12; hp 5; THAC0 20;

#AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SZ M (5'6" tall); ML average (9); Int exceptional (15); AL NE; XP 15

**Proficiencies:** Dagger; appraising (15); artistic ability: metalwork (11)

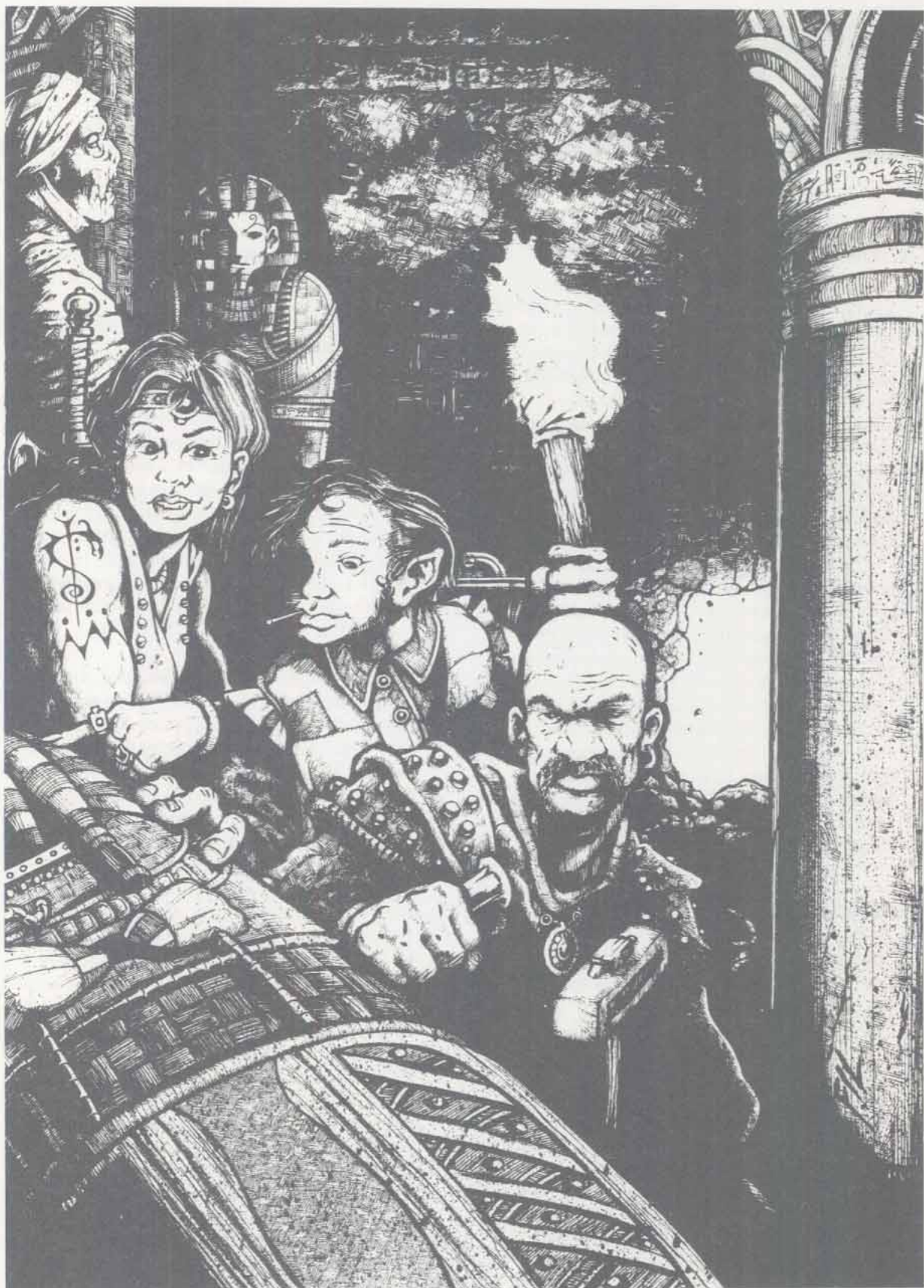
**Languages:** Common, kobold

On the verge of bankruptcy, Hati-Aman found himself forced to desperate measures. After his offer to sell his business was turned down by Ari Kaddah, he concocted a plot to kill his competitor as a way of bringing commerce back to his own business. A nervous man by nature, Hati-Aman is easily frightened—not a good thing for those around him, since he tends to overreact in times of stress by going to extremes.

- With the empire at war, Ak'Ridar is a city under siege—cut off from its trade routes and slowly running out of supplies. Though outside forces have been unsuccessful in taking the city, the enemy's siege is beginning to take its toll. Disease is on the increase in the Miners' District, with pestilence spreading slowly to the other quarters. Famine is imminent if reinforcements and supplies don't come soon. Early attempts to send for reinforcements were quelled by the siege forces. Desperate times call for yet another attempt.

The PCs stand to make great names for themselves if they can make it past the occupying forces beyond the city walls. They also stand to make great wealth if they return with supplies and reinforcements. Going through the besieged city gates is impossible; the enemy forces would surely catch anyone leaving the city via that path. The only apparent means of subtle exit is over the steep walls of the crater. Or maybe there's another route—through the abandoned mines that underscore the City of Hope . . . perhaps, if something isn't done, soon to become known as the City of Hopelessness.





# City of the Dead



On an open plain at the edge of the desert is a cluster of small buildings made of baked mud and painted brick. These squat structures, known as mastabas (from an Arabic word meaning “stone bench”) are laid out in rows and connected by paths. The design resembles that of a city, which indeed was the intent: the mastabas were built as a city in which to house the dead.

## Overview

The land surrounding this setting is similar to that in the region around the Nile River in Egypt. The climate is equatorial or subtropical: dry and hot, but providing enough moisture via rainfall to spark the growth of tall grasses and scrub brush. The landscape is flat and featureless, except for an occasional pond or small copse of trees. Where the land borders the desert, it is marked by either a sandy loam or a scraggly cover of tall prairie grass. Keep these facts in mind when placing the mastabas in your campaign world. (See pages 90–91 of *Legends & Lore* for a bit of basic information on mastabas.)

Several miles to the east, in another section of the river valley, is a village of tribesmen known as the Nairotnans. If the PCs’ path takes them to the village before they encounter the mastabas, they will be welcomed warmly and invited to stay for at least one night.

If the PCs decline the invitation and end up investigating the mastabas on their own, or if they discover them before talking with the local tribesmen, skip ahead to the section describing the actual layout of the mastabas. If the PCs decide instead to talk to members of the Nairotnan tribe before encountering or investigating the mastabas, they learn at least some of the following information.

To the west of the tribe’s settlement is a mysterious area containing many buildings that have no apparent means of entrance or exit: the mastabas. They have been there for as long as local tribesmen can recall. Nairotnan tribal elders say

the enigmatic structures have been there since the dawn of time. Though the true origin and purpose of the mastabas is unknown to the elders, they believe the buildings have some spiritual significance. The impregnable features of the clay structures only heightens the arcane sense of mystery surrounding them.

**Nairotnan tribesmen (30):** AC 8 (leather); MV 12; HD 1; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (spear or farm implement); SZ M (5’8” tall); ML average (9); Int low (7); AL NG; XP 15 each

**K’dza, tribal chief (F5):** AC 8 (leather); MV 12; hp 35; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (spear); SZ M (5’9” tall); ML steady (12); Int exceptional (15); AL NG; XP 175

**Proficiencies:** Spear; fishing (14), hunting (14), tracking (15)

K’dza is 50 years old and in failing health. He is useless in combat, and serves the village as an aged overseer—a member of the council of elders who has the authority to arbitrate disputes but otherwise is little more than a figurehead leader.

**K’drin, tribal subchief (F4):** AC 8 (leather); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (spear); SZ M (5’10” tall); ML steady (12); Int very (12); AL NG; XP 120

**Proficiencies:** Spear; agriculture (12); fishing (11), rope use (16)

K’drin is poised to become the new chief upon his father’s death. At present, he is the true power behind his father’s throne.

**Paor, tribal shaman (D8):** AC 8; MV 12; hp 33; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger) or 1d8+3 (rod of smiting); SZ M (5’6” tall); ML steady (11); Int high (13); AL N; XP 2,000

**Proficiencies:** Dagger; ancient history (12), fire-building (14), fishing (14), reading/writing (14)



## City of the Dead

**Equipment:** *rod of smiting, scroll of protection from undead*

**Spells (5/4/3/2):** 1st—*bless, create water, cure light wounds, locate animals or plants, purify food & drink*; 2nd—*barkskin, charm person or mammal, messenger, speak with animals*; 3rd—*locate object, plant growth, water breathing*; 4th—*control temperature 10' radius, lower water*

Paor is an elderly druid (55 years old) who serves mainly as a mentor to the younger priests and as a village elder. He is active only in the annual tribal rituals.

**M'rin, tribal priest (D6):** AC 8 (leather); MV 12; hp 24; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SZ M (5'7" tall); ML steady (11); Int very (12); AL N; XP 650

**Proficiencies:** Dagger; ancient history (11), healing (11), religion (13)

**Equipment:** *scroll of protection from undead*

**Spells (4/3/2):** 1st—*create water, detect evil, detect magic, purify food & drink*; 2nd—*barkskin, charm person or mammal, speak with animals*; 3rd—*call lightning, plant growth*

At 40, M'rin is younger than Paor and thus serves as the main village priest. M'rin expects to assume control as tribal shaman once Paor dies. He is also a village elder.

### The Fire Tales: A Communal Event

The people of the Nairoton tribe have occupied the banks of the Marada River, farming the lands and fishing the river, for more than five hundred years. Prior to that time, the Nairotons wandered the desert, staying in one place only as long as the area supplied sustenance. The discovery of the Marada River valley changed that; the fertile banks of the river proved capable of sustaining the tribe through more than one season. Surplus food stores turned seasons into years, years into decades, decades into centuries.

Nairoton history is an oral tradition, one fraught with fantasy and allegorical allusion. It is a community tradition, a nightly event shared by all members of the Nairoton tribe. At the end of each day, when the Nairoton gather around the communal fire, tribal stories known as "fire tales" are told by village elders. These tales are open events, and the PCs are encouraged to join the circle of wide-eyed, avid listeners.

The stories told by the tribal elders are similar in purpose and content to those of Homer: heroic fantasies describing the fantastic experiences of honored ancestors. The stories are told both as history lessons and as entertainment, and often engage the live-action services of tribal warriors who reenact the events to the villagers' delight.

The following stories are samples of fire tales the PCs may hear at these gatherings. Ad-lib these tales to the best of your ability, using them to add flavor to the Nairoton tribe's colorful history. If you are unfamiliar with the stories upon which these fire tales are based, you may concoct tales of your own. Either way, the goal here is to lend atmosphere via the fire tales—not to detract from the flow of the adventure.

"The Wailing Sands" is an eerie, ghostly version of the Sirens myth from Homer's *The Odyssey*. The tale starts by noting that several Nairotons have died in the desert, gasping for water and begging the gods to save them. Their voices were captured by the malevolent desert winds, collected together with the voices of others, and carried across the empty sands. These unattended souls are used by the evil desert winds to lure others to similar fates. On any night, the speaker tells, the voices of a thousand lonely souls meld together in a beautiful song, an enchanting wail that beckons careless nomads to an early grave in the desert.

"Mantow and the Efrete" is a retelling of "Moses and the Burning Bush." This variant tells of a great man who sees and speaks with an efrete, a good spirit who leads the faithful nomads out of the dying desert.

## City of the Dead



"The Magic Bottle" is basically "Aladdin and His Magic Lamp." The difference here is an evil twist in which the genie (the imprisoned spirit of the bottle's previous user) may only escape by enticing the new user to make three wishes. Once the third wish is uttered, the "genie" is freed and the new user takes his place in crystal captivity.

"Ukarr and the Scarab" is a retelling of "Theseus and the Minotaur" from Greek mythology, with Ukarr the hero fighting a giant scarab beetle in a carrion-filled underground maze.

"Washing the Earth" is a tale of the deluge similar to the many tales told by various cultures in our own world (for example, the tale of Noah and the Ark). It is a tale of faith and preservation through pure living.

Most Nairotan history is pure and simple fantasy—noted more for its hyperbole than for its factuality. All of the tales listed above allude in some loose way or another to the mastabas, though this will not (and should not) be immediately obvious to the PCs. One tale, however, is of particular note and may strike an ominous chord with the players.

"The Garden of Salt and Sand" is a curious tale often told as a sequel to "Mantow and the Efreet." Like its prequel, "The Garden of Salt and Sand" deals with the wanderings of a nomadic people who, after enduring the desert's hardships, are repaid for their religious faith. In this fire tale, the nomads discover a lush valley plentiful with flora and fauna. Through the dreams of the elders, the nomads are told by the gods that the valley and its animal inhabitants have been placed there for their use. Every life form in the river valley is theirs to shepherd, to use as they deem fit.

In the rambling manner of tales of its ilk, "The Garden of Salt and Sand" takes a turn for the worse while recounting the passage of several generations of Nairotons. During this time, the river valley becomes a faithless land, a setting rife with corruption and abuse, ruled by cruel and selfish leaders. An uprising occurs in which

the animals of the valley rebel against the Nairotons. The ensuing battle leaves the village a necropolis: a city of the dead. The few survivors reaffirm their beliefs and take to task the burial of the dead. The valley is burned, salt is sowed in its earth, and the people move to a new location.

"The Garden of Salt and Sand" is historically loose, but contains some elements of truth—the primary ones being the discovery of the lush valley, the servitude of the fauna, the era of depravity, and the uprising of the valley creatures.

It is true that the Nairotan nomads discovered a lush valley, but the tale becomes clouded with lies of omission from that point on. (For the full truth of the matter, see the following section of text.) Note that the PCs have no way of learning the secret history of the Nairotons prior to their investigation of the mastabas. Clues within the burial chambers may alert the PCs to the hidden horror; these clues should be doled out as a reward for clever investigation and not simply for having PCs happen to be in the right place at the right time. Quizzing the tribal elders (or reading their minds) proves fruitless, since the elders are entirely unaware of their tribe's murky history. All they know has been handed down through the interesting but inaccurate fire tales.

### An Unspeakable Truth

"The Garden of Salt and Sand" is a colorful interpretation of a darker history. Historically, the Nairotons did make their way out of the desert to the Marada River valley. When they arrived, however, they were not the valley's only human occupants. An indigenous tribe of peaceful farmers known as the Angkarta had been inhabiting the valley for centuries. The Nairotons were received as guests—though not for long.

Wandering the desert had made the nomads a hard people. Many Nairotons died in their wanderings; the survivors had grown accustomed to loss, to life in the dry wastelands. Still, they longed to leave the desert.



## City of the Dead

The Angkarta grew suspicious of their guests' plans. In their opinion, the valley belonged to the Angkarta; the gods had placed them there to till the fields and shepherd its beasts. The land outside the valley, however, was free to farm. If the Nairotan desired to occupy that area, the Angkarta would not interfere.

The Nairotons were displeased with that offer. They decided instead to take the river valley by force. A terrible conflict ensued in which many of the unprepared Angkarta were killed. The surviving tribespeople were made servants, forced to till the fields for the valley's new owners, the Nairotan usurpers. This arrangement continued as the Nairotons grew stronger and more entrenched in the valley. The Angkarta continued to serve and also grew in numbers. Both tribes lived in relative peace for centuries.

Similar to what happened in ancient Rome, the passage of time allowed fissures to form in the foundations of empire. The Nairotons became lazy and weak, decadent in their demands upon the stronger, more devout Angkarta. The Angkarta became displeased with the desecration of their culture, their valley, and their tribe.

The seeds of Angkarta rebellion were sown in small circles and grew slowly—sometimes discontented servants were discovered and rooted out, but in most cases the resentment went undetected as it built quietly yet firmly within the Nairotan culture. The pot of civil unrest came to a boil, and then overflowed in a violent rebellion. Many people died in the terrible times that ensued. In the end, leaders and survivors from both sides called for peace, but not before the village had been turned into a killing field.

New tribal elders led the cleanup in which both Nairotons and Angkarta participated. The dead were buried, the land was salted to mark the unsanctity it had gained, and monuments were built to house and honor the most noteworthy of the victims. Those monuments are the mastabas.

Time healed the wounds of the past. The two

tribes relocated their village and grew together through marriages and generations of children. Stories grew up around the new tribe's sordid history—fire tales such as "The Garden of Salt and Sand," which were originally meant to serve as lessons to warn people about avoiding the mistakes of the past.

Time also erased details and historical accuracy. Generations of storytelling have reduced "The Garden of Salt and Sand" to religious allegory. As a result, the tale lacks any detail important to its telling. What this means is that the Nairotan tribespeople are not only unaware of their violent past, but of the purpose of the mysterious mastabas that lie to their west.

### The Mastabas

Reasons for the PCs visiting the mastabas may vary based on the group's approach. Your goal should be to introduce the PCs to the Nairotan village first, have them listen to an evening's worth of fire tales, then allow them to proceed to the mastabas on their own curiosity or as a result of actions described in the "Adventure Hooks" section of this scenario.

From a distance, the clay mastabas look like small hills. Upon closer examination, however, the trapezoidal mastabas look like single-story, flat-topped adobe houses with sloping walls. There are 12 separate buildings, laid out in four rows of three mastabas each with 10-foot-wide spaces between adjacent buildings. As a group, the structures look like a small village, albeit an uninhabited one, as borne out by the tall grass that grows thick in the paths between them.

The clay buildings are 10 to 20 feet high and vary in size from 10 × 20 feet to 20 × 30 feet. Some of them are painted; others are merely smooth-sided with a coating of dried mud. A few of the mastabas have what appear to be open skylights in their roofs.

The mastabas have 5-foot-wide, 6-foot-tall recesses in their sloping walls: one in each of the

# City of the Dead



smaller structures, two in each of the larger ones, seemingly for the placement of doors. When the PCs get closer, they will see that in fact doors—of a sort—are built into these recesses: each indentation goes 2 feet in, but the opening is then sealed off with a block of solid stone. These stone blocks have no hinges and no handles anywhere on their outside faces.

Getting into a mastaba requires breaking through the wall of the structure. (Because the walls are constructed of clay bricks, it is much easier to break through them than it is to break through the stone “doors.”) Creating a man-sized hole requires time, strength, effort, and the correct digging tools (shovels, pickaxes, etc.), which the PCs must provide since the Nairotons have no such items. If the PCs choose to do this, it takes one turn to clear away a 1-foot thickness of brick or two hours to get through a slab of stone. In lieu of tools, excavators may use weapons or damage-causing spells, but this is a tedious process at best (make it tough, giving each

1-foot thickness of bricks at least 100 hit points, and feel free to have weapons be damaged or broken from bashing them against the walls). In addition, the larger mastabas are magically protected by *glyphs of warding* (DM’s discretion as to type, number, and placement).

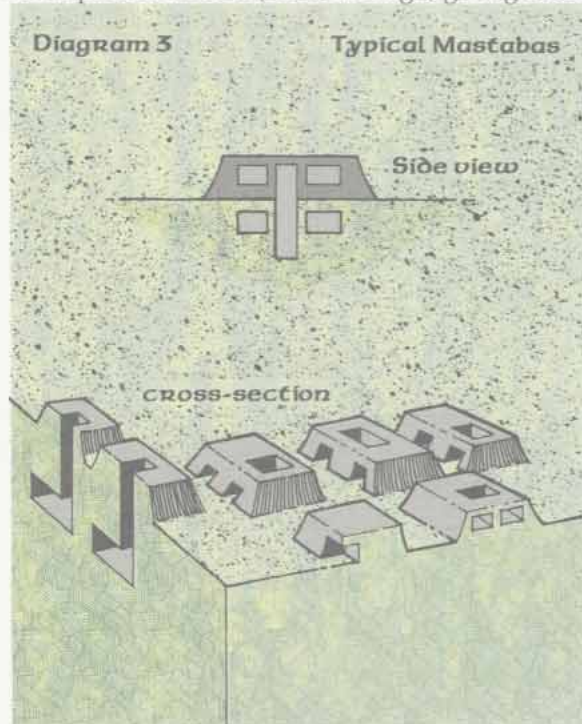
PCs who investigate the hole in a mastaba’s roof will find it to be nothing more than a square shaft that extends 10 feet underground before ending against hard-packed earth—except for mastabas 4, 7, and 9 (see the descriptions below), in which the shaft opens into a subterranean chamber. In all other mastabas, the walls of the shaft must be broken through in order to find what lies on the other side.

Digging down into the earth outside a mastaba will reveal that the clay walls extend 10 feet below ground level, offering no easier way to get into any of the structures.

## The Nairotons

Regardless of whether the PCs encounter the Nairotons before finding the mastabas, any investigation of the clay structures will not go unnoticed by the tribesmen for long. (A group of hunters will pass near the buildings, for instance, and report back to the elders that some activity is taking place at the site.) If the Nairotons were not invited to accompany the PCs to the mastabas, a small party of them will follow the characters and observe their actions from a distance. The Nairotons normally avoid the mastabas out of fear and respect for their mysterious purpose, but will approach the buildings and try to protect them if they think someone means to harm the structures.

In some way or another, the Nairotons will probably find out what the characters manage to unearth from within the burial chambers, and they will become aware that the mastabas actually hold the bodies and possessions of their ancestors. From that point on, the tribesmen will take offense at what the PCs have done to this



# City of the Dead

sacred site and will try to make it difficult for them to continue exploring the place.

How this probable conflict plays out is up to you, and up to the players' ingenuity. Can the PCs persuade the Nairotnans that robbing the tombs is not a bad thing (perhaps by offering them a share of the proceeds from the sale of found items, or by donating some treasures to the tribe)? Will the PCs respect the Nairotnans' wishes and leave the mastabas alone, thereby earning the eternal friendship of the tribe (and also a large XP award)?

## Building Descriptions

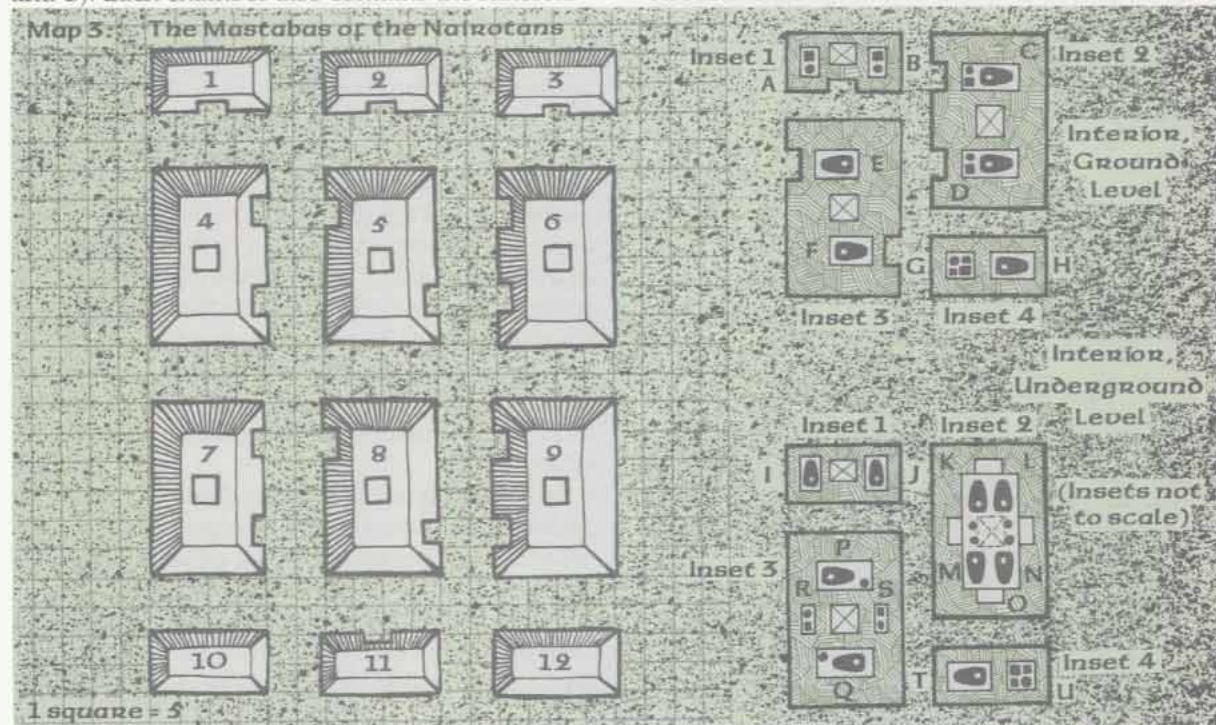
**1. Unpainted mastaba:** The interior of this structure is based on Inset 1 of Map 3.

The ground level of this mastaba contains two canopic jars, which are ornate vessels containing the vital organs and viscera of the corpse buried below—one in each of the closed chambers (A and B). Each chamber also contains the funereal

garments, implements, and hieroglyphic stones that serve as burial documents.

The underground level of this mastaba has two chambers. Chamber I contains a simple sarcophagus that houses the mummified remains of an old man, along with a bag of copper and silver (100 cp, 50 sp). Chamber J contains a sarcophagus that holds the body of an elderly woman. She wears a gold pendant (30 gp) around her neck and a finely crafted silver ring (15 gp) on one of her fingers. This mastaba is not protected by any magical or monstrous means.

**2. Unpainted mastaba:** This building is identical with mastaba 1 from the outside. Inside it has only one chamber on each level (A and I, but no B or J). The subterranean enclosure contains a simple sarcophagus holding the mummified remains of a middle-aged man with an ornate scepter in his hand (nonmagical, 100 gp). This mastaba is not protected by magical or monstrous means.



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**3. Unpainted mastaba:** This mastaba is identical in most respects with mastaba 1. The difference is that chamber A also contains a small, locked chest. The chest holds 100 gp and a *tome of understanding*. The key to the chest is not in either aboveground chamber.

On the underground level, Chamber I holds a simple sarcophagus containing the mummified remains of an old man who wears an ornate gown laced with trim (10 gp). Around the old man's neck is a chain, upon which is a small key. The key unlocks the chest in chamber A.

Chamber J contains a sarcophagus holding the body of a younger man. If the burial vault is disturbed, the body of the young man animates immediately. Now a mummy, it will attack anyone it can reach inside the building. If not disposed of, it follows anyone who manages to escape from the mastaba (using its supernatural strength to scale the shaft leading to the roof).

**Mummy:** AC 3; MV 6; HD 6+3; hp 23; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d12; SA fear, disease; SD harmed only by magical weapons, immune to *sleep, charm, hold, cold, poison, paralysis*; SW vulnerable to fire; SZ M (6'); ML champion (15); Int low (6); AL LE; XP 3,000; MM/261

**4. Painted mastaba:** This mastaba is 15 feet high. It is painted light blue and has a smooth surface. The interior layout of this structure is shown in Inset 2 of Map 3.

The ground level of the interior has two burial chambers, C and D. A shaft leads from the roof to the chambers below ground. Each aboveground chamber holds a sarcophagus containing the body of a young man. The chambers also contain canopic jars (filled) and all the funereal items mentioned in the previous descriptions.

The underground level of this mastaba has one large burial chamber, K, that contains four sarcophagi and their attendant canopic jars (filled). The bodies in these coffins (a man, a woman, and two young boys) are dressed in elaborate gowns.

The man's body holds an ornate scepter (non-magical, 200 gp) and has a silver chain about its neck (50 sp). The woman wears a jeweled tiara (200 gp) and a gold ring (50 gp). Neither of the other bodies has any jewelry or ornamentation.

The underground chamber contains four 1-foot-cubic alcoves (L, M, N, and O) 4 feet off the floor. The alcoves have been covered over with rows of thin bricks and a coating of mortar, making the visible surface look like ordinary walls. These coverings are considered secret doors and can be detected as such by an elf or a half-elf. Anyone who knocks on the wall in one of these locations will hear a hollow sound. The panels must be broken through (not difficult or time-consuming) to get at the objects inside. Each alcove holds a small chest containing 200 gp, 100 sp, and 1d4 gems (50 gp each). Also, 1d4 of the chests contain a magical potion of your choosing.

Any, some, or all of these sealed alcoves may contain poison gas traps (your preference). The chests inside are sealed with no apparent means of entry. They must be broken open by inflicting damage equal to 8 hp. If a chest that is broken into fails a saving throw vs. crushing blow (as for thick wood), any potion bottle it may have contained is broken from the impact of the blow.

This mastaba is protected by magical means. Anyone who touches any body in any of the chambers above or below ground suffers a curse that acts as the 3rd-level priest spell *cause disease* (debilitating).

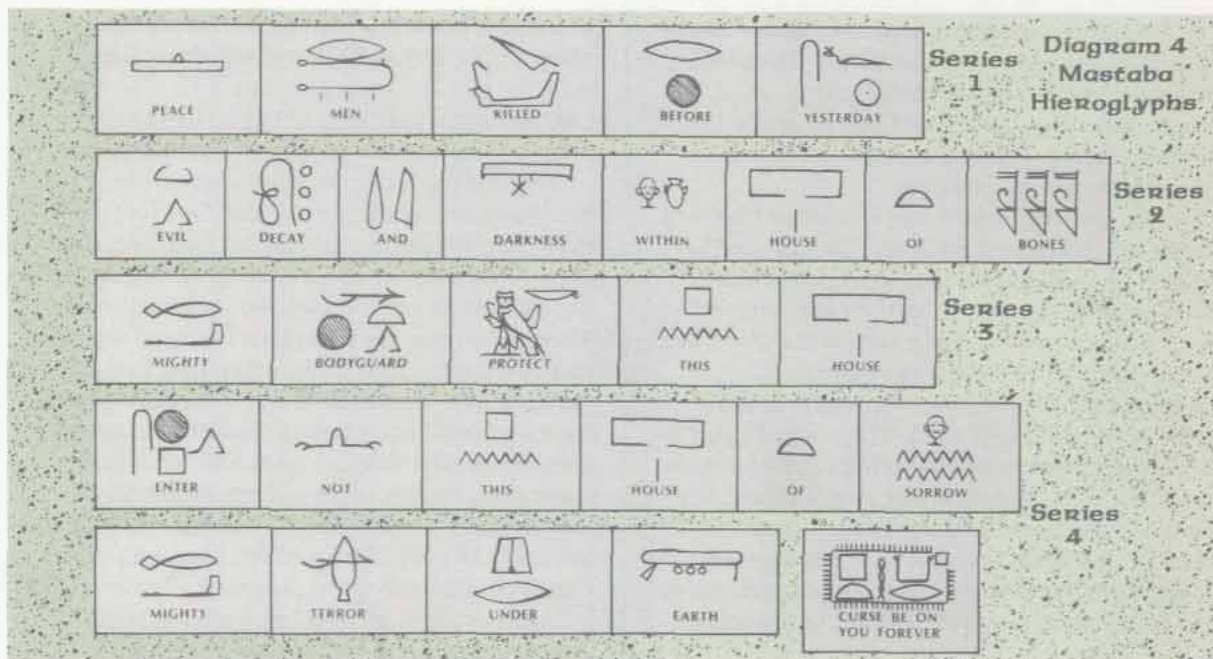
**5. Unpainted mastaba:** This mastaba is 20 feet high and is imprinted with two sets of hieroglyphs. The interior of this structure is based on Inset 3 of Map 3.

The hieroglyphs embossed and painted on this building appear to convey a message. Starting to the right of the stone slab on the western face of the structure, the hieroglyphs run in sequence from left to right around the entire mastaba, ending just to the left of the stone slab where they began. The sequence of hieroglyphs





## City of the Dead



is shown in Diagram 4 (above) and corresponds to series 1 and 2.

Hieroglyphs on this and other mastabas may be read by magical means only. None of the Nairotans understands the symbols, nor would they be interested in guessing at their meaning. Any PC who magically reads the hieroglyphs translates them as follows:

1. "Peace Men Killed Before Yesterday."
2. "Evil Decay And Darkness Within The House of Bones."
3. "Mighty Bodyguard Protects This House."
4. "Enter Not This House of Sorrow. Mighty Terror Under Earth. Curse Be On You Forever."

The ground level of this mastaba has two burial chambers and a shaft that leads to the chambers below. Each aboveground chamber holds a sarcophagus containing the body of a young man. There is nothing else of interest in either chamber; notably, there are no canopic jars.

This mastaba is not protected in the same manner as some of the others. It does, however,

contain magical wards underground. At the bottom of the underground shaft is what appears to be the face of a human male carved at head height in the west wall. When the PCs reach the bottom of the shaft, the face opens its eyes and speaks slowly, almost painfully, its lips moving in overanimated gestures. It then closes its eyes. After a brief pause, it opens its eyes and repeats the message.

The PCs may only translate the clay face's message via magical means. If they succeed at this task, they hear the following:

*"Do not enter this or any house of sorrow. Mighty terror lies within. Leave this city of the dead before the evil curse is upon you."*

If the PCs obey the face, nothing terrible happens (yet). They are free to return to the village and free of the implied curse—at least until the brigands break into the mastabas later on (see "Adventure Hooks"). If the PCs touch the clay face or dig around the dried clay surrounding it, they make an eerie discovery: the face is part of a



mummified corpse buried in the wall in an erect position. Once the PCs uncover the body, it ceases to function as a *magic mouth*. The corpse wears only a cloth around its waist. Its purpose served, the corpse crumbles slowly into dust.

Note: The method of burial of this corpse is significant to the DM, as the same phenomenon occurs in mastaba 8 in a more malevolent form. Quick-thinking PCs may be given a hint of this terror (if you deem it appropriate). Subtlety is the key; do not simply give the secret away.

If the PCs continue without heeding the warning, or if the brigands have already broken into the mastabas, continue with the rest of the descriptions listed below.

The underground level of this mastaba has two sealed chambers (P and Q) that contain one sarcophagus each and an attendant canopic jar (filled). The chambers contain the remains of a holy man and his wife.

Chamber P holds the mummified remains of a middle-aged man. He wears a regal gown covered with ornate trim and hieroglyphs that denote him as a religious man. On his head is a jeweled headdress (1,000 gp). He holds a jeweled scepter (1,500 gp) in one hand and wears a gold chain (500 gp) about his neck.

Chamber Q holds the body of a middle-aged woman dressed in colorful raiment. She wears an ornate necklace (500 gp) around her throat and has a gold ring (500 gp) on her finger.

**6. Painted mastaba:** This mastaba is 15 feet high. It is painted green and has hieroglyphs (Diagram 4, series 1 and 2) painted in rows along the western face of the mastaba, between each of the 5-foot-wide stone slabs. The mastaba layout is shown in Inset 2 of Map 3. The contents of this mastaba are similar to those in mastaba 4.

**7. Unpainted mastaba:** This building is 15 feet high. It is smooth-sided with dried mud and has hieroglyphs painted in rows between the stone slabs (Diagram 4, series 1 and 2). The interior of

this structure is laid out as shown in Inset 2 of Map 3. The contents of this mastaba are similar to those in mastaba 4.

**8. Painted mastaba:** This mastaba is 20 feet high. It is the most elaborately painted mastaba in the lot. The hieroglyphs embossed and painted into the structure appear to convey a message. Starting to the right of the stone slab on the western face of the structure, they run in sequence around the entire mastaba, ending to the left of the same stone slab. The characters are elaborately imprinted and painted, giving this mastaba a more regal appearance than any of the others. The series of hieroglyphs is illustrated in Diagram 4, series 1–4. The interior of this structure is based on Inset 3 of Map 3.

The ground level of this mastaba has two chambers and a shaft that leads below. Each aboveground chamber holds a sarcophagus; each contains the body of a young man. There is nothing else of interest in either chamber; notably, there are no canopic jars.

This mastaba is protected. If either of the aboveground chambers is breached, the body within will animate and attack. In all respects, these mummies behave the same as the one described in mastaba 3.

The underground level has two sealed chambers (P and Q) that contain one sarcophagus each and an attendant canopic jar (filled). The chambers hold the ancient rulers of the realm, their names long since lost to the sands of time. Chamber P contains the mummified remains of a middle-aged man. His body wears a regal gown covered with ornate trim and hieroglyphs that describe him as a head of state. On its head is a jeweled crown (1,000 gp). He holds an ornate scepter (1,500 gp) in his right hand and wears a gold chain (500 gp) about his neck. Clutched in his left fist (and not visible unless the fingers are pried apart) is a key.

Chamber Q contains the body of a middle-aged woman dressed in colorful raiment. She



## City of the Dead

wears a jeweled crown (1,000 gp), an ornate necklace (1,000 gp), and a gold ring (500 gp). The woman holds a scepter (1,500 gp) in her left hand. Clutched within her other hand is a key.

Two small chambers, R and S, contain one chest each and an ornate crown on a silk pillow. The headpieces are crowns of state; as such, they are extremely valuable artifacts (5,000 gp each). The crowns carry curses that befall any person who takes possession of them. Treat each curse as similar to the 6th-level priest spell *harm*.

Both chests are made of metal-banded wood and are locked. The keys to the chests are held by the bodies in chambers P and Q (P to R, Q to S). Any attempt to pick the locks results in 1d4 darts being shot out for 1d4 points of damage each. Each chest contains the following items: 1,000 gp, 500 sp, and 1d6 gems (1,000 gp each), plus a magical scroll and/or a potion (your choice).

Of course, the PCs may not get a chance to make this discovery until later. The moment anyone touches a chest, he is grabbed by mummified hands that reach through the soft clay wall at the back of the chamber. Encased in the walls are 10 lesser mummies. When aroused, they break free of their clay confines to attack the PCs.

This action creates a secondary action not intended by the mastabas' creators. Once the lesser mummies are free of their confines (or if the PCs begin losing horribly), the walls and ceilings begin to collapse and slide into the underground chamber. The result is a room full of wet clay and earth, canopic jars and other items from both levels. The PCs and lesser mummies are engulfed by the flood of earth and must make a check against Strength to wade through (use Strength 12 for the lesser mummies).

**Lesser mummies (10):** AC 7; MV 6; HD 2+2; hp 15; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA disease; SD harmed only by magical weapons, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *cold*, *poison*, *paralysis*; SW vulnerable to fire; SZ M (5'); ML champion (15); Int low (5); AL LE; XP 975

The collapse creates a pit similar to a sinkhole, with the mastaba walls caving into the pit and creating a mess of the structure and its contents. The PCs and lesser mummies may only escape the underground chamber by crawling up and through the open pit—an eerie sight, probably confusing and perhaps terrifying to an outside observer, who sees clay-covered bodies (some living, some dead) coming out of the ground. Any PC who fails the Strength check will suffocate in 10 rounds unless rescued.

**9. Painted mastaba:** This mastaba is 15 feet high. It is painted burnt orange. The interior is based on the layout shown in Inset 2 of Map 3. The contents are similar to those in mastaba 4.

**10. Unpainted mastaba:** This mastaba is 10 feet high. It is made of rough dried brick. Its surface is featureless; it has no recesses on the outside walls. This mastaba is a single-story structure with no underground shaft or chambers. The interior is based on the ground-floor layout shown in Inset 4 of Map 3. At your option, either or both chambers contain a poison gas that escapes once the tomb is breached.

The larger chamber inside this mastaba (H) contains a simple sarcophagus holding the mummified body of a young woman. She wears a simple robe and no jewelry. The other chamber (G) contains the canopic jar and attendant funeral objects mentioned in previous entries. There is nothing else in either chamber.

**11. Unpainted mastaba:** This mastaba is 10 feet high. It is made of rough dried brick and is featureless except for the 5-foot-wide recess in the north wall. It is based on Inset 1 of Map 3. The contents of this mastaba are similar to those of mastaba 1.

**12. Unpainted mastaba:** This mastaba is identical with mastaba 10.

# City of the Dead



## Adventure Hooks

- The PCs encounter the Nairotan tribe in the midst of great turmoil. Seeing the mastabas as a source of treasure, a band of brigands invaded the village while K'drin, M'rin, the village warriors, and priests were away. The brigands kidnapped K'dza and Paor and tortured them to learn how to get into the mastabas. Getting no answers, they killed the elders, took several tribesmen hostage, then rode off to the mastabas.

When the PCs arrive at the mastabas, they find that several chambers have been broken into, with the brigands stealing the contents and fighting off the inhabitants (which mastabas and the number of brigands inside each one is up to you).

There are 20 brigands currently at work. They are led by Garin, a 3rd-level fighter.

**Brigands (20):** AC see below; MV 12 (mounted 24); HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ M (6'); ML average (9); Int average (8); AL NE; XP 15

**Equipment:** All are armed with swords and spears, and carry a bag containing a shovel, pick, and rations. Four are also armed with short bows. All carry small shields; 10 wear no armor (AC 9), 9 wear leather armor (AC 7), and 1 wears ring mail (AC 6). All ride light horses with basic tack and harness.

## Garin

*A 3rd-level male human fighter*

**Alignment:** Neutral evil  
**Move:** 12 (mounted 18)  
**AC:** 4  
**THAC0:** 18  
**Hit points:** 30

**Strength:** 17    **Intelligence:** 12  
**Dexterity:** 15    **Wisdom:** 4  
**Constitution:** 12    **Charisma:** 15

**Proficiencies:** Long sword, spear; blind-fighting, survival (12)

**Languages:** Common, kobold

**Armor:** Chain mail and small shield

**Weapons:** Long sword and spear +1

**Equipment:** Medium horse with basic tack and harness, and *ring of human influence*

**Age:** 38

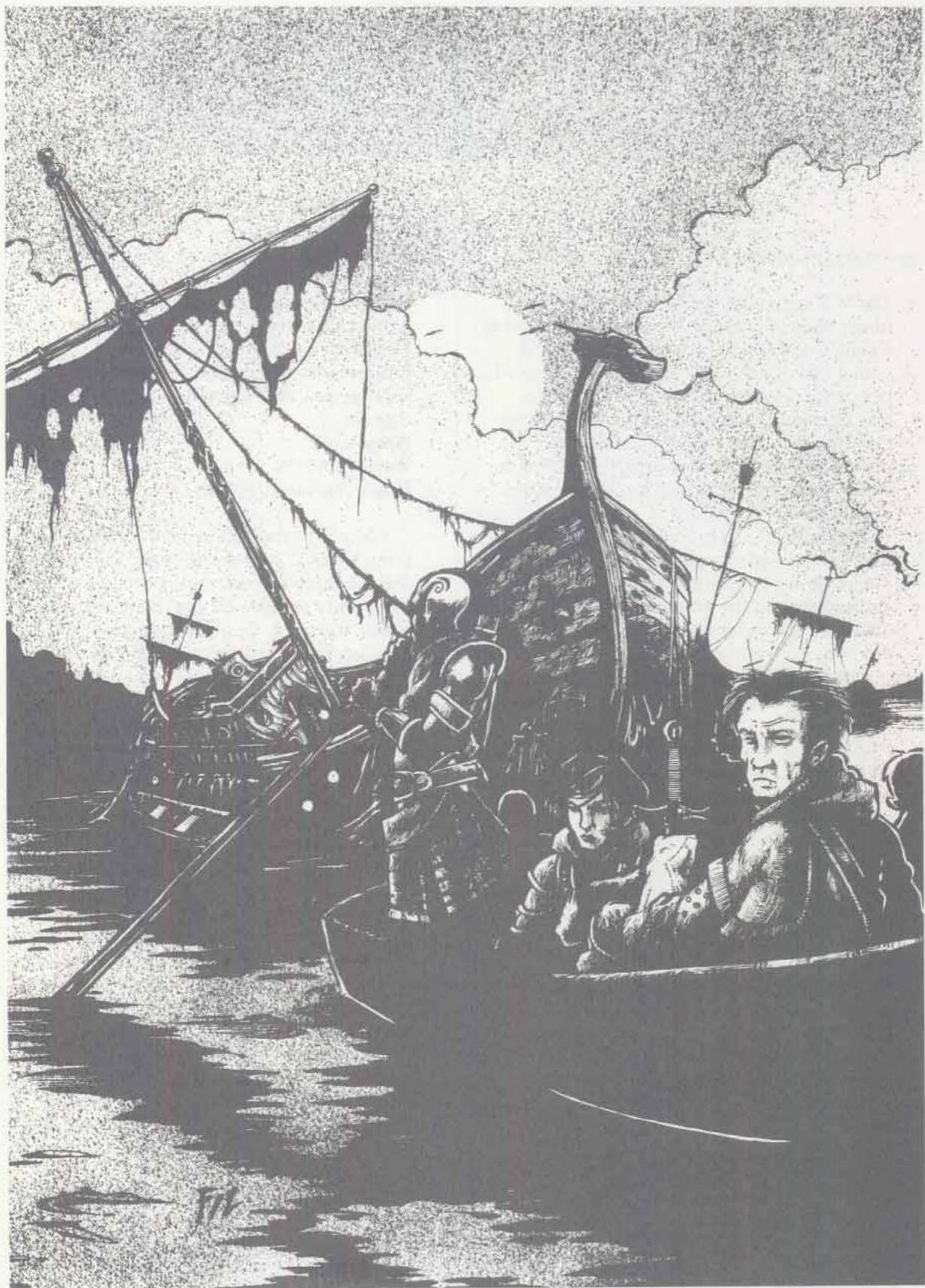
**Height:** 6'2"

**Weight:** 180 lbs.

**Hair/eyes:** Black/brown

Garin is a cruel leader bent on stealing anything he finds in his path. Many local tribes fear the brigands, worried not only for their own safety but also for the safety of their ancestral treasures. Garin and his men will attack anyone who does not submit to their will. They take anything portable, or objects that may be easily disassembled (i.e., broken apart and salvaged). Garin and his brigands also have a reputation as slave traders up and down the coast.

- A scholar interested in excavating the mastabas for academic purposes wants to enlist the assistance of the PCs. He and a group of laborers approached the "dig" several weeks ago, but had barely begun to investigate when they were warned away from the place by a group of angry tribesmen. The scholar wants to return to the site and make a show of force (using the PCs to help accomplish this), hoping to keep the tribesmen from becoming violent, but he also realizes that some diplomatic skills may be necessary to prevent a conflict. Emphasize to the PCs (through the persona of the scholar) that this is *not* a treasure hunt. Personal gain (keeping any treasure that may be found) is not the scholar's goal, and he will not allow anyone to take away any recovered items, but he will pay a generous salary to any character who agrees to help.



# The Mariners' Graveyard



The seagoing approach to the coast in this area is blocked by a large patch of sargasso, a slippery, ropelike variety of kelp. Many ships have sailed into the sargasso and found themselves hopelessly entangled in the clinging fronds. The area itself is now a graveyard for abandoned ships and long-forgotten salvage.

## The Sargasso Sea

The waters that run along the coast of the country of Martaigne are some of the warmest in the world. Equatorial currents bring a constant, fresh supply of warm ocean water to the region—water teeming with plankton and several other building blocks in the oceanic food pyramid. This combination of warmth and fertility is the main reason the coastal waters are so abundant with plant and animal life. Among the most abundant plants are the sargasso weeds.

In our real world, the Sargasso Sea is a large region of the North Atlantic Ocean off the southeast coast of the United States. In early American history, the sargasso seaweed provided only a slight hazard to sailors in smaller ships. The vegetation resembles normal seaweed in many ways; the only difference is the size of the kelp beds. These beds covered miles of ocean, coloring the waves green and giving them a froth uncommon to the deeper waters.

In its fantastic form as described in this setting, the sargasso differs in many ways from the real thing. It is thick and spiny, and clings easily to wood, doing so by imbedding its thorns and lashing its fronds slowly around the object. It grows quickly and has rudimentary ambulation in its fronds. As a result, it is able not only to cling to objects, but to slowly pull its fronds across the surface of an object, eventually crisscrossing fronds and covering a surface with its thick, green tentacles.

The greater mass of the sargasso lies in a bed well below the water's surface, but its fronds are able to exist out of water indefinitely. Thus, it pro-

vides a far more hazardous obstacle to sailors than its real-world counterpart does. In this scenario, the sargasso forms a bed that stretches from the shores of Martaigne's coast, some fronds twining as far inland as a quarter-mile before splintering and drying out due to lack of water.

From shore, this intricate network of roots reaches 50 miles out into the warm coastal stream. Strong ocean currents make it difficult for the sargasso to grow beyond the 50-mile mark; the fronds are broken by the strong undertow or forced back into the bed. Nevertheless, the sargasso beds make this portion of the coast unapproachable. As a result, this region inland is mostly uninhabited.

Why the sargasso does not cover the entire coast is a curious question for sailors and scientists alike. Most believe it to be a matter of divine favor: the maritime gods approve of the humans' seaborne trade and limit the accursed sargasso to this small region only. The truth, however, is a combination of elements. One is that the soil composition along the shoreline on either side of the sargasso sea contains a high quantity of lime.

The lime is the output of two rivers: the Rica and the Alesta. Both rivers empty into the Sapara Ocean within 100 miles of each other (that region being the sargasso coast), each creating its own unique delta. Both deltas are massive, swampy regions characterized by lime and muck. Much of this lime silt pours out onto the coastal shelf, or is swept away by the swift, ocean currents. The lime deposits expelled by each river blanket the silt-covered floor of the coastal shelf everywhere except for the roughly 50-mile-square area where the sargasso thrives.

The sargasso is unable to gain even a temporary hold beyond the 50-mile mark, near harbors where the lime composition is low. This is because the settlers of the cities built in the harbors take painstaking efforts to clear the sargasso as soon as it takes root. Some cities employ permanent laborers to conduct this dredging operation



## The Mariners' Graveyard

year-round, using a combination of barge-based machines and human (and sometimes merman) divers to perform the task.

The sargasso bed in this region is most dense near the ocean's surface, where its roots branch off into several intertwining shoots, all woven together like wet burlap. The ocean floor is much less densely covered, and resembles an underwater forest planted with sargasso roots. These roots vary widely in circumference, ranging from the dimensions of a small birch to those of a giant sequoia.

The fantastic variety of sargasso, though the plant is not sentient, is an important element in the setting. You may add to this description as you see fit. Likewise, if a larger sargasso region is desired, feel free to extend the sargasso beds in any direction(s)—even onshore. This setting could provide several adventures for players and even generate its own campaign setting with a little extra work.

### The Sargasso

The sargasso fronds that intertwine the rotting hulls of captive ships are fairly thick (anywhere from 6 inches to 3 feet in diameter) and exceedingly slippery. In addition, their sinewy ropes are covered with round-edged thorns. The thorns are surprisingly sharp, and vary widely in their dimensions, ranging from the size of a nail to that of a large dagger. The sargasso bed is blanketed with these thorny fronds; they writhe and roll through the bed, reaching out of water like leafy, green serpents before disappearing once again beneath the calm waters. The slippery, green ropes cover everything in the sargasso beds, hanging from ships in the manner of broken rigging and stretching between wrecks like mooring lines.

Dexterous characters may find it possible to use the sargasso fronds as paths between ships, treating them as ropes for gaining access to ship hulls that sit high in the water. Doing so requires

a Dexterity check at every change of direction. For example, a player says his thief is walking across the fronds to a large medieval caravel (a typical sailing vessel of the middle ages). Once he has done that, he walks across the fronds to another ship. The action requires two Dexterity checks.

In cases where PCs choose to climb the slippery fronds, use the climbing rules set forth in Chapter 14 of the *Player's Handbook*. Treat the fronds as slippery, rough with ledges (represented by the thorns, which can be used as handholds). Do not feel obligated to use these rules in short climbs of less than 5 feet. Falling damage of 1d6 points per 10 feet fallen applies, with an additional 1d4 points of damage assessed from falling on the sharp, daggerlike thorns that cover the fronds. Though their edges are rounded, the thorns do have sharp points that are strong enough to pierce armor.

There are several decaying, half-sunken ships' hulls protruding at regular intervals throughout the sargasso sea. These remains appear in all shapes and sizes from lifeboats to small towing craft, from single-deck intercoastal barges to the shattered, splintered remnants of double-decked, oceangoing caravels. Many of these would not be visible above the ocean surface were it not for the sargasso fronds keeping them afloat.

The ships' wooden skeletons populate the ghostly harbor with their twisted, bisected remains, their masts and prows pointing skyward at awkward, random angles. From a distance, the sun-bleached facades look like so many bones poking out of the ground. Up close, however, the wooden husks tell a different story, as they serve as homes to several forms of maritime life.

Most of the ships' remains are entwined with sargasso fronds and seaweed, covered with moss and barnacles, and serve as hosts to insects of every variety. Seagulls and other marine birds roost in some of the broken hulls; others provide shelter for fish hiding below. Other larger, more intact hulls provide cover for lurking predators.

## The Mariners' Graveyard



Place the remains of these miscellaneous vessels wherever you desire. If a tougher challenge is needed, feel free to load up on these troublesome wrecks, placing them throughout the field of seaworthy ships described below. Maps of these shipwrecks will not be necessary; simply describe the ship's appearance and let the players decide whether or not their characters will investigate. Many of these wrecks may provide obstacles in the PCs' paths to other ships. However you decide to approach this matter is your option.

Creatures that inhabit the sargasso seas and the wrecks locked in their serpentine fronds are listed below. You should vary the number of creatures appearing to fit the power levels of the PCs. The "Aquatic Monster Summoning, Salt Water" table on p. 378 of the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* hardcover book can be helpful in providing additional suggestions for creatures and maritime oddities (such as seaweed that allows underwater breathing when eaten).

**Locathah (50):** AC 6; MV 1, Sw 12; HD 2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ M (5'+ tall); ML average (10); Int very (11–12); AL N; XP 35 each; MM/228

The locathah have lived in the sargasso beds for as long as their history recalls. The sargasso sea gives them a safe haven from the larger predators of the coastal waters, and it provides the necessary building materials for underwater habitats—simple shelters constructed of sargasso roots and covered with ordinary seaweed. For years, the locathah's numbers reached into the hundreds as their community thrived and grew. Then the human ships appeared.

As humankind progressed along the coast, so did its technology. Sailing vessels became more apparent. At first small, intercoastal vessels plied their trade along the coast; then large, oceangoing traders started to appear. As the shipping routes defined themselves, passage along the

sargasso beds became more frequent. Frequent also were the off-course ships that strayed into the sargasso weeds and became entangled.

The appearance of the humans led to a decline in the locathah population. At first curious, the locathah investigated the odd-looking "vessels floating in air." Frightened sailors responded by attacking the locathah. At first, the locathah fought back. Then, as more and more of their numbers died or disappeared, the locathah began isolating themselves from the surface. Many moved deeper into the frond-choked waters. Still others remained near the surface, curious, waiting patiently for the humans to go. But the humans did not go; they continued to come, now in ever greater numbers.

As ocean trade boomed around the continent, coastal and deep-ocean transits became more frequent. So, too, did instances of ship strandings. With the shipwrecks came other, less scrupulous humans: vainglorious mercenaries greedy for salvage. These bands of marauders raided the shipwrecks, setting many aflame and killing anyone or anything that came between the marauders and their wealth. Many locathah were killed. So were men, along with several other species of creatures inhabiting the sargasso beds.

For years, the sargasso beds were a graveyard: waters red with blood and thick with sharks, air putrid with the smell of death and decay. Then a curious change occurred—something at first fortuitous and strange, later malevolent and unspeakable. The locathah did not understand the change, only that it somehow involved humans and their dead. Since then, the locathah have avoided the ocean surface, except for the occasional trophy-seeker who typically never returns.

The locathah may be useful to PCs capable of underwater breathing and possessing great powers of persuasion. The locathah would like nothing more than to rid the sargasso waters of their human curse. They could be convinced to aid anyone willing to help achieve that purpose.





## The Mariners' Graveyard

You should develop the locathah society as much as desired, adding attendant creatures and other elements of their habitat as explained in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book.

**Barracudas (2d6):** AC 6; MV Sw 30; HD 3; hp 17 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SZ M (6' long); ML steady (11); Int animal (1); AL N; XP 65 each; MM/117

**Sharks (3d4):** AC 5; MV Sw 24; HD 5; hp 32 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SZ L (8-9' long); ML average (9); Int animal (1); AL N; XP 175 each; MM/117

The sargasso beds are home to several varieties of fish, including predators such as barracudas and sharks. Sharks usually appear in groups of three or more, though lone hunters are not uncommon. Note that the number appearing is not the total number inhabiting the sargasso sea.

**Sahuagin (20-100):** AC 5; MV 12, Sw 24; HD 2+2, 3+3 (lieutenant), or 4+4 (chieftain); hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1 or special; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d4/1d4/1d4 or by weapon; SD exceptional vision & hearing; SZ M (6' tall) to L (9' tall); ML steady (12); Int high (13-14); AL LE; XP 175/270/420; MM/306

A twist that may be added to the sargasso sea is the addition of a small population of sahuagin. You should be aware from the outset that using the sahuagin in this setting complicates matters considerably. First, the sahuagin are notorious for their plundering and other hostile activities. As a result, their appearance in the sargasso seas could create a state of war between them and the indigenous locathah. This state of conflict could be conducted as a territorial dispute, and would easily explain not only why the locathah population is in decline, but why the shores near the sargasso sea are uninhabited.

The presence of the sahuagin may also help to explain why so many human ships are wrecked

here: the sahuagin lure the humans by planting lights and bells onboard the stranded wrecks.

Though the sahuagin complicate this setting, their addition may be beneficial to the overall campaign. You should be aware in advance of the level of time and effort that could go into developing the details: the sahuagin society, their conflict with the locathah, their deceptions, and onshore activities. Develop the sahuagin society as much as desired, adding attendant creatures and other elements of their habitat as explained in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book.

**Sirine:** AC 3; MV 12, Sw 24; HD 6; hp 38; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA song, spell powers; SD spell powers, water breathing; SZ M; ML steady (12); Int genius (18); AL NE; XP 4,000; MM/314

This creature may be used as another reason for ships straying into the sargasso beds.

### Medieval Sailing Vessels

Until the late Middle Ages, most sea trade was conducted by small ships, little more than barges, that plied their trade via intercoastal routes (routes close to shore). Known as caravels, these small ships were often no larger than 10-15 feet wide, 30-50 feet long, and 5 feet tall from keel to rail. (See Diagram 5.) The ships were single-decked vessels with single masts set amidships. They were powered by single lateen-rigged sails: triangular sails set on a boom and secured to allow little room for movement. The ships were steered by means of a tiller and rudder at the stern of the boat and guided by a lookout in the crow's nest atop the main mast and/or in the forecabin at the bow of the ship.

Goods for transport were stored on the open deck. Crew members were housed in a small tent or wooden construct between the main mast and the stern of the ship. These small, coastal vessels carried no more than 5 to 10 sailors on month-

# The Mariners' Graveyard



long voyages that featured several shore stops along the way.

The late Middle Ages saw a change in sea travel. Caravels remained the mainstay of the commercial world, but their sizes and ranges increased. These oceangoing ships were often 20–30 feet wide, 60–90 feet long, and 10–20 feet tall from keel to rail. (See Diagram 5.) These double-decked vessels featured a top deck for crew activity and a lower deck containing a hold for goods and quarters for ship personnel. The double-decked caravels still employed single masts set amidships, and were still powered by lateen-rigged sails (usually one sail, but often two, one sail being twice the size of the other).

Goods for transport were mostly stored below deck toward the front of the ship, though sometimes also on the top deck, in the open. Crew members were quartered below deck in a separate section in the back half of the ship. The captain's quarters were located in the stern. The ship's galley, mess hall, and navigation room were housed in a wooden construct on the top deck situated between the main mast and the stern of the ship. These larger vessels carried 10 to 30 sailors on long, open-sea voyages that often lasted several months and sometimes more than a year.

## The Coastal Graveyard

The ships described below are provided as examples of wrecks that inhabit the sargasso sea. Each entry includes sample cargoes and creatures that have taken up residence inside or around the wreckage. These may be varied in any way you see fit: add the personal effects of any crew members, including ship's logs, personal letters, business documents and correspondence, and other notes of interest—in short, any material that may give a meaningful clue to the ship's point of origin, destination, freight, and the fate of its crew.

Any ship mired within the sargasso bed can

be classified in one of five categories of integrity, as follows:

*Sunken:* Only the ship's prow, mast, stern, or the bottom of its hull is visible. Usually the ship has broken in two and its mast is splintered.

*Poor:* The ship is mostly submerged, and has capsized or lies on its side. Major structural damage is evident in the ship's mast and hull.

*Bad:* The ship sits low in the water, but its top deck remains above the ocean surface. Some structural damage may be seen in the mast and hull.

*Good:* The ship sits high in the water and appears in relatively good condition.

*Excellent:* The ship sits high in the water, shows no structural damage whatsoever, and appears seaworthy.

The integrity of every ship described later in this text falls into one of the latter four categories. Although sunken ships are scattered throughout the sargasso beds, none of these wrecks are mentioned in the following roster. Many may be assumed to lie between each of the wrecks that are described. You may wish to add a few of these wrecks to the map and develop underwater encounters therein as desired.

## The Ships

From a distance, the sargasso bed looks like a harbor: ships bob on the waves as if anchored there. At night, many ship locations are eerily pinpointed by flickering pricks of light. (PCs won't know until they investigate that these light sources are lanterns, perhaps placed on and within some of the hulls by the locathah, sahuagin, or some other agency.) The state of disrepair of the ships "docked" here is only apparent upon closer inspection (from well within the sargasso sea itself). A total of about 100 ships lie in state here. Most are not truly seaworthy, being kept afloat on the bed of kelp that crisscrosses their hulls like so many thorned tentacles. Their rotting husks litter the sargasso bed.



## The Mariners' Graveyard

There are about 10 ships in all that are truly noteworthy. (Increase this number by adding ships as desired.) Many of these ships appear older, but are still in excellent shape. Others are in the earliest states of confinement and appear relatively undamaged as a result. There is another reason for some of the ships' seaworthiness, as explained in the individual descriptions that follow.

**1. The *Southern Zephyr*:** This single-decked caravel sits high in the water, which suggests that its hull is still intact and that its integrity is good. The *Southern Zephyr* is a simple, intercoastal vessel that was stranded here nearly 100 years ago. Its top deck contains the scattered remnants of a cargo of cut stone. The normally neatly stacked piles of stone have been overturned. One pile seems fairly intact, though from a distance, its disheveled appearance suggests a makeshift mound.

Close inspection reveals that this pile of stones has been stacked to form an enclosure of some sort. A 10-foot-wide hole appears in one end of the stack, presumably an opening that was once used (or is now being used) as an entrance to the area beyond. Keen-eyed PCs will notice a number of strange marks in the wooden deck around the stone pile: several small holes or indentations each roughly the size of a coin.

If the PCs stick their heads inside the opening in the stone pile, they see discarded mollusk shells, fish fins, and fish tails. They also see a large, oval-shaped object in the dark corner of the pile. The object has several appendages and moves quickly!

**Crab, giant:** AC 3; MV 9; HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2d4/2d4; SD surprise; SZ L (10'); ML elite (13); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 65; MM/50

**2. The *Golden Bow*:** This large, two-decked caravel sits high in the water; its hull is intact and its integrity is good. The top deck of the ship is

covered with sargasso and contains the rotted remains of a cargo of grain. This place is home to several rats and birds, but no other dangerous creatures (unless you decide otherwise).

**3. The *Aloysius Scott*:** This large, two-decked caravel rides low in the water, which suggests that its integrity is bad and that its hull has rotted through below the waterline. Sargasso fronds entwine the ship and lay across its hull, encircling its broken mast and snaking across the top deck. Many fronds reach inside the ship's hold and some appear to go directly through the hull.

On board, it's hard to identify objects without looking up close; the ship's mast lies broken across the top deck and the tattered remains of the sails and rigging lay tangled about the deck. PCs will have to dig through the rigging and pull away the shreds of sails that flap like flags in the offshore breeze.

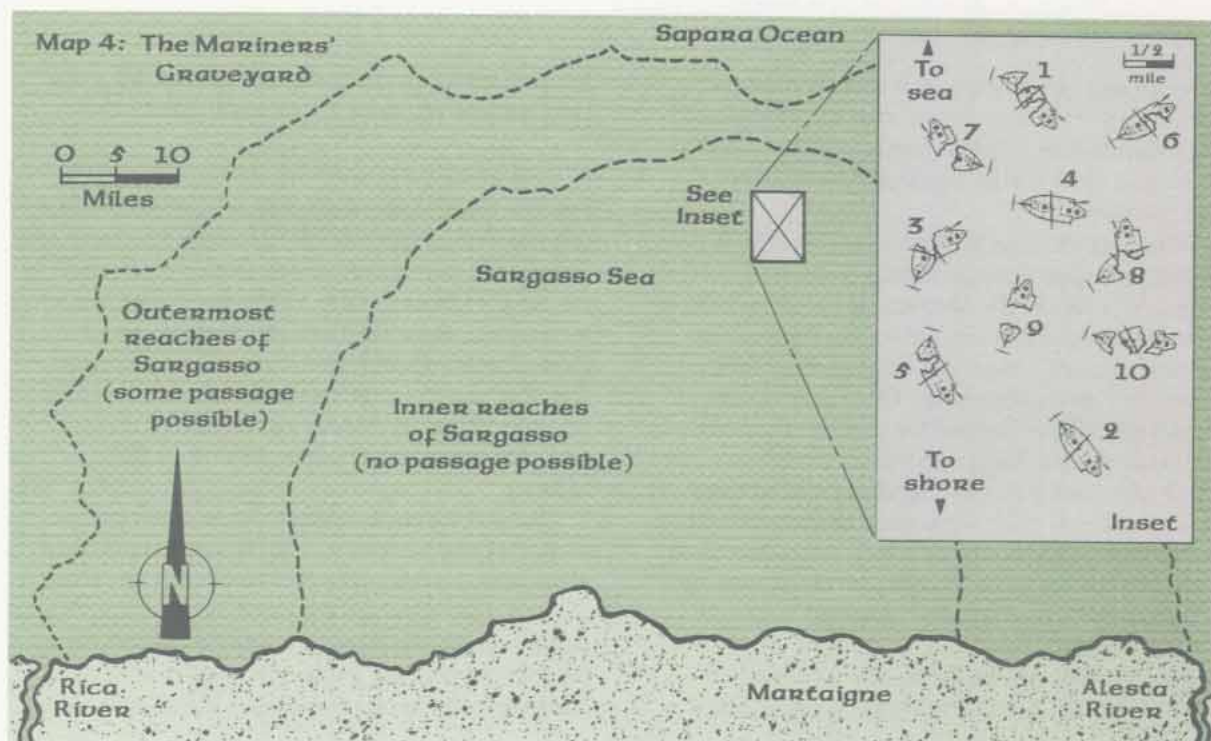
From the looks of it, any cargo the *Aloysius Scott* may have had on its top deck now belongs to Davy Jones's locker. Closer examination of the top deck reveals a few human remains. All that's left now are shards of bone—smashed skulls and splintered leg and arm bones, most of which are crushed or broken in two as if by some great force. Likewise, the ship's galley tent has been torn apart as if by a strong wind. There is nothing else on the top deck.

Below deck is another matter entirely.

**Octopus, giant:** AC 7; MV 3, Sw 12; HD 8; hp 50; THAC0 13; #AT 7; Dmg 1d4(x6)/2d6; SA constriction; SD ink, color change; SZ L (12'); ML elite (13); Int animal (1); AL N(E); XP 2,000; MM/271

When it ran afoul of the sargasso sea, the *Aloysius Scott* also had the grave misfortune of running afoul of a giant octopus. Many sailors lost their lives in the fierce battle that followed; several drowned after falling overboard or met other fates as they escaped across the sargasso

# The Mariners' Graveyard



fronds. The octopus is the cause of all the destruction on the ship. It has taken a shine to this, its new home, and lives in relative comfort below deck.

At the first sound of activity on or near the ship, the giant octopus is alert and ready to attack. PCs are likely to have some initial difficulty differentiating between sargasso fronds and octopus tentacles unless they look closely or notice movement; the two are similar enough in color, consistency, and dimensions to be confusing at first glance. The octopus takes unwitting advantage of this similarity by hiding its tentacles between sargasso fronds and under the fallen sail fabric.

The giant octopus attacks whenever it has a chance to hit, at first trying to grapple and constrict its prey, then dragging it into the hold; there, it flails its prey against the sides of the ship's hull, or pulls it underwater in an attempt to drown it. When its hit points fall below one-quarter of normal maximum, the octopus

retreats through the breach in the ship's hull and dives as far into the sargasso sea as it can.

**4. The *Windhover*:** This small ship is a single-decked caravel with good integrity; it rides high in the water and is heavily entwined by sargasso fronds. This ship's cargo is no longer on deck, though close investigation suggests the *Windhover* was hauling livestock, as indicated by the rows of stanchions, the piles of decomposed straw and manure, and the several hoof marks in the wooden deck.

As with some of the other ships described in this listing, there is nothing remarkable about the *Windhover*—unless you determine that the PCs, when they investigate this ship, need a stronger challenge than they are facing already.

**5. The *Crystal Beacon*:** This large ship is a two-decked caravel that rides low in the water, almost to the deck-line; its integrity is bad. Further, the ship sits in the water at an odd angle, with its

# The Mariners' Graveyard

prow jutting out of the water and its hold half-submerged. This may imply that the ship's hull has rotted through below the waterline and that the ship is slowly sinking into the sargasso fronds below.

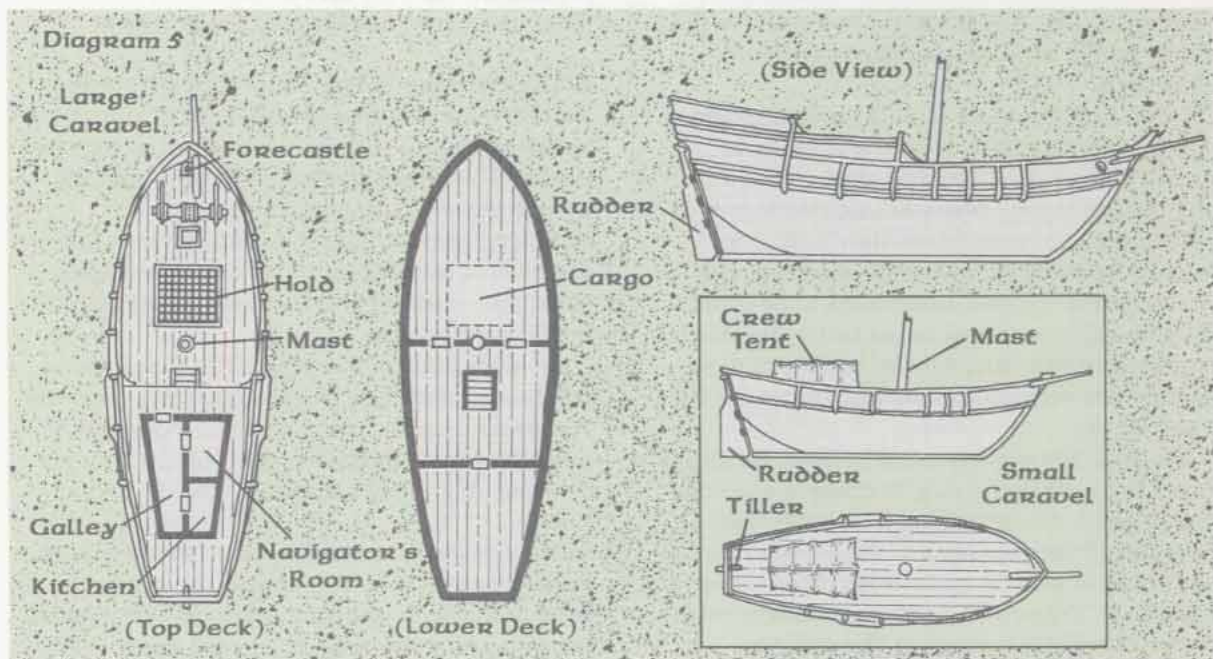
Whatever the *Crystal Beacon* was hauling is no longer apparent; there is no sign of the ship's cargo above deck. The ship's hold is a little hard to get to, because shredded sails cover the broken opening. The PCs must dig through the fabric before they get to the portal. Once they do, they see strange fabrics draped throughout the hold—silky strands that hang into the water below. Characters who look into the upended prow of the ship see more shreds of this apparent fabric, as well as the dangling tapestry from which it has unwoven. They also see something large and black moving in the center of the tattered "drapery."

**Spider, giant marine:** AC 4; MV 9, Wb 12; HD 7+7; hp 31; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2d6;

SA poison; SZ G (10' long, 20' diam.); ML elite (14); Int low (6); AL CE; XP 1,400; MM/326

This giant marine spider has a nest built below the deck of the ship. Its webs wind throughout the decks below, with filaments reaching out to the sails and masts above deck. Nearly half of the ship's lower deck is submerged. The spider's web winds about the rest of the deck, some strands resting upon the water. (The webs on this ship may be confused for the webs created on other ships by Frader Peenbeak's *web* spell—and vice versa; see the description of ship 10, below.)

The giant marine spider sits in the topmost corner of the sunken wreck (the upended prow of the ship), waiting to drop onto any life form that appears through the hold or pops out of the water. While attacking, the spider tries to incapacitate its prey by pulling it underwater or holding it in the air, whichever it thinks is more



## The Mariners' Graveyard



detrimental. (The creature is intelligent enough to distinguish between air-breathing prey and water-breathing prey, but will not be able to tell that a PC has the ability to breathe underwater.) The spider's web is full of eggs that are ready to hatch. The spider buries its eggs in the bodies of its victims, thus providing nourishment for its hatching young.

**6. The *Pride of Valhalla*:** This small intercoastal trader is a single-decked caravel whose integrity is poor: it lies on its side in the water, half its hull exposed to the air, the other half underwater. In addition, much of the hull is charred and covered with soot. Some of its planks are burned through. The ship sits low in the water, suggesting that the *Valhalla's* hull has rotted through below the waterline, causing the ship to slowly sink into the grasping sargasso fronds.

Captured here for nearly 50 years, the *Pride of Valhalla* is a wooden tribute to foolish hopes and human ineptitude. Having run afoul of the sargasso sea, the ship's captain and crew abandoned ship. All 10 crowded into the lifeboat and quickly found themselves unable to row or even pull the boat through the tangled fronds.

In an act of utter desperation, the crew of the *Valhalla* set the ship aflame as a signal to rescue forces onshore. The ship burned throughout the night, then smoldered to the waterline before turning over on its side and sinking to its current depth. With no help apparently forthcoming, the captain and his crew decided to set out across the fronds, where they met various unknown tragic fates.

This small trader carried a cargo of finished lumber, most of which lies in a charred, rotted array alongside the *Valhalla's* black, blistered hull. The ship has become the home of 1d4 red urchins, who nest below the surface of the water in the ship's hull.

**Urchin, red (1d4):** Int semi- (3); AL N; AC 2; MV 6, Sw 6; HD 3+1; hp 19 each; THAC0 17; #AT 3;

Dmg 1d4+1; SA poison spines; SZ S (3'); ML steady (11); XP 420; MM/354

**7. The *Dancing Bear*:** This single-deck caravel sits low in the water, which suggests that its integrity is bad and that its hull has rotted through below the waterline, causing the ship to slowly sink. It has been trapped here for about 100 years.

The *Dancing Bear's* cargo has disappeared through the breach in the ship's hull; it gives off a metallic yellow glimmer from below the water's surface. From a distance these bits of metal may look precious, but they are merely pieces of bronze mixed with slag. The PCs must get into the water to make this pointed discovery. Once they do, they discover something more pointed: the teeth of several barracuda.

**Barracudas (2d6):** AC 6; MV Sw 30; HD 3; hp 17 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SZ M (6' long); ML steady (11); Int animal (1); AL N; XP 65 each; MM/117

**8. The *Pietro de Medici*:** This small intercoastal trader is a single-decked caravel. It sits low in the water, half of the top deck at the stern submerged, the bow tilting into the air at a 30-degree angle. Clearly, the ship's integrity is bad.

The *Pietro de Medici* has been confined to these waters for well over 50 years. Its cargo—iron spikes and nails—has broken through the rotting deck at various points and fallen into the waters below. Any attempt by a PC to walk upon this ship's inclined deck requires a Dexterity check. Though the top deck is covered with fronds and piles of spikes, it is also very slippery. Any character who fails the Dex check slips, falls, and slides into the water at the ship's stern. Once in the water, the PC must avoid getting caught in the ropes and shreds of sail that float upon and under the surface of the water. Below the water's surface is another surprise—one that strikes quickly at the first sign of thrashing.



## The Mariners' Graveyard

**Sharks (1d6):** AC 5; MV Sw 24; HD 5; hp 30 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SZ L (8–9' long); ML average (9); Int animal (1); AL N; XP 175 each; MM/117

**9. The *Mourning Star*:** This large, oceangoing vessel is a two-decked caravel that sits high in the water, which suggests that its integrity is good. The top deck of this large vessel is fairly clear of debris, a curious point because of the fact that most of the other ships' decks are littered with wreckage of one sort or another.

Closer examination of the ship reveals a number of other facts. The ship's sails and rigging have been removed and apparently taken away. The galley is empty, without a shred of evidence that any food was kept here, and the navigation station has no equipment. Both of the ship's lifeboats have been cut free from their hangers; neither boat can be seen on either side of the ship. Last, and most curious, the ship's hold has been boarded over, as have both ladder chutes leading belowdecks. These boarded portals are disturbing not only because they have been boarded from the inside, but also because the barriers are covered with symbols and stained with some type of oil.

Any PC looking over the rail at the stern of the ship sees a large breach in the ship's hull high enough above the waterline to keep the ship from becoming unseaworthy. The boards around this hole are splintered inward, suggesting that some outside force has broken in. In addition, keen-sighted PCs see several odd gouges in the wooden sides of the ship. These small gouges look like nail holes, or ticks made by the point of a knife or a dagger.

If the PCs look closely enough, they find the ship's log in a desk drawer above deck in the navigator's chambers. The log lists all the important data: point of origin, destination, captain, its crew of 10, and its cargo—in this case, 20 passengers of various ages, all from overseas. Mired here for well over a decade, the *Mourning Star* is

another tribute to foolish hopes. The log also tells the tale of a ship thrice cursed.

### *Mourning Star* log

According to the ship's log, the *Mourning Star* had a relatively uneventful departure and first leg of the journey. Midway through its ocean passage, however, the people on board began to take sick with an unknown illness. Victims complained of high fevers, exhibited livid, red sores that covered their arms and legs, coughed blood, and eventually went into violent convulsions. One early victim died shortly after contracting the illness. With half the crew and passengers stricken, the captain plotted an immediate course for shore, at which point the ship ran into the accursed sargasso.

The ship sat trapped for days while its unafflicted crewmen fought desperately to free the vessel. All efforts failing, the captain sent out a handful of sailors and passengers to make for shore in two separate lifeboats. Those who stayed behind derigged the ship and cared for the sick and dying passengers and crew belowdecks. Those who succumbed to the disease were wrapped in pieces of sailcloth secured with rigging and then lowered over the side into the weed-infested water—the closest thing to a burial at sea that the living could provide for them.

The fate of the two lifeboat crews is unknown (though the PCs may surmise that they did not make it ashore—or that if they did, the crews committed a heinous act by not sending help back to the ship). In any case, the remaining crew members and passengers began to give up hope as food and water supplies diminished and afflicted people started to die in greater numbers. It was at this point that the *Mourning Star* was beset by its third and final curse.

People started to witness strange sights in the wreckage surrounding their ship. At first they saw strange lights, accompanied by what appeared to be the wispy shapes of men. These

## The Mariners' Graveyard



fleeting images grew closer through the night, but disappeared with the dawn. The next evening, the figures could not be seen, though loud thumpings above deck shattered the night silence. When the sailors went above deck, they found the half-eaten remains of a man who had died early that evening and was awaiting burial. The ship's log ends at this point.

If the PCs try to go below deck, they must either do so by making a hole in the ship's deck (which is still sturdy and difficult to break through) or its hull, or by trying to batter in the boarded portals (an action requiring a combined Strength of 32, with only two characters able to hammer on a portal at one time). A simpler option is for the PCs to drop a rope or fix a rig allowing them to enter through the breach in the stern of the ship. In any case, PCs without infravision will need a light source to be able to see below deck. Also, check as necessary for any mistakes the characters make in their efforts to get through the hull and the penalties they incur as a result.

If the PCs enter the lower deck through the captain's quarters in the stern, the first thing they notice is the sweet, pungent smell of ancient decay. Though not overwhelming, the smell is strong enough to suggest death. Digging through the cabin, they find a dismembered human skeleton whose bones show signs of having been gnawed upon. There is nothing else of note in the captain's cabin, except for the odd fact that the cabin door, now obviously splintered outward from this side, was previously boarded shut from the inside. (Any character who takes the time to examine the door closely will notice this latter fact.)

Passing through this doorway, the PCs again smell the odor of decay. They also discover a horrifying scene of destruction. Amid the debris of the crew's quarters, strung from wall to post and post to wall, are several hammocks—some having fallen onto the floor, others hanging by

one end, a few still suspended from both ends. The suspended hammocks sway slowly with the gentle rocking of the ship, weighted still with the mass of their burdens. Close examination reveals these burdens as the broken, gnawed remains of several humans.


Looking around the large, open quarters, the PCs discover several bodies in similar condition—some lying in crumpled piles where they fell, others wrapped in shrouds that have been ripped and shredded open by sharp talons. All exhibit the same teeth marks. As with the captain's quarters, the doors to these quarters are similarly splintered from this side, having been boarded shut from inside. (Again, a character must specifically examine the door to notice this fact.)

As the PCs pass through this doorway, they find themselves in the ship's hold. The smell of decay is overwhelming in these dark, closed quarters—a fact that should suggest more recent deaths have occurred here. Any character who fails a Constitution check will retch and be forced to leave the room for air. Those who can stand the smell will see piles of rotting bodies in the hold of this ship . . . and movement among the bodies.

**Ghouls, lacedon (2d6):** AC 6; MV Sw 9; HD 2; hp 18 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; SA paralyzation; SD immune to *sleep* and *charm*; SZ M (6' tall); ML steady (11); Int low (5); AL CE; XP 175 each; MM/131

These ghouls have taken up residence in the hull of the *Mourning Star*, habitually bringing their prey into this cargo hold before consuming it. The ghouls will attack, following the PCs if they retreat back through the lower deck, though the monsters are reluctant to go outside the ship during daylight. (The gouges in the wood on the hull outside the crew quarters are the nail marks made by the ghouls climbing in and out of the lower deck.)





## The Mariners' Graveyard

**10. The *Winged Seraph*:** At first glance, this ship appears much like the others in the ghostly fleet: it is a large, two-decked caravel riding high in the water, which implies that its integrity is excellent. Closer examination, however, reveals a number of odd inconsistencies—for example, the fact that the ship's hull is relatively free of sargasso fronds; none of the constricting fronds appear above the waterline on this vessel. Also, the ship sits high enough in the water to suggest that its hold is empty—a strange state for any trading ship, since commerce usually involves importing materials in one direction and exporting others back. Strange also is the fact that the ship's woodwork is intact; there isn't a sign of breakage or decay anywhere in sight. Last, the ship's sails have been taken down; all the other sails on the wrecked ships (with the exception of the *Mourning Star*) hang in billowing tatters.

There are other odd notes here: a series of boards laid one across the other out onto the sargasso in a pattern suggesting a path to and from the ship; ropes that dangle from or are coiled atop the ship's rail; even wooden ladders resting on boards alongside the ship's hull. PCs using spyglasses or getting within 50 feet of the *Winged Seraph* see thin trails of smoke coming from its deck. They also see occasional suggestions of movement. Judging by appearances, the PCs may surmise that this ship is inhabited.

Indeed it is—by a strange, unearthly figure, a man by the name of Frader Peenbeak. He has lived in the sargasso bed for 20 years, aboard the *Winged Seraph*, ever since the ship ran afoul of the treacherous fronds and was abandoned for later salvage. When orders were given to abandon ship, Peenbeak, the navigator, chose to remain behind.

His decision to stay with the ship provoked the ire of his captain and the derision of the crew. At first, the captain tried to reason with his navigator, a man he had known through several ocean passages. "What possible reason can you have to stay?" he asked. Peenbeak gave no reason, stating only that leaving the ship was beg-

ging a visit from Death.

This claim further inflamed the ship's captain, who no longer pleaded with his navigator. At first he ordered Peenbeak to go, claiming the men would not be able to make it ashore without his aid. When Peenbeak gave the men his navigational tools and pointed them in the right direction, the captain grew more irate. For a time, he considered hanging his navigator on grounds of mutiny, leaving his body to dangle from the yardarm. In the end, however, the captain left Peenbeak to his own devices, cursing him and casting invectives as he ordered his crew to abandon ship.

That afternoon, the captain and his crew took the lifeboats from their transoms, lowered them into the green-tentacled water, and began to fight their way through the thick sargasso beds. That was the last Frader Peenbeak saw of his captain and crew. Though he does not know for certain that the crew failed to make it ashore, Peenbeak can see many wrecked lifeboats from the deck of the *Winged Seraph*: some are overturned, others are splintered in two. A few still ride high upon the waves, trapped in the green waters of the sargasso sea, their oars and tillers manned by the skeletons of men who starved to death when the boats became mired in the fronds.

### Frader Peenbeak

*A 9th-level male human mage*

<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral evil
<b>Move:</b>	12
<b>AC:</b>	10
<b>THAC0:</b>	18
<b>Hit points:</b>	20

<b>Strength:</b>	12	<b>Intelligence:</b>	15
<b>Dexterity:</b>	13	<b>Wisdom:</b>	14
<b>Constitution:</b>	14	<b>Charisma:</b>	9

**Proficiencies:** Dagger, staff; fishing (13), navigation (15), reading/writing (16), rope use (13), seamanship (14)

# The Mariners' Graveyard



**Languages:** Common, elvish, halfling, dwarvish, orcish

**Armor:** None

**Weapons:** Dagger, staff, dagger +1

**Equipment:** *Wand of paralyzation, amulet versus undead, rope of entanglement, portable hole, potion of longevity, personal spellbook, virtually whatever common equipment he needs*

**Spellbook (4/3/3/2/1):** 1st—*charm person\**, *dancing lights\**, *detect magic*, *feather fall*, *hypnotism*, *light*, *read magic*, *shield*, *sleep\**, *spider climb\**, *wall of fog*; 2nd—*alter self*, *detect invisibility*, *fog cloud\**, *invisibility\**, *knock*, *levitate*, *mirror image*, *misdirection*, *web\**; 3rd—*delude\**, *feign death*, *protection from normal missiles*, *slow*, *suggestion*, *vampiric touch\**, *wraithform\**; 4th—*charm monster\**, *dimension door*, *fear\**, *improved invisibility*, *polymorph self*, *solid fog*; 5th—*animate dead\**, *distance distortion*, *passwall*

\* indicates favored spell.

**Age:** 65

**Height:** 5'6"

**Weight:** 140 lbs.

**Hair/eyes:** Gray/brown

Though Frader Peenbeak's decision not to go with the rest of the crew was based originally on cowardice, his reasons for staying grew stronger based on greed. Time and solitude have led Frader Peenbeak's mind astray, causing his mental health to deteriorate during his isolation. Slowly, the strange sights and sounds of the nautical graveyard gained sway over his unsound mind, causing the inevitable collapse of his sanity.

Lacking any frame of stable intellect, Frader Peenbeak began to envision himself the commander of the entire ghost fleet. His mental health worsened as other ships blundered into the sargasso beds. At first, Peenbeak did his best to hide from the crews of the trapped ships, hoping they would suffer a fate similar to what he presumes happened to his captain and crew. Then, as his greed grew stronger, he envisioned the trapped ships and their crews as scavengers,

marauders seeking the treasures contained within the multitudinous hulls of his private fleet of salvageable ships. Peenbeak envisioned the people who would eventually come to him for help as brigands bent on salvage. This, Peenbeak told himself, would not happen.

Frader Peenbeak set about the task of protecting his "fleet" from pirates. The demented navigator dug out his old tomes and magical tools and began researching magic, thus revitalizing his old skills from younger days spent as an adventuring mage. What he did not have, he located on his foraging missions to other ships. Several times he nearly lost his life in battle. The heat of conflict strengthened him, though, building his courage, making him stronger, and sharpening his skills as a wielder of magic.

When the forces opposing him began to outnumber him, Peenbeak enlisted the aid of servants resurrected from the dead. Slowly, his skills worked toward evil, and his mind deteriorated further under delusions of godhood. Frader Peenbeak began bringing back corpses and skeletons from the shipwrecks he investigated. In the hold of the *Winged Seraph*, the crazed magician brought them back to life and empowered them with his will. Peenbeak created a small army of zombies and skeletons to do his bidding. His first goal was to protect his precious treasures: the rotting grain, broken boards, and worthless cargo held within a dozen phantom hulls.

Frader Peenbeak's evil nature is unquestionable. During his two decades alone aboard the *Winged Seraph*, Peenbeak's mind has failed completely, leaving only the animated husk of a man driven by an insatiable hoarding of worthless goods. No longer limited by moral compunction or ethical restraints, Peenbeak is capable of the most heinous acts.

Frader Peenbeak is a withered old man with gray hair, hollow cheeks, and deep-set eyes. People notice his eyes first: these, deep, impenetrable



pools seem overlarge for Peenbeak's face, a chilling sight that sets the viewer's hairs on end. Wrinkled, bent, and apparently frail, Frader Peenbeak is surprisingly strong for his age. He is a misanthrope in the keenest sense of the word. He avoids human contact unless it suits him, plotting the demise of anyone he meets. Peenbeak attacks with his undead minions first, resorting to magical combat next, and physical combat in cases of emergency only.

Above deck, Peenbeak still uses the *Winged Seraph's* galley and mess hall; he also uses the former navigator's room as a sunroom. Below deck, Peenbeak employs the captain's quarters as his cabin, which accommodations he has furnished with the salvage of a dozen other ships. The cabin contains a four-poster bed, dresser and mirror, standing wardrobe, desk, table and chair, wooden chest, and other furnishings.

The crew's quarters have been remodeled to house Peenbeak's study, a large room containing his work station, a rolltop desk, a library, and

other implements necessary for his research. The mage keeps his prized magical tools and references in a locked cabinet.

Peenbeak uses the ship's hold as a work area and a storage room for his zombies and skeletons. A small cell has been built into the back of the hold; it is here that Peenbeak places captives he plans to question or perhaps use later. Any zombies and skeletons stored here will remain dormant until anyone unfamiliar enters the hold, whereupon they will attack immediately.

**Zombies, sea (2d12):** AC 7; MV 6, Sw 12; HD 5; hp 18 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; SA stench, disease, spell use; SD spell immunities; SZ M (6'); ML fearless (19); Int low (6); AL CE; XP 420 each; MM/373

**Skeletons (3d10):** AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (weapon); SD spell immunities; SZ M (6' tall); ML special (never checks); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 65 each; MM/315

# The Mariners' Graveyard



## Adventure Hooks

- The PCs' ship becomes entangled in the thick sargasso as it approaches the coast. This approach should occur at night, in which case the PCs notice an eerie light on the deck of one of the ghostly ships also trapped in the sargasso. The light moves about above deck, disappears and reappears, and goes below deck. It eventually disappears from the deck of one ship to later reappear on the deck of another.

If the PCs' ship is entangled during daylight, they notice movement on the deck of one of the shipwrecks. The movement later occurs on several other ships. By nightfall, the lights appear as described above.

- In a tavern or a nautical supply store in a port city, the PCs overhear tales of strange, ghostly lights that appear in the shipwrecks off the coast of Martaigne. Many local sailors believe the sargasso-entangled ships are haunted by the spirits of dead sailors. Others believe the rotting hulls are home to various maritime beasts and other malevolent life forms. A superstitious lot by nature, many local mariners are satisfied simply to avoid the maritime graveyard, regardless of what unknown, salvageable treasures may exist therein.

If the PCs venture into the sargasso and return to the port city with proof of their successful salvage operation, they will be hailed as heroes, and any number of sailors will be eager to sign on for another mission if the characters are interested in going back for another try.

- The government of Martaigne has finally decided to do something about the sargasso, and is looking for ambitious and powerful characters to help clear the weeds from this entire area. The country is becoming overcrowded, and the shoreline running between

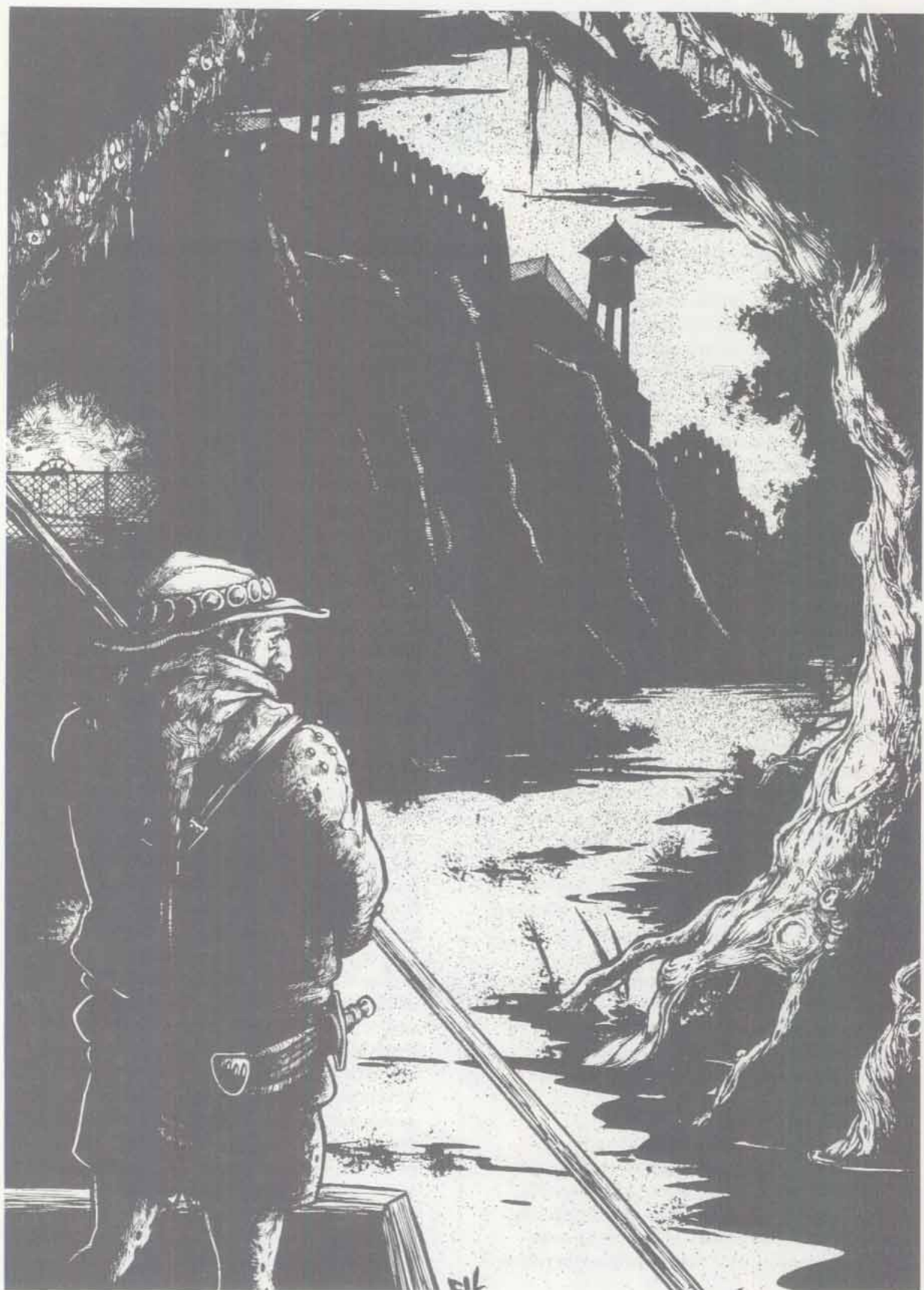
the two rivers is needed for settlement by people who want to emigrate from the cities—but no one can occupy this area until and unless the sargasso, and all the wreckage contained within it, is gotten rid of.

This could be an opportunity for characters with access to powerful magic to put their abilities to some constructive use. If the PCs agree to hire on for this job, it is their choice whether to approach the sargasso from the seaward or the landward side. The root of the problem, of course, is the ocean floor—obliterating the sargasso at sea level will not keep it from growing back.

Optionally, the characters could hire on as diplomats charged with the responsibility of trying to enlist the aid of the intelligent sea creatures living in this area. The cooperation, or at least the consent, of the locathah will be necessary if this effort to clear away the sargasso is ever to succeed.

- A wizard who viewed the area of the shipwrecks from above by using his *carpet of flying* has returned with a strange tale: On the deck of one of the trapped ships he saw an old man who was obviously agitated. (This was Frader Peenbeak, who was furious with the flying wizard for having intruded upon his territory and began shouting and shaking his fists to get the wizard to go away.)

The wizard did not dare to try landing his carpet alone and taking the old man aboard (of course, Peenbeak would never be willing to leave anyway), but now that he has returned home he is interested in finding a group of adventurers who are willing to revisit the sargasso and try to rescue the old man. The wizard may be willing to accompany the party, or he might agree to loan or rent his *carpet of flying* to the PCs. The goal of the mission is to save the old man, not to recover any booty from the trapped ships, but PCs are not forbidden from salvaging anything they can.



# Island of Lost Souls



Deep within bayou country, on a man-made island at the edge of a slow, winding river, is Gedding Gaol. The prison was built to house the most nefarious criminals and political prisoners. Accessible only by boat, this formidable structure is known far and wide for its main claim to fame: no one imprisoned here has ever survived an escape attempt.

## Overview

The early lawlessness of the Thazian frontier posed a problem for new settlers in the realm. With criminal activity widespread, farmers and their families had a difficult time forging safe and secure lives for themselves. To alleviate the problem, the settlers banded together, forming small communities that grew as the region became more developed. In the early days, laws were strictly enforced: Some communities considered any criminal act more severe than petty theft to be punishable by hanging or some other means of execution. Justice for lawbreakers was swift and merciless.

As the population of the former frontier increased and the area became more civilized, settlers and their descendants adopted a somewhat more tolerant approach toward wrongdoers. Only the most heinous crimes, such as murder and treason, were still punishable by death. People found guilty of lesser crimes, such as thievery and assault, were imprisoned. City jails served this purpose initially, and larger prisons were built later to meet an increased need. Gedding Gaol is one such complex.

Since its completion more than a century ago, Gedding Gaol has stood as the most effective prison in the realm. The place has never been the site of a riot, and no prisoner has ever succeeded in escaping from Gedding Gaol. The reason for this astonishing success is twofold: the prison's isolated setting and the fiercely autocratic people who run it.

## The River, Lake, and Swamp

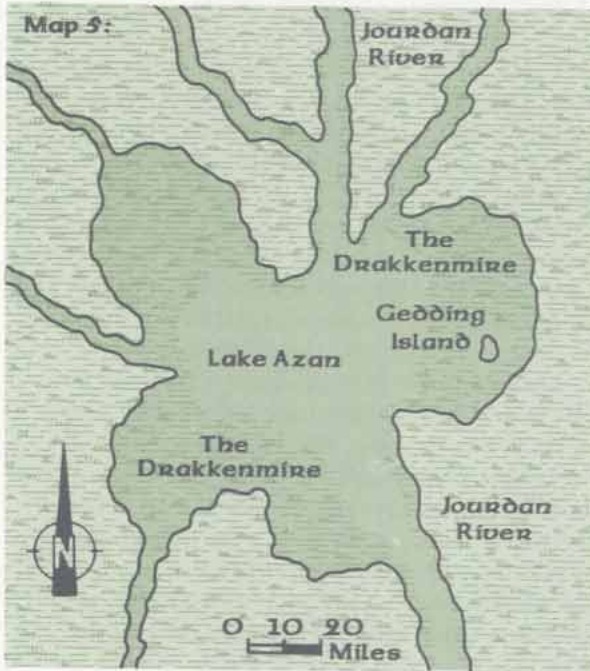
Gedding Gaol is built far from civilization, near Thazia's troublesome, ill-defined eastern border with Martaigne. The prison's location is a secret known only to a handful of people: Gedding's staff, King Tobias, his Sergeant-at-Arms, and a special detachment of guards who transport the prisoners to the island. None of the inmates knows the prison's location; once a criminal boards the jailer's cart, he is hooded for the entire journey into the wilderness.

Gedding Gaol is located along the Jourdan River, at a point where four other major rivers and tributaries meet. This confluence forms a large lake known as Lake Azan. Even though the lake is shallow (average depth 30 feet), it is nevertheless noted for its swift, ever-changing currents and strong undertow. It is also noted for the Drakkenmire, a nearly impassable swamp that surrounds the lake for miles on all sides. The waters of the Drakkenmire are thick with roots and weeds, making passage difficult by any means other than a flat-bottomed boat.

Gedding Gaol is located deep within the isolated reaches of the Drakkenmire, on Gedding Island (or "the Mound," as prisoners call it). The island is man-made, constructed of landfill, and surrounded by deep-dredged waters (to a depth of 60 feet) on all sides. Slow, strong currents curl and roll through these deceptive depths.

It's not impossible to get off the Mound, though few if any would-be escapees ever make it any farther. Part of the reason for Gedding Gaol's perfect escape record lies in the prison's isolation, dangerous surroundings, and secret location. The Drakkenmire is full of predators. Stirges and large bats live in the cypress that hangs from every branch, and alligators bask on many muddy banks. Rumor has it that the swamp is home to other forms of life as well—creatures too horrible to describe except in hushed tones.

# Island of Lost Souls



## Dark Passage

The dismal route for every prisoner begins with being blindfolded and hooded, then loaded into the back of an armored cart. The cart is made of wood, with steel reinforcements, barred windows, and benches to which the prisoners are chained. The largest vehicles of this type can transport as many as eight passengers; no voyage to Gedding Island is ever undertaken with fewer than two prisoners. The driver and jailer sit up front. When the prisoners are locked and loaded, their dark passage begins as the cart driver takes them overland, through the rough, Thazian frontier, to a simple cottage on the shore of the Jourdan River, at the southern end of Lake Azan. It is a four-day ride to the river. During that time, the driver and jailer take turns driving, stopping at night to camp while the prisoners are kept locked in the back of the cart.

The cottage serves as the launch point for the second half of the journey. At sunrise of the day

after they arrive here, the prisoners are loaded onto a skiff, a flat-bottomed boat built specially for navigating shallow streams and bogs. Each boat will hold up to four prisoners, who remain blindfolded and hooded, and are chained together. The king's guards return to the city, and two specially appointed river pilots take over. The journey from the cottage to Gedding Island takes at least half a day, often longer.

Following the slow, powerful current of the Jourdan River, the skiff moves out into the lake. The river pilots struggle through the waters, rowing and poling as they make for the southeastern bank of Lake Azan.

After hours of effort, the pilots come to the first leafy shoots and floating bogs that mark the beginning of the Drakkenmire. The river pilots must make it to Gedding Island before late afternoon. Though strangely picturesque by day, the swamp becomes a different setting after dark, when the creatures of the night come out of hiding. Some denizens are noticeable by daylight: stirges and large bats lurk in the cypress that hangs from every limb, waiting for dark to begin their search for prey. Other creatures live during the day deep in the bogs, away from all navigable routes, or waiting on the surface of the muck that passes for a lake bottom.

Tales are told of mysterious lights and horrendous creatures that prowl the bogs at night, and it is certain that not all these tales are imaginary. Many a riverman has disappeared attempting a night crossing of the Drakkenmire—becoming lost in the swampy labyrinth that stretches for miles, or having his boat capsized by some force beyond his power to fight. No one who has spent a night alone in this place has ever returned to tell about it.

The Drakkenmire is a subtropical/temperate swamp, similar to the areas that line the Mississippi River and surround Lake Ponchartrain in Louisiana. As is true of any swamp, the place is alive with all varieties of flora and fauna. You can populate the area using creatures indigenous to

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swamps and drawn from any of the entries in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book or other sources. A few common creatures are these:

**Stirges (3d10):** AC 8; MV 3, Fl 18 (C); HD 1+1; hp 6 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; SA blood drain; SZ S (2' wingspan); ML average (8); Int animal (1); AL N; XP 175 each; MM/332

**Bats, large (3d6):** AC 8; MV 3, Fl 18 (C); HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SD maneuverability; SZ M (6' wingspan); ML unsteady (7); Int animal (1); AL N; XP 35 each; MM/15

**Alligators (3d8):** AC 5; MV 6, Sw 12; HD 3; hp 18; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2d4/1d12; SA surprise; SZ L (12' long); ML average (9); Int animal (1); AL N; XP 65 each; MM/49

Treat these creatures as fresh-water versions of crocodiles.

**Spider, giant water (1d8):** AC 4; MV 15; HD 3+3; hp 21; each THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA poison; SZ L (8' diam.); ML elite (13); Int semi- (4); AL CE; XP 420 each; MM/326

**Ogre, merrow (2d12):** Int average (9); AL CE; AC 4 (leaders & chieftains 3); MV 6, Sw 12; HD 4+4/5+5 (leader)/6+6 (chieftain); hp 30 each/36/42; THAC0 15; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1d6/1d6/2d4 (or by weapon +6); SA charge, surprise; SD camouflage; SZ L (9'); ML steady (11); XP 420/650/975; MM/273

See the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book for information on creating a typical tribe of merrow.

## Gedding Gaoth

Toward late afternoon, the river pilots spy Gedding Island and begin their approach. The island has three distinct levels from west to east. It is surrounded by a 10-foot-high, tight-meshed wire fence. The western side, the docks, is just above water level; it often disappears for days at

a time beneath floodwaters. The docks are surrounded by a wire separate from the one that encircles the island and forms the entry maze (see Map 6).

A fenced-in pathway leads from the docks to the start of the next island level: a steep mound that rises from the water's edge to a plateau. This is Gedding Island, the site of the prison and its support facilities. The sides of the mound are angled up at 80 degrees, covered with ramparts and wire, and impossible to climb. A wire fence runs between a series of guard towers along the perimeter of the plateau.

A sharp cut separates the main part of Gedding Island from another man-made landmass referred to by the prison guards as Warden's Island. (The prisoners have several names for this place, none of them complimentary.) The plateau of the smaller landmass is not enclosed within a fence, but the sides are covered with the same obstacles that festoon the slopes of the main island.

**1. The entry maze:** The river pilots reach the fence surrounding Gedding Island. The barbed-wire fence is secured to long metal poles buried in the floor of the swamp and standing a full 10 feet out of the water (sometimes as little as 5 feet during floods). There is only one way into the wire maze; finding it quickly is a matter of knowing where to look ahead of time. Once the skiff is inside the wire maze, the pilots pole slowly along until they come to the wire gate that marks the entry to the Gedding docks—and the Gaoth beyond.

**2. Docks:** A tall, tight-meshed fence surrounds the docks, forming a 10-foot-high pen around a single wooden pontoon pier that's tied to shore at one end. The fence is secured to several poles planted firmly in the floor of the swamp, and topped with a 2-foot-diameter coil of primitive barbed wire. As the boat approaches the gate on the north side of the fence, it is met by a guard



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who unlocks the gate and locks it again after the skiff has passed.

The incoming boat is met at the dock by a contingent of guards (three or four, depending on the number of new inmates). The prisoners are taken ashore in single file, still hooded and chained. Two skiffs are tied to the dock most of the time; one is used on occasion by the guards and administrators for fishing and relaxation.

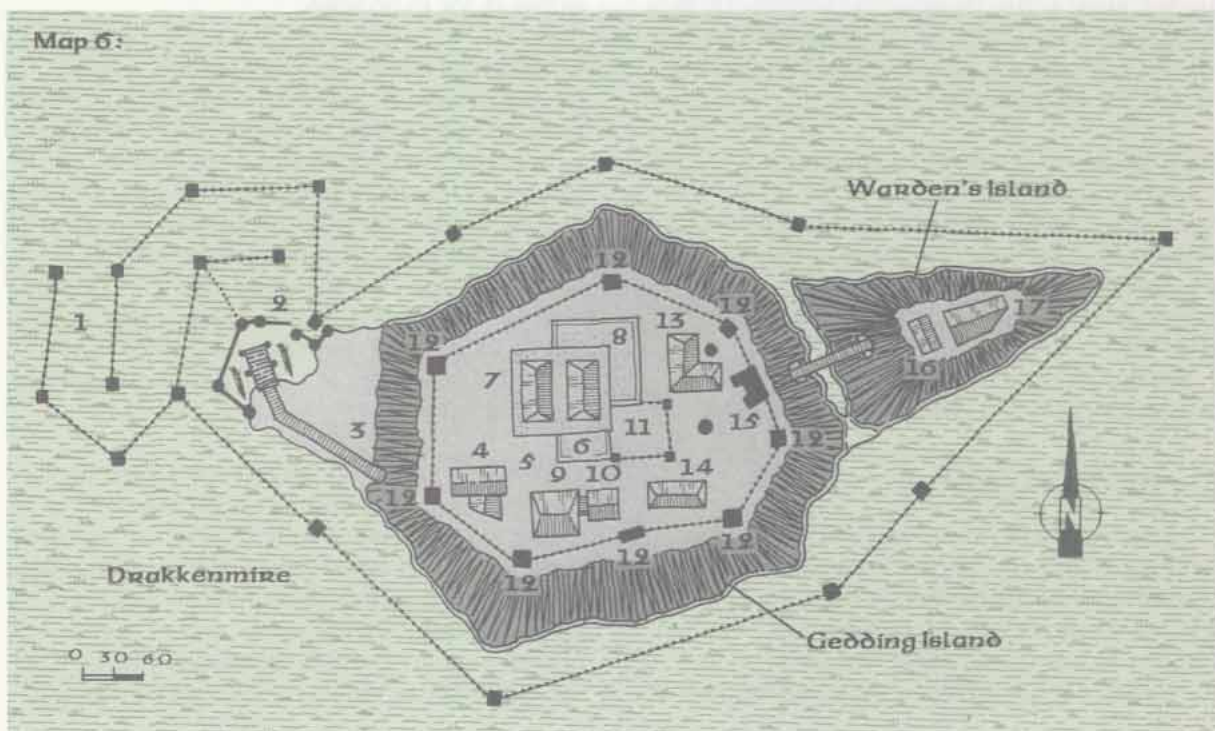
**3. The Gate of Hades:** Each prisoner's hood is removed just as he steps into an entryway that the prisoners and guards refer to as "the Gate of Hades." This stone archway is 8 feet high and built wide enough to accommodate three men walking abreast. (Prisoners are still transported single file, but the width means that two guards can flank a troublesome prisoner.) The archway leads to a tunnel that burrows through the side of a large, rocky hill, upon which is built Gedding Gaol. Above the arch, scrawled in crude penman-

ship on a pair of rough planks, are the words "Abandon all hoap you who enter hear"—advice no doubt penned (albeit incorrectly) by Warden Bel Amarc while in one of his better moods.

The damp, dark tunnel extending upward and through the western slope of the main island is lit at long intervals by flaming sconces secured to the walls. The passage alternates between crude stairs and flat inclines, some of them steep.

**4. Admissions Office and Hall of Records:** The tunnel leads to a pair of locked double doors (a second pair 10 feet beyond the first) that open onto a large chamber inside a windowless building. Inside this chamber is a long desk that runs wall to wall and separates the offices (in the southern wing of the building) from the rest of the interior. Prisoners are searched and examined here, and their papers are processed for admission. They are given prison clothing, handcuffed and shackled separately, and taken through the

Map 6:



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yard (location 5) to the administrative offices (location 6) and the cell blocks (location 7), where their actual incarceration begins.

**5. The yard:** This open area is flat and grass-covered. A public well is located in the middle of the largest open area, and another well (used by guards) is about 30 feet north of the first one. The yard is enclosed by a 10-foot-tall, tight-meshed fence topped with barbed wire. Eight 20-foot-high guard towers (locations 12) ring the yard and are manned at all times.

**6. Administrative office:** Prison guards, up to and including the Assistant Warden, have their offices in this two-story building (one level for each floor of inmates in the adjacent cell blocks). Incoming prisoners are led here for a brief indoctrination into prison rules and expected behavior. Warnings are freely offered. Most new prisoners are introduced to the Assistant Warden, examined by the prison priest, and in special cases may be visited by or meet with the Warden.

Once a prisoner has been indoctrinated, he is led through a locked and guarded single door in the north wall of this location. This doorway leads directly to the cell blocks (location 7) and from there into the galley and mess hall (location 8). Another locked single door at ground level in the east wall leads outside to the exercise pen (location 11). A single window on each floor of this building overlooks the exercise pen.

**7. Cell blocks:** The jail at Gedding has 50 cells and usually holds about that number of prisoners, but can accommodate up to 100 inmates by doubling up on cells. The only entry into this building from the outside is through the administrative offices (location 6). The 10-foot-square, 10-foot-tall cells are laid out in two stories of 5 x 5 grids with a 5-foot-wide walkway between adjacent cells. Each cell is furnished with only a wooden bed (or two) and a latrine. The door to each cell is barred and locked from the outside,

even when the cell is empty, and each lock has its own key. The exterior walls of this building have 2-foot-square windows (too small for a man to get through) set 8 feet off the floor and spaced 10 feet apart on all sides.

A set of double doors in the east wall leads into the mess hall (location 8), and another set in the north wall leads to the galley (also part of location 8).

**8. Galley and mess hall:** The north section of this one-story building is the galley. It features all the furnishings needed to provide two daily meals for as many as 100 prisoners (guards eat separately, and often not in the galley). This area is separated from the mess hall by a serving counter that runs the east-to-west length of the hall. There are no outside exits from this hall. Off-duty guards may pick up meals to eat in their quarters without having to go through the cell blocks. Food can be passed out to them through a 2-foot-wide, 1-foot-tall window on the northeast corner of the building. The kitchens are run by a cook and his assistant, with further help from the prisoners.

**9. Hospital:** A locked set of double doors in the north wall gives access to this one-story building. It has 10 beds for patients, one "operating room," a latrine, a storeroom, and an examining room. The hospital contains all the supplies and equipment necessary to administering patients. The hospital is connected to the prison priest's quarters and offices (location 10) via a single door in the east wall that opens onto a short, covered passageway. This door is always locked from the east side, and the key is held by the priest.

**10. Prison priest's quarters and offices:** This single-story building doubles as the offices and quarters of Fiela Bonaspar. A small desk covered with papers and other materials, a table, a wardrobe case, a footlocker containing the priest's



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personal belongings, a bed, and a latrine are located here. A single locked door in the north wall leads outside; another at the end of a short passageway in the west wall leads into the hospital (location 9).

**11. Exercise pen:** This cage surrounded by a 10-foot-high fence offers prisoners the little open air and exercise they get in Gedding Gaol. A locked door in the northwest corner leads to the cell blocks (location 7), and another one in the southwest corner opens into the guard offices (location 6). Prisoners are let out for one hour (at most) per day, and never in groups larger than 10. They are left to themselves in the pen, though a guard watches through a small window on the first or second floor of the administrative offices.

**12. Guard towers:** The eight wooden towers around the prison yard are enclosed and connected by the yard fence. Each tower is built on four sturdy legs that raise the floor of the tower to 25 feet above ground level—high enough to see onto the roof or over any nearby building. The supports are covered with coils of barbed wire extending to 10 feet off the ground. There is a clear line of sight between any two towers and over the edge of the island to the swampy waters below. The only easy access to a tower is provided by the guard in it, who will lower a rope ladder for his replacement at a shift change.

Each tower room is a 5-foot-square observation room with two chairs and a small table. One guard is on duty in each tower, day and night; he is allowed to receive one off-duty (but still armed) guard as a visitor. Except in the case of a full-scale riot (which has never happened) or an escape attempt, guards are forbidden to leave their towers throughout their 12-hour shifts. Each tower is always locked from the inside and contains a small, locked (with a different key) weapon chest containing a bows and 20 arrows. On-duty guards communicate with each other by way of horns, small megaphones, or hand

signals. Each tower contains a lantern that can also be used for signaling purposes at night, but is not kept lit because it makes the occupant of the tower a better target. (Although no one remembers any guard having been injured while in a tower, the jailers at Gedding Gaol are under orders to take no chances.)

**13. Guard barracks:** This is a two-story building with a 20-foot-deep basement. Two sets of double doors are located in the north and east ends of this building. They are locked only at night. The first and second floors hold the bunks, footlockers, and storage cabinets used by the guards. The basement contains a common room with several chairs and tables, a small mess hall, and a latrine. Though off-duty guards are free to roam the prison facilities, most of them don't go out at night. By order of the warden, every guard spends at least 8 hours of every off-duty shift in the barracks, resting or eating.

**14. Assistant Warden's quarters:** This single-story building houses the quarters and personal effects of Bel Amaric. The Assistant Warden is fanatical about cleanliness; as a result, this good-sized residence (as large as the entire hospital) is always clean and orderly. Nicely furnished, Amaric's quarters contains the following items: a well-organized desk, a wooden bed, a small wardrobe, a locked footlocker, a locked weapons cabinet (containing field plate, helmet, shield, long sword, crossbow, 20 bolts, and dagger), a small fireplace, a table, two chairs, and a latrine. The single door to this building, in the north wall, is always locked; only Amaric and the Warden have keys.

**15. Gatehouse, tunnel, and bridge:** This small building has a set of double doors in the west wall that are locked from the inside (facing the yard) and may be opened from this side only by the guard on duty during daylight hours. At night the doors may not be opened except by the

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Warden from his side (or with a stolen key). The gatehouse contains nothing but two chairs and a small table.

In the east wall of the gatehouse is a locked door that leads to a set of steeply descending stairs that travel 30 feet down to a horizontal, 5-foot-wide, 8-foot-high tunnel. At the other end of the tunnel is a rope bridge spanning the man-made moat that separates the main island from Warden's Island. This bridge leads to another tunnel and a flight of ascending stairs. The stairs end at a single locked door that ultimately leads to the Warden's office (location 16).

**16. Warden's office:** This one-story building has single locked doors in the west wall and the east wall. The only keys to either lock are held by the Warden.

The small office is sparsely furnished. It contains a desk, three chairs, a small table, a weapons cabinet (field plate, shield, helmet, long sword, crossbow, 20 bolts, spear, and dagger), and a file cabinet holding brief notes on each of the prisoners and on the island personnel.

**17. Warden's quarters:** This small, two-story building looks like a miniature house. It has a kitchen, a living room, and a study on the first floor; a master bedroom and a sunroom on the second floor; and a wine cellar, a storage room, and a latrine in the basement. Each room is sparsely furnished, containing only the essentials. Emil Gant, the Warden, has few personal items about the place, and not much effort has gone into decorating the building. In all, if it weren't for the furnishings, the rooms would look as barren as the prison cells in Gedding Gaol.

The single doors on the east and west walls of this building are never locked. The grassy yard surrounding this building and Gant's office (location 16) has limited space. Unlike the one on the main island, this yard has no surrounding fence.

## Gedding's Gaolers

The prison is run by some of the cruelest, most sadistic figures in the realm. First among them is Emil Gant, the Warden. He is a severe, heartless character who hates having been stationed here permanently, and takes out his anger and frustration (usually only verbally, but not always) on most people he meets. His remarks are edged with cynicism or cruelty, and his gestures and facial expressions are geared to some sarcastic response. Gant avoids almost all contact with the prisoners, choosing instead to delegate his autonomy to the few souls with which he surrounds himself.

Gant knows that his "appointment" to the office of Warden was more of a punishment than an honor. It came about more than 20 years ago, when Gant was a captain in the Special Guard, an elite corps of warriors attached to King Tobias himself. He served nobly in this position, fighting for Thazia and performing his duties in the name of the king—until misfortune robbed him of his honor and his post.

Border skirmishes with Martaigne, Thazia's eastern neighbor, turned into all-out hostilities. A siege on a Thazian stronghold near the frontier ended with the defeat of its Thazian defenders. Worse, the king's nephew, Prince Cernian, was taken hostage by Martaigne. Attempts at ransoming the prince failed. Then a poorly executed rescue attempt went awry, ending in a rout of the rescue forces and the subsequent, and prompt, hanging of Prince Cernian. That failed rescue attempt was led by Emil Gant.

Gant and a few of his remaining fighters escaped and made the long journey across enemy lines, through the rough frontier, fighting and retreating most of the way, eventually to the safety of the Thazian border. Their return to Thazia was met with much disfavor. Prince Cernian, a highly popular figure in the royal court, was mourned vehemently. Punishment was demanded of the rescuers. Aghast at the failure, Thazian royalty and nobility called for Gant's head.



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Noted for his sense of justice in such matters, King Tobias interceded and quelled the opposition. The rescuers, he said, would be punished for their failure, but not by being beheaded. Emil Gant, Bel Amarić (second-in-command on the rescue attempt), and the remaining 25 men of his Special Guard unit would continue to serve the king they had failed. Their service would be conducted, King Tobias declared, in the alligator-ridden swamp and confines of Gedding Gaol.

Emil Gant, Bel Amarić, and Gant's men have served their penalty ever since that time. Not one of them has set foot outside the bogs of the Drakkenmire since being "assigned" here.

### Emil Gant

A 10th-level male human fighter

**Alignment:** Neutral evil  
**Move:** 12  
**AC:** 8  
**THAC0:** 11  
**Hit points:** 66

**Strength:** 18/35    **Intelligence:** 13  
**Dexterity:** 16    **Wisdom:** 12  
**Constitution:** 17    **Charisma:** 9

**Proficiencies:** Short sword, dagger, crossbow; agriculture (13), animal handling (11), reading/writing (14), rope use (16), survival (12)

**Languages:** Common, orcish

**Armor:** Leather

**Weapons:** Dagger, short sword, crossbow, sword +1, +4 vs. reptiles

**Equipment:** Potion of *heroism*, various personal effects

**Age:** 51

**Height:** 6'6"

**Weight:** 270 lbs.

**Hair/eyes:** Gray/blue

Emil Gant is a square-shouldered, broad-chested man with large, powerful hands and an over-

bearing stature. He towers over even the largest guards in the compound. Emil Gant rules Gedding Gaol with an iron fist and an unflinching demeanor toward punishment. Quick to anger, Gant is avoided by most of his staff whenever possible, and he similarly avoids them. He disdains public appearances, choosing to remain behind the locked doors of his office. He is seen only on rare occasions, including once a month when he makes a public address to the prisoners.

Gant's facial features are often distorted into the soft, fake smile and feigned attention of public office. In spite of his public mask, there is something evil and foreboding in his eyes: they cut with a shallow, ceramic coldness that suggests a darker, crueler mind behind their shark-like flatness.

Under no circumstances does Gant help the prisoners in their personal plights (although he promises to "look into it" whenever he is in the mood to say so, just for the sake of sowing false hope in a prisoner). Gant sees himself as much a captive on Gedding Island as any of the prisoners. A man riddled with remorse, Gant hates his confinement as much as his surroundings. His mood is often melancholic and his views nihilistic. Nevertheless, he carries out the duties of his office with the quiet (albeit reluctant) devotion of a man without hope or options.

Noted for his swift, strict judgment, Gant is not above taking out his own condemnation upon the prisoners in situations of misconduct. This he does by exacting brutal punishment in a private session with the offender (and in the company of a guard, of course).

### Bel Amarić

A 6th-level male human fighter

**Alignment:** Neutral evil  
**Move:** 12  
**AC:** 7  
**THAC0:** 15  
**Hit points:** 46

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**Strength:** 18/66    **Intelligence:** 14  
**Dexterity:** 14    **Wisdom:** 10  
**Constitution:** 17    **Charisma:** 6

**Proficiencies:** Long sword, spear, dagger; agriculture (14), animal handling (9), endurance (17), rope use (14)

**Languages:** Common, hobgoblin, kobold

**Armor:** Ring mail

**Weapons:** Dagger, spear, long sword, *sword +1*

**Equipment:** Various personal effects

**Age:** 43

**Height:** 6'4"

**Weight:** 250 lbs.

**Hair/eyes:** Brown/brown

Gant's second-in-command is a cold, sadistic man who wears a strangely disconcerting smile. Amaric has a twisted sense of humor that feeds on the misery of others. He is often seen or heard laughing at his own wit. His jokes (verbal) are cruel and violent, his pranks (physical) often more so.

For example, though it is against the royal court's order to do so, Amaric will single out a prisoner he has pegged for private execution. After dark, Amaric puts a hood on a convict and (with a guard) takes him from his cell to "a place no one else knows." This place (the basement of the guard barracks) contains a short staircase leading to a wooden gallows. Once the convict is in place on the gallows, he pulls the hood from the prisoner's head and replaces it with a noose tight about the neck.

After a few short words of condemnation, Amaric steps from the platform and orders the attendant guard to pull the lever. The lever is pulled, the trap door beneath the prisoner swings open, and the convict falls through—a short distance to the ground below.

As the prisoner sits dumbfounded beneath the gallows, his heart racing and the rope dangling loose behind him, Amaric laughs uproariously and says, "You'll have better luck next time." He

then pulls the prisoner roughly to his feet and leads him back to his cell. This joke is performed repeatedly on prisoners Bel "takes a likin' to."

Amaric is a giant of a man with powerful arms, massive hands, and a thick neck. He has a large head with a rough, sharp-edged face. His jawline and cheekbones are often taut, contorted by sadistic laughter, and his large brown eyes are deep-set in the sockets. Amaric has a nervous habit, an obvious twitch in his left eye, that occurs when his anger is fueled. Amaric is noted primarily for his oppressive cruelty, though also for his sparse personality.

Bel Amaric keeps a high profile among the guards and prisoners, and often involves himself extensively in the day-to-day duties of prison management.

## Fiela Bonaspar

*A 6th-level male human cleric*

**Alignment:** Neutral evil  
**Move:** 12  
**AC:** 8  
**THAC0:** 18  
**Hit points:** 28

**Strength:** 10    **Intelligence:** 17  
**Dexterity:** 14    **Wisdom:** 17  
**Constitution:** 16    **Charisma:** 7

**Proficiencies:** Dagger, mace; healing (15), herbalism (15), reading/writing (18)

**Languages:** Common, elvish, dwarvish, orcish

**Armor:** Leather

**Weapons:** Dagger, footman's mace

**Preferred spells (5/5/3):** 1st—*cause fear, command, cure light wounds, detect poison, purify food & drink*; 2nd—*charm person or mammal, flame blade, hold person, silence 158 radius, slow poison*; 3rd—*cure disease, dispel magic, speak with dead*

**Equipment:** Ring of human influence, candle of invocation, potion of ESP, robes, censers, religious objects, and various personal effects



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**Age:** 42  
**Height:** 5'7"  
**Weight:** 130 lbs.  
**Hair/eyes:** Red/green

Fiela Bonaspar is one of the prison attendants who was not initially sent here with Emil Gant and his men. Formerly a cleric in the royal court, Bonaspar was condemned to service on Gedding Island after it was discovered that he was performing magical cures and healings on commoners for uncommonly high prices. Bonaspar has been here for 10 years. In that time, he has learned to deal with his excommunication and adapt to his surroundings.

Bonaspar's responsibility is simple: to keep the prisoners alive as long as possible, giving them the opportunity to serve out their sentences in the king's confines. To that end, Bonaspar attends to the prisoners' health and sustenance. He oversees all prisoners' diets (which provide the barest level of sustenance possible) and ministers to sick inmates confined to hospital quarters. Aside from these duties, Bonaspar is free to do as he wishes. In his free time he is generally ignored by other staff members and administrators and left to himself.

Though distanced from his colleagues, Bonaspar is also a force with which to be reckoned. A misanthrope by nature, he has further refined his hatred for humanity since being confined here. When he is not conducting "experiments" on local fauna and flora, Bonaspar may be seen taking prisoners into his offices for "questioning and examination." What goes on behind those locked doors is not spoken of openly, though most prisoners suspect experiments of an arcane, evil nature.

The inmates are basically correct in their suspicions: The cleric uses magic (*cause fear, command, charm person*) to extract information about the royal family and the Thazian court from exiled nobles and courtly figures now imprisoned on Gedding Island. Bonaspar does not plan to be on

the island forever. He has been building a solid background of knowledge of the machinations of the Thazian court and plans to use this information to bribe his way out of service at Gedding Gaol. For now he is patient, slowly building his dossiers on courtly figures from the thoughts and utterings of exiled prisoners.

An emaciated wisp of a man, Bonaspar has a jaundiced, unhealthy complexion and skin that is spotted and pocked. His red hair is sparse and flaxen, usually unwashed and sticking out at odd, almost comical angles. Unbathed and unkempt, the cleric is the embodiment of bad etiquette and hygiene. Bonaspar is an antisocial creature at best, nervous and irritable at worst. He is difficult to deal with for any longer than it takes to utter a passing remark.

**Guards (40):** AC 8; MV 12; HD 2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ M (6' tall); ML varies (9 to 13); Int varies (6 to 12); AL NE; XP 35 each

**Equipment:** Each guard has leather armor, a spear, a short sword, a bow, and 20 arrows.

Half of these guards are from Emil Gant's original detachment. (Twenty-five men came here with Gant and Amaric, but five have died in the years since their arrival.) The other 20 are more recent additions to the staff; like the original guards, these men are here because of offenses against the crown. In effect, all these men are serving life sentences on the island, although their living conditions are considerably better than the prisoners'. They run the gamut in terms of personality and demeanor, from friendly to sullen.

**Prisoners (50 to 100):** Int varies (4 to 18); AL varies; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp varies (1 to 8); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ M (5' to 7' tall); ML varies (5 to 12); XP 15 each

Prisoners come in a wide assortment of ages, sizes, and professions. Vary these NPCs as nec-

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essary, providing character development as situations arise.

**A final note on NPCs:** The templates and characters listed are provided merely as examples and time-saving tools. Feel free whenever possible to use NPCs from your campaign world in populating Gedding Gaol. This will add to the atmosphere of the setting by providing it with a number of interesting criminal NPCs. These may include political prisoners, foreign noblemen held for ransom, freelance thieves (those operating outside the local thieves' guild), disenfranchised members of the royal family, lunatics, troublesome con men, and so on.

## Adventure Hooks

- The most tempting hook from a DM's standpoint is to pay back PCs for crimes committed during the course of earlier play. This direct approach may entail a simple capture of the PCs by the authorities, although a more challenging adventure could include wanted posters, bounty hunters, and a frantic chase—all leading to the inevitable capture of the PCs.

This plot thread may vary in a number of ways. For example, the PCs may be falsely accused of a crime, or framed by other parties. Some or all of them may be rounded up for questioning in which "subtle" means of coercion are applied to obtain confessions.

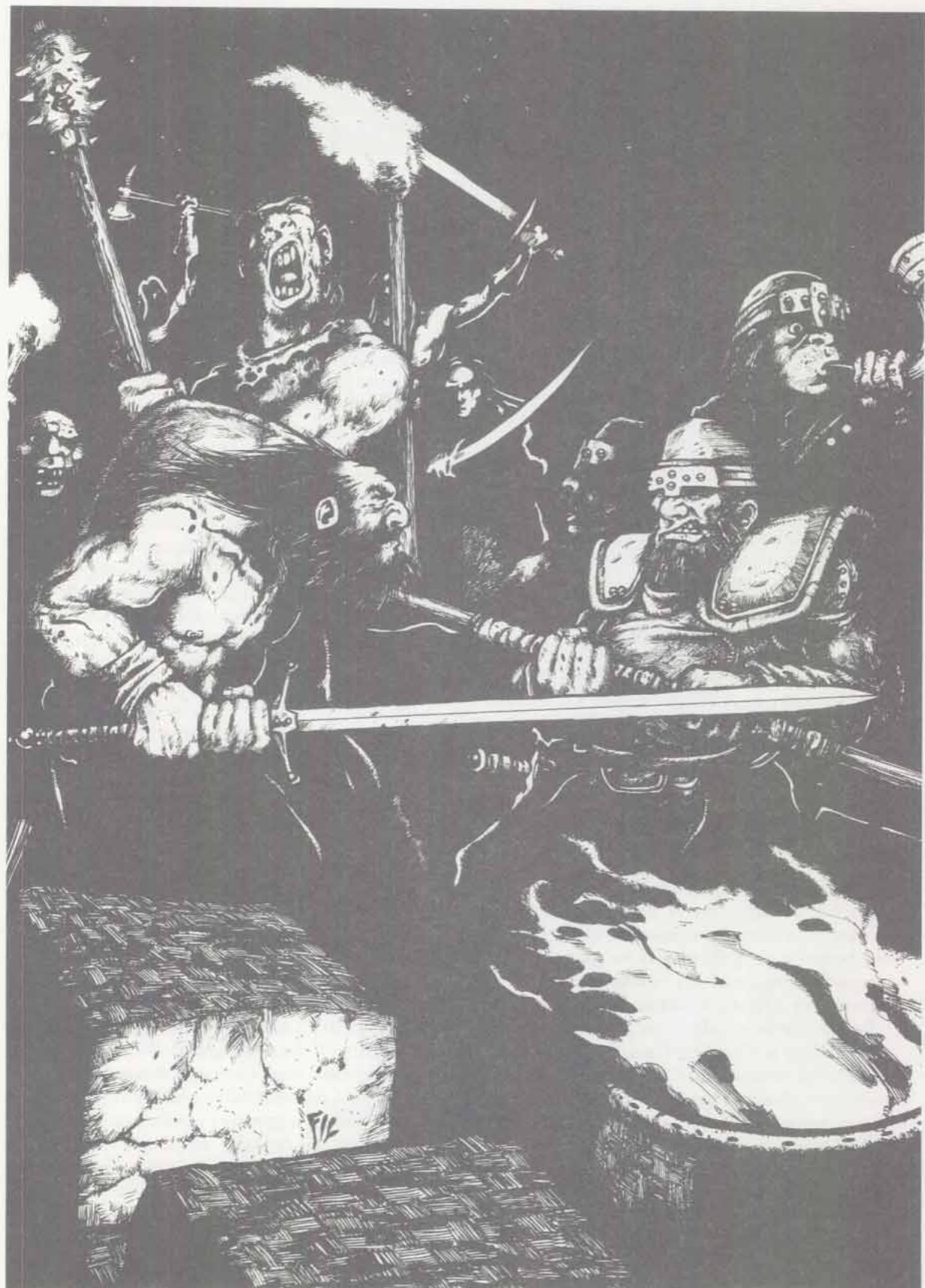
In a case where only some of the PCs are on their way to Gedding Gaol, the DM may make it the remaining PCs' goal to follow their comrades and break them out of prison. This adventure may be more difficult to run in that it requires the DM to split the party into two groups, both of which meet as one at the climax of the adventure. This setup may prove useful in cases where players have time conflicts and not everyone can get together at once.

- The PCs are hired by the local thieves' guild to plan and execute the escape/rescue of an important guild member. A political twist may be added to this hook by making the representative a front for a radical political group, one plotting the overthrow of the royal family. This representative may be a front for competing royal relatives, or power brokers looking to free the bastard son of the current ruling family. Or, the PCs could be hired by foreign dignitaries to engineer the escape of a noble gentleman who was imprisoned by their enemy. This may involve a side adventure requiring the PCs to sneak through enemy lines on their way to Gedding Gaol.

This adventure hook may be useful for introducing the PCs to high-level NPCs that may lead to more intriguing campaign plots of your own devising. Think first of the characters imprisoned in Gedding Gaol; they are the important motivation behind anyone else's going there. Inspiration may be found in movies such as *Papillon*, *The Great Escape*, or any of a host of other prison-escape films or stories.

- Unbeknownst to any of the administrators or other guards, one of the guards recently assigned to Gedding Gaol has been protesting his imprisonment here (by sending messages back to the royal court via the river pilots), and now he has succeeded in persuading the king of his innocence. But if the man is simply allowed to go free, his life would be in danger from any of the other guards who also want to get out (and from Gant and Amaric themselves). A representative of the king is charged with finding a group of adventurers who can somehow get onto the island and rescue the guard without being discovered. The characters have credentials that allow them passage into Gedding Gaol as royal inspectors—but getting out with an extra passenger is another matter entirely.





# Darian's Wall



A great stone wall marks the eastern border of Martaigne. It was completed more than 100 years ago to stop the encroachment of barbarian hordes. Darian's Wall still serves that purpose today, limiting entry to the realm and keeping barbarians from crossing the border on pillaging raids and other vandalous missions.

## Overview

A strong and expanding empire requires stable, yet slowly advancing borders, preferably at the heels of a slowly receding frontier. Such was true of historical empires such as China and Rome, two powers that extended their reaches far into the northern realms of their continents. It is no coincidence that the political height of each empire was marked by the building of a wall along its northern edge: the Great Wall of China on the border of Mongolia, and Hadrian's Wall in northern England, along the border of Scotland. The purpose in building these walls was to keep the barbarians from invading northern settlements: in Britannia, keeping the "wild men" out of Roman England; in China, keeping the Mongols on the far side of the Yellow River.

Both walls are similar in design and construction, the only major difference being their extent: Hadrian's Wall is 73 miles long, while the Great Wall of China stretches over 1,500 miles. They serve as models for the design of Darian's Wall.

Darian's Wall may be placed in any fantasy setting, with alterations made as each DM sees fit. You are not required to use the names for settings and characters suggested herein; these are merely provided for background. Likewise, the length of Darian's Wall and the frequency with which its support structures appear may be varied at your discretion.

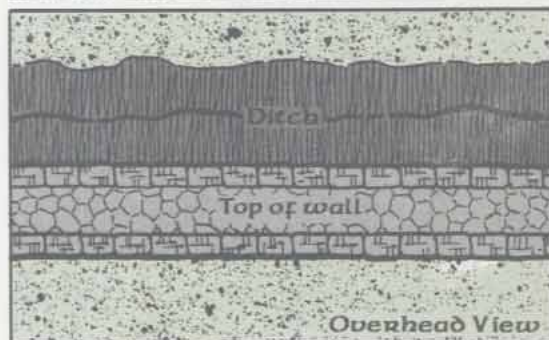
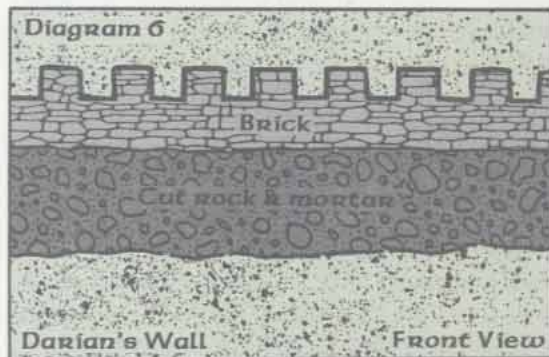
## Darian's Wall

This structure has served as a deterrent to invading vandals for more than a century. The

wall was originally commissioned by King Darian IV, and took nearly 50 years to complete. When the final stone was mortared into place, a new royal family had ascended to power. King Ambros I held the throne and oversaw the completion of what was then the most marvelous construction in the civilized world.

The 20-foot-high wall runs the entire 300-mile length of the king's realm, paralleling Martaigne's border with the disorganized Five Kingdoms of Tracia to the east. The interior of the wall is made of rough stone and primitive concrete. Both the eastern and western facades are faced with smooth, flat stones that fit closely together. The small gaps between stones are filled with mortar. (In game terms, this is a "smooth, cracked" surface.)

A 20-foot-wide ditch runs along the outside (foreign side) base of the wall. This steep-sided trench, 40 feet deep in the center, prevents siege machines from being brought close to the wall and makes the climb up from the outside that much more difficult.





## Darian's Wall

The wall is 10 to 20 feet wide at the parapet and 15 to 25 feet wide at the base. It is generally thickest at the spots where mile castles and city forts (see below) are located. The top of the wall has crenellations and "murder holes" (narrow slits in the parapet for use by archers) built into the stone. The parapet runs the entire 300-mile course of the wall without a break. The path atop the wall is 5–10 feet wide and 20 feet above the level of the surrounding ground. At places where a building such as a mile castle or watch tower (see below) is located, the path atop the wall slopes down to a height of 10 feet, to meet up with doorways that lead in and out of the building, but the top of the wall itself is still 20 feet high in these locations.

### City Forts

Fifty large forts, or "city forts," are built into and around the inside of the wall at various locations. Each city fort is a permanent structure occupied year-round, and is capable of housing anywhere from 100 to 1,000 people (soldiers and families). These forts are large enough to contain all the elements of a small military community, including streets, chapels, offices, barracks, officers' quarters, courtyards, bath houses, mess halls, granaries, workshops, and storehouses. Often, a small peasant village is located around the perimeter of a city fort.

Since city forts vary widely in size and population, a sample layout of a "typical" one cannot be provided. Following are brief descriptions of the features of most city forts.

**Outer ward:** The outer section of the city fort is where soldiers, their families, and support personnel live. It also houses the various businesses that provide goods and services for the residents.

**Inner ward:** Surrounded by and contained within the outer ward, this area serves as the city fort's second line of defense. It may be closed off

from the outer ward in the event that the outer ward's defenses are breached. This inner section of the city fort houses royalty, nobility, and officers of high rank, along with their special detachments of soldiers and other support personnel. In addition, the inner ward should include soldiers' barracks, officers' quarters, an armory, a mess hall, a warehouse, and a few workshops and stores.

**Main keep:** This tall stone tower in the center of the inner ward is the final line of defense in the city fort. It serves as a stronghold for the powers that rule the city fort, whether royalty, nobility, or military. The main keep may be closed off from the rest of the city fort in the event that the outer and inner wards' defenses have been breached.

**Gates and gatehouses:** Two sets of gates are built into the outer wall: one facing Martaigne, the other built into Darian's Wall and allowing passage into the Tracian frontier. Both gates should be large, sturdy, and defensible (drawbridges, double gates, etc.). Naturally, the set of gates leading to the frontier should be the stronger and larger of the two. Only one gate is needed for access from the outer ward to the inner ward. This gate may be smaller and simpler (for example, a small, single gate or portcullis). Every gate is manned constantly by at least one guard. Gatehouses, where they exist (always at larger gates, sometimes at smaller ones), are large enough to provide seating for the guard(s) and to contain the gate mechanisms.

**Walls and wall defenses:** Every city fort should have outer walls at least as thick as Darian's Wall, with similar features (a path along the top, crenellations, murder holes, etc.).

**Watch towers:** Watch towers are essential to the defense of the city fort. Several tall, sturdy towers should be built into the wall defenses surrounding the outer ward and should also appear

# Darian's Wall



near any gate leading into the frontier. Smaller watch towers may be used less frequently in the wall defenses of the inner ward.

Take the time to vary the designs of these forts to incorporate them into your campaign world. Any simple castle design will suffice. Bear in mind the uniqueness of terrain, city population, local agriculture and commerce, and so forth when designing each city fort. Keep in mind that thrift is important in any structure built along the frontier. Though not rare commodities, stone and mortar are limited in supply and are thus used first in building the wall, then in housing soldiers. Wood is also used frequently in building construction, particularly for roofs and interior structures. Each city fort is named, to distinguish it as a city and as a unique entity.

The standard population of a city fort includes 1 lord major, 1 guard captain for every 100 foot soldiers, 1 guard lieutenant for every 25 foot soldiers, 1 wall sergeant for every 10 foot soldiers, 1 wall corporal for every 5 foot soldiers, and 100 to 500 foot soldiers, plus 100 to 500 civilians living within the fort and a possible 50 to 1,000 peasants living in dwellings or villages immediately outside the complex.

## Mile Castles

In addition to the city forts, Darian's Wall also has approximately 300 mile castles—so named for their frequency and location (one mile apart)—built into its interior wall. Some of these sites, in areas where no city fort is nearby, are occupied by small detachments of soldiers year-round on seasonal shifts. Other mile castles are vacant most of the time but can be manned as needed.

Each mile castle is a self-contained unit: two stories made of stone, topped by a wooden roof (see Map 7). Some of these sites have small wooden outbuildings that are used as storage sheds or crude temporary housing for visitors.

The standard complement of soldiers includes 1 guard lieutenant, 1 wall sergeant, 1 wall corpo-

ral for every 5 foot soldiers, and 5 to 10 foot soldiers. (You may vary this number and the frequency of officers as you see fit.)

## First Floor

Four wooden doors lead in and out of a mile castle. Each is 5 feet wide and capable of being barred from inside. Heat is supplied by two fireplaces built into the first floor and opening onto the second floor. The chimneys extend up through the wooden roof. Water for drinking and bathing comes from two small wells: one in the kitchen, the other in the bath. Food is either supplied and stored in the kitchen or gathered through hunting expeditions. Two sets of 5-foot-wide stairs lead to the second floor.

**1. Kitchen:** This 20-by-25-foot kitchen accommodates the needs of the troops housed at the mile castle. Food is stored here and cooked in the large fireplace adjacent to the Wall. The room contains a variety of simple kitchen equipment: pots, knives, and so forth.

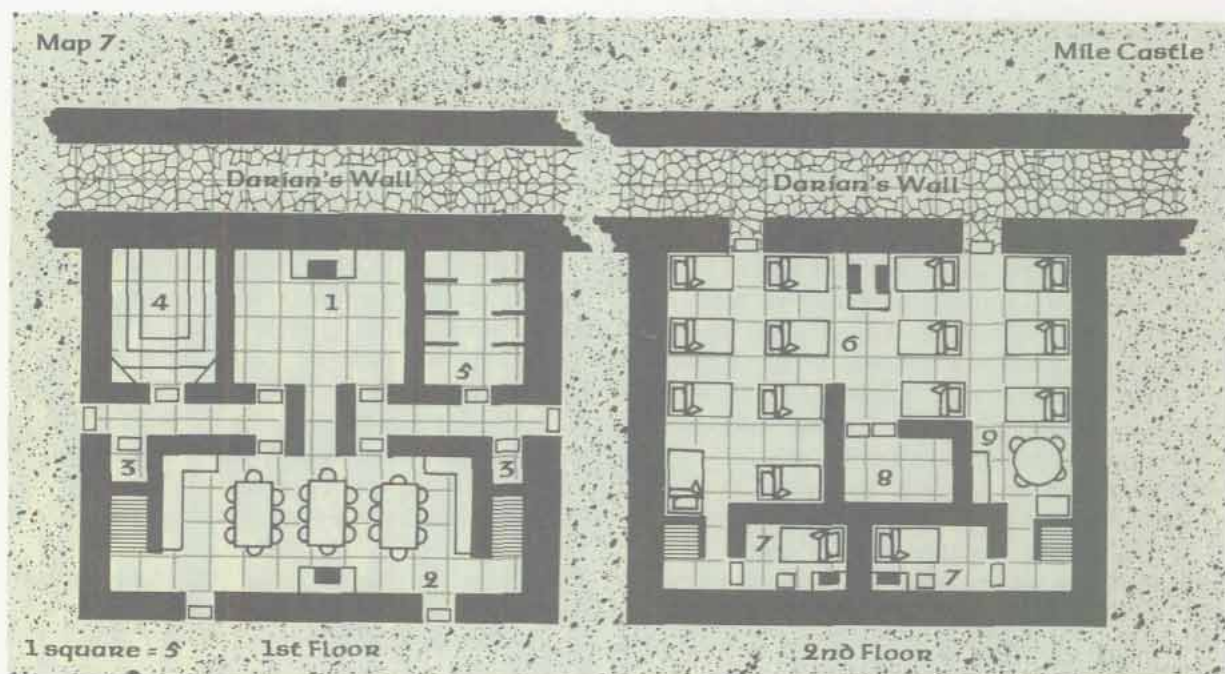
**2. Mess hall:** Three tables and 24 chairs (enough seating to accommodate a few visitors or guests) fill this 20-by-45-foot hall. Counters and cabinets along the walls contain some food items as well as eating utensils used in the soldiers' two daily meals. A small fireplace is built into the wall opposite Darian's Wall.

**3. Storage:** These two 5-by-10-foot rooms under the staircases are used for storing various ordinary supplies.

**4. Bath:** The "tub" taking up most of this room is made from a 2-foot-high waterproof stone wall set into a stone floor. In cold weather, bath water can be heated in the kitchen fireplace.

**5. Lavatory:** This room contains four wash basins on the inner wall and four latrines along the outer

# Darian's Wall



wall. The contents of the latrines empty into a stone-lined cesspit just outside the mile castle that must be emptied from time to time.

## Second Floor

The second floor of a mile castle is completely enclosed except for two 5-foot-wide doors that open out onto Darian's Wall. (As noted above, the path leading along the top of the wall is only 10 feet off the ground at this point.)

**6. Soldiers' barracks:** This large room contains 14 wooden bunks. At the foot of each is a locker for storing personal effects. The fireplace in the kitchen (location 1) sends some heat into this room through openings in the chimney; these openings can be closed off during hot weather.

**7. Officers' quarters:** These rooms are used by the mile castle's lieutenant and sergeant (corpo-

rals sleep in the soldiers' barracks). Each room contains a wooden bed, footlocker, and small table. The fireplace from the mess hall (location 2) opens into each room, providing heat separately to each set of quarters.

**8. Armory:** Military equipment and guard supplies are stored in this room. Various weapons may be found here, as may supplies such as rope, lanterns, and oil.

**9. Commons:** This open area is sometimes used by off-duty soldiers for relaxation and recreation. Its cramped quarters contain a bench, four chairs, and a table.

## Watch Towers

Evenly spaced between the mile castles and city forts are approximately 600 watch towers built into the interior side of the wall. These sites

# Darian's Wall



serve as sentry houses and are intended for occupancy on limited terms only (see Map 8).

The towers are two-story constructs composed primarily of stone, though some utilize wood in their support construction. All have chimneys and wooden roofs.

A watch tower contains 1 wall corporal and 3 foot soldiers. You may add soldiers and officers as you see fit, as long as no officer with a rank above wall sergeant is ordered to this location for any longer than temporary duty. In times of dire necessity (barbarian attacks, breaches in the wall, etc.) additional troops may be stationed in a camp outside a tower.

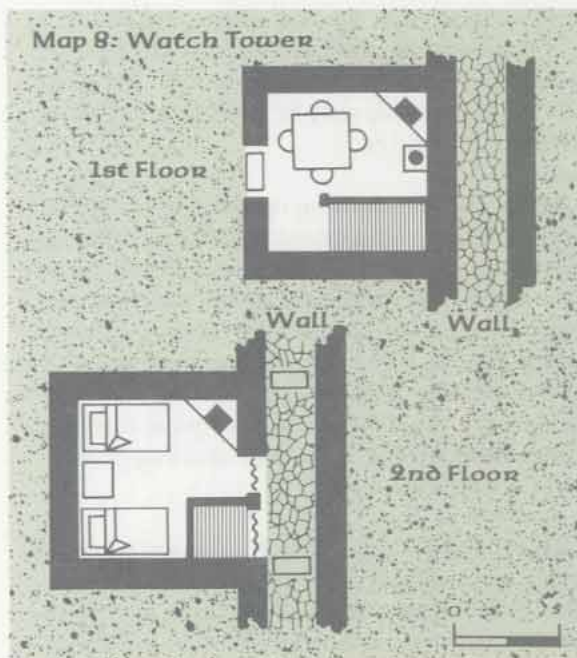
**First floor:** This area contains a table and four chairs, a small well, a fireplace for heating and cooking, and shelves and lockers for food storage. The floor of this room is usually dirt or straw. A 5-foot-wide wooden stairway leads up to the second floor.

**Second floor:** This room has two wooden beds for off-duty soldiers, footlockers for storage, a fireplace, and a small table. Double-sewn hides serve as doors leading to and from the wall. Two sentries are always on duty, usually walking the walls in search of trespassers, and two sentries resting.

## River Gates

Darian's Wall uses bridge constructions across two rivers, the Rica and the Alesta, both of which flow into Martaigne. These stone crossings are built low to the water to discourage river passage, heavily fortified, and occupied year-round by 50 soldiers. Known as river gates (see Map 9), these elaborate stone bridges use retractable, underwater metal gates to limit waterborne access into Martaigne.

The standard complement of soldiers for a river gate is 1 guard lieutenant, 1 wall sergeant, 8 wall corporals, and 40 foot soldiers. Two of the corporals and six of the foot soldiers are sta-



tioned in the watch towers (locations 9), four men are on duty in the area of the overhead passage (location 5), and the remainder of the soldiers are quartered in the adjoining mile castle (location 12).

**1. Road:** This dirt road leads from the farmlands in the outlying areas and runs between Martaigne's larger cities. All forms of commerce and military travelers and vehicles use this road.

**2. Ramps:** Two wooden ramps at either end of the bridge elevate travelers to the bridge level 10 feet above the riverbank. They are smooth and easy to ascend for people as well as pack animals, though slightly worn from use.

**3. Covered bridge:** This bridge is made of sturdy wood and covered to shield it from the elements. The bridge is 15 feet wide and 80 feet long with a 10-foot ceiling. It is braced crosswise by sturdy



## Darían's Wall

timbers secured to the wall above and below and braced in the direction of travel by brick arches built between bridge supports (locations 8). Optionally, tolls may be demanded of those who use the bridge.

**4. Wall:** The wall leading up to the river is identical with the wall sections described earlier. As before, ditches (locations 10) are built on the outside of the wall to discourage the use of siege engines and to deny attacking infantry easy access to the wall. The wall section built across the river is similar to the rest of the wall, the only exception being that it is supported at three separate points on the river: once at either shore and once in the center.

**5. Overhead passage:** This 10-foot-square wooden structure sits atop the covered bridge (location 3). It connects the wall (location 4) with the small watch tower (location 6) in the center of the bridge. The passage is built on the same level as the top of the wall. It has two doors, one on either end of the passage. Two wooden wheels that operate the river gates (locations 7) are located here, on the wall.

**6. Small watch tower:** This 10-foot-square tower is two stories high and built as part of the center bridge support (location 8). The passage inside the tower is narrow (5 feet square) and contains a wooden ladder. At the bottom of the ladder (first floor) is a wooden wheel. This wheel operates a winch that lowers and raises the metal portcullis housed above in the overhead passage (location 5). A wooden door on the first floor opens onto the covered bridge (location 3).

**7. River gates:** These four metal gates resemble mesh fences. Each gate uses rings interlocked to form a large ring mail "blanket." The mesh is loose enough to let water and fish through, but tight enough to prevent man-sized objects from passing. One end of each blanket is linked to a

metal bar. Both ends of each bar are housed in a track built into the shore and center bridge supports (locations 8). The other ends of the four blankets are secured at two locations: two below the wall and behind the stone arch, and two to a rock bed at the bottom of the river.

Two wooden wheels (one for each set of gates) raise and lower the river gates. They are set into the stone at the top of the wall (location 4) near the small watch tower (location 6). Each wheel operates a rope drive that raises and lowers each bar in its track. This rope drive in turn unrolls each ring-linked "blanket" until they meet at the middle depth of the river. The wheels can be locked so that the gates cannot be retracted from underwater.

The river gates were built to keep boats and swimmers from passing. At the first sign of trouble, guards sound the alarm and lower the river gates. The gates are strong enough to stop a large rowboat, and difficult to break through without great strength, powerful tools, or magical means.

**8. Supports:** Three stone structures support the bridge (location 3) and wall (location 4) at three points, one on either shore and one in the center of the river. These supports are 70 feet tall, measuring from the bottom of the riverbed up to the bottom of the bridge. The large center support is 10 feet thick and 65 feet long, the two smaller ones along the shore 5 feet thick and 50 feet wide. The wide edges of the supports are tapered to allow the passage of water around them.

**9. Watch towers:** These watch towers are identical with those mentioned earlier. The corporal and foot soldiers on duty here are responsible for controlling passage over the bridge (location 3).

**10. Ditches:** These ditches are identical with those mentioned earlier.

**11. River:** Two rivers flow into Martaigne: the Rica and the Alesta. Both rivers are narrow at

# Darian's Wall



the border: 80 to 100 feet across and less than 50 feet deep. The floodplain around both rivers has been built up with landfill from outlying areas. Both river shores on the Rica and Alesta have been fortified with rock and timber, and have been raised 20 feet at a sharp angle to allow for and contain flooding.

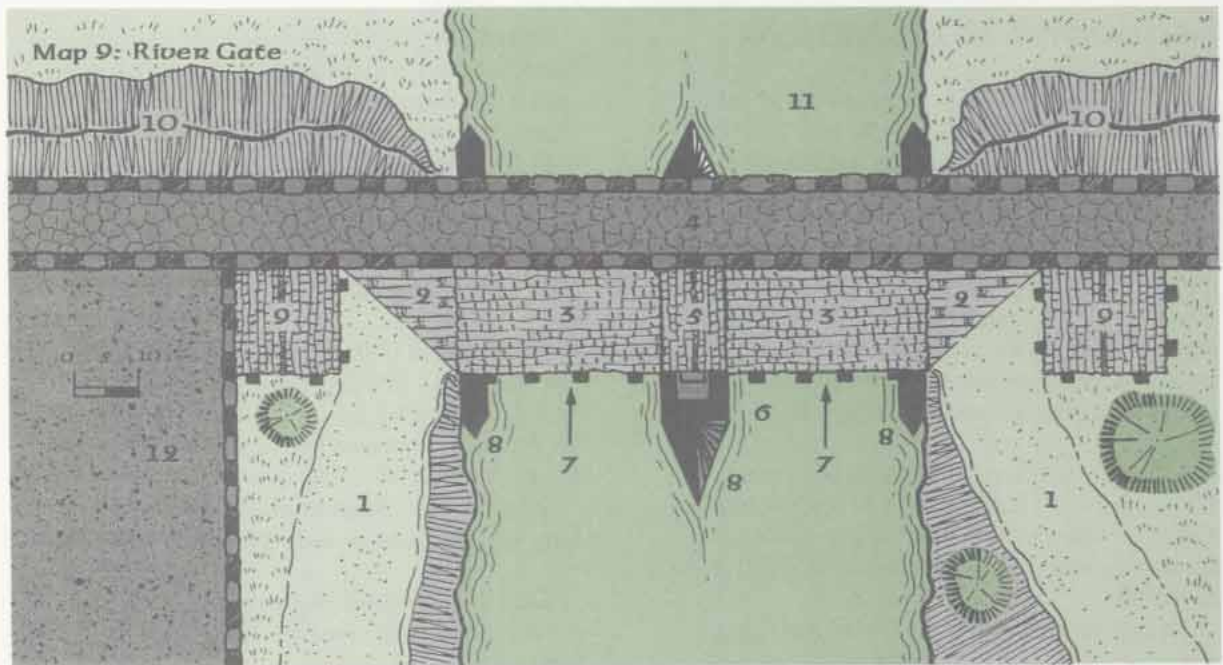
An early attempt to shorten the bridge span was employed on the first Rica river gate. It involved the use of wing dams: stone dams built below the river surface and designed to push the water toward the middle of the river. This shortened the necessary span of the bridge and wall. The material-saving design, however, met with disaster.

Shortly after the Rica river gate was erected, Tracian barbarians discovered the dams and destroyed them, causing a flood that washed away the wall and bridge. The disaster cost many lives and left a breach in the wall—one that required massive troop maneuvers to rout

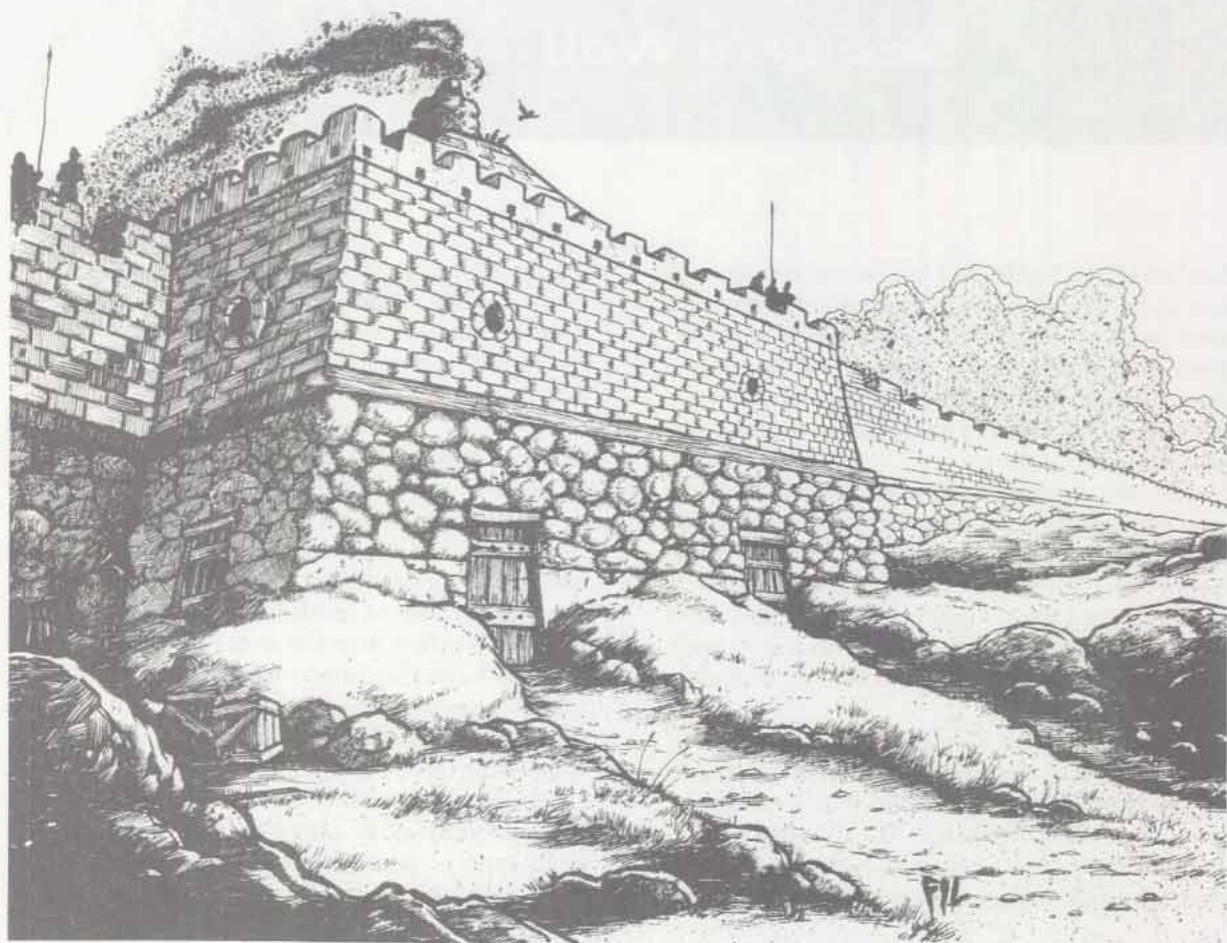
the invading barbarians. Thereafter, wall engineers discarded the use of dams at river gates (but they may be useful in campaigns where rivers flow out of enemy territory instead of into it).

**12. Mile castle:** This mile castle is identical with those mentioned earlier, except that it is staffed by 6 wall corporals and 30 foot soldiers. Conditions are crowded, but the duty is relatively easy since each of these men (including the four soldiers at location 5) only works an 8-hour shift rather than the usual 12 hours.

Since barbarian hordes often attacked at these two river gates, King Ambros I saw fit to have mile castles installed to provide the necessary troop support. (In the circumstances of your campaign, the placement of mile castles at river gates is optional. You may exclude them from river gates on smaller rivers, or add city forts to river gates on larger rivers.)







## Standard Wall Militia

The following NPCs are provided as templates for populating city forts, mile castles, watch towers, and river gates. Besides the characters described below, officers of higher rank, such as royal generals and their attendant noble officers, may serve occasional tours of duty at the wall. Note that such royal appearances are infrequent, and usually occur only at times of dire necessity (war, a morale crisis, a treaty signing, etc.). You may use NPCs from your campaign to further personalize this setting.

**Lord major (F10):** AC 4 (1 w/Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 63; THAC0 10 (w/+1 Str bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon +3 (Str bonus); ML champion (15); Int exceptional (16); AL NG; XP 2,000

**Equipment:** Chain mail and shield; long sword, crossbow and 10 bolts

This is the highest generic rank of officer stationed at the wall. Usually, a lord major is the person in charge of a city fort. He will not choose to be involved directly in combat, but will direct it from a safe vantage. The lord major presides over the complete detachment assigned to a city fort, usually having 1 to 5 guard captains and their complete troop complements under his command.

**Guard captain (F9):** AC 4 (2 w/Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 60; THAC0 11 (w/+1 Str bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon +3 (Str bonus); SA Strength bonuses; ML elite (14); Int exceptional (15); AL NG; XP 1,400

**Equipment:** Chain mail and shield; spear, long sword, short sword, crossbow and 10 bolts

This is the second highest rank of officer stationed at the wall, usually found only at a city fort. Each guard captain is in charge of a detach-

## Darian's Wall



ment of men typically consisting of 5 guard lieutenants, 10 wall sergeants, 20 wall corporals, and 100 foot soldiers.

**Guard lieutenant (F7):** AC 4 (2 w/Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 47; THAC0 13 (w/+1 Str bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon +1 (Str bonus); ML steady (12); Int high (14); AL NG; XP 650

**Equipment:** Chain mail and shield; spear, long sword, short sword, crossbow and 10 bolts

This is usually the highest-ranking officer stationed at a mile castle. A guard lieutenant in such a location is in charge of a detachment of men consisting of 1 wall sergeant, 2 wall corporals, and 10 foot soldiers.

**Wall sergeant (F5):** AC 6 (5 w/Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 34; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon +1 (Str bonus); ML steady (12); Int high (13); AL NG; XP 175

**Equipment:** Ring mail and shield; spear, short sword, short bow and 20 arrows

Each wall sergeant is in charge of a detachment of men consisting of 2 wall corporals and 10 foot soldiers. This is the highest-ranking officer that would ever be stationed at a watch tower, and then only in unusual circumstances. Sergeants are usually found only in mile castles and city forts.

**Wall corporal (F3):** AC 6; MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; ML steady (12); Int very (12); AL NG; XP 65

**Equipment:** Ring mail and shield; spear, short sword, short bow and 20 arrows

This is the highest-ranking officer normally stationed at a watch tower. Each wall corporal is in charge of a detachment consisting of 3 to 5 foot soldiers, depending on location.

**Foot soldiers (F1):** AC 7; MV 12; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; ML steady (12); Int

average (9); AL NG; XP 15

**Equipment:** Leather armor and shield; spear, short sword, short bow and 20 arrows

These soldiers make up the bulk of the wall's defenders. There are 3 to 5 foot soldiers in a standard unit under the command of a wall corporal.

**Civilians and peasants:** AC 10; MV 12; hp varies (1-6); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ varies (S-M); ML varies (5-13); Int varies (4-15); AL varies (NG, LG, or N); XP 7

**Equipment:** Farm tools, wooden spears

These are family members and support characters living in or around the city forts.

**Military priest (C3):** AC 8; MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA spells; SD +2 Wis bonus on saving throws; SZ M; ML 12; AL NG; S 11; D 12; C 10; I 13; W 16; Ch 13

**Equipment:** Leather armor; mace, spear

**Preferred spells (4/3):** 1st—*bless, cure light wounds, protection from evil, shillelagh*; 2nd—*chant, flame blade, spiritual hammer*

Military priests are assigned to detachments at a rate of 1 per 20 men. Military priests will not be assigned to any station other than a city fort except on demand and in cases of dire need (such as during a battle).

## Adventure Hooks

- The PCs are hired as mercenaries to help shore up a particularly hard-pressed segment of the wall. Each character is given a temporary rank commensurate with his or her experience level (but no higher than sergeant in any event). The characters have a contract that promises to pay each of them 50 gp per month in addition to room, board, and transportation to the frontier. They are required to perform as military



## Darian's Wall

hirelings, following orders and conducting themselves as militiamen.

Use this hook as a break between larger adventures, providing low-level PCs with a chance to increase their wealth and experience. Do not play out the daily grind of the military life; it isn't necessary to bore players with the tedious routine of the soldier. Make this an action-packed diversion, offering battles and duties of military importance. PCs should consider this a convenient diversion from "normal" adventuring; an opportunity to fight and defend the safety of their beloved homeland while gaining pay and experience.

- Unbeknownst to the rest of the residents (except for a few guards who are necessarily in on the scheme but have been sworn to secrecy), the PCs are hired by the lord mayor of a city fort to test the defenses of the outpost. They are let through the outer gate into Tracian territory under cover of darkness, after which they have 24 hours to get back over the wall (or break through it) within one mile of this location without being detected and stopped by soldiers. According to the lord mayor, his guards will be under orders to detain, but not kill or injure, any trespassers they may come across.

What the PCs don't know is that the lord mayor has no intention of allowing them to live long enough to collect the pay he has promised them. Contrary to what he claims, the guards—as usual—have standing orders to kill anyone who tries to breach the wall. If the party succeeds in getting back to the lord mayor without losing any of its members, the PCs may be none the wiser about the lord mayor's attempted double-cross. But rather than pay them, the lord mayor will order them to be taken prisoner and deposited back on the "bad" side of the wall. And this time he will double the guards along the wall near his city fort to prevent the PCs from getting

across a second time (and seeking out the lord mayor again to get their revenge upon him).

- Building on the possibilities suggested by the previous scenario, set up a situation in which the soldiers of Martaigne are the "bad guys" and the barbarians of Tracia are the honorable people in this conflict. Generations ago, as the Tracians would tell it, the power-hungry rulers of Martaigne drove the northern boundary of their realm deep into what had been Tracian territory. Because the Tracians are simple people with relatively few resources, they were powerless to resist the advance of the forces of Martaigne and the subsequent construction of the wall.

If the wall has sealed off Martaigne from Tracia, it has also provided the Tracians with complete seclusion from their enemies. Martaigne is ignorant of the fact that the so-called barbarians have become much more numerous and much more organized over the last few decades, and are now on the verge of being ready to mount an all-out assault on one of Martaigne's city forts. What they need to put them over the top, figuratively and perhaps literally, is the assistance of a group of powerful characters who are sympathetic to their plight and may be able to help the Tracians get a foothold in their attempt to reclaim their lost territory.

- Despite their elaborate and impressive structure, the river gates are the weakest spots along Darian's Wall. Considerable opportunity presents itself (for characters who are suitably equipped) to smuggle people and/or supplies into Tracia by moving underwater when the gate is open to allow surface traffic through.

To take advantage of this fact, arrange for the PCs to be contacted on the Martaigne side of the wall by Tracian sympathizers who need to get a message, or a valuable magical item,

## Darian's Wall



into the hands of their allies. The members of the Tracian underground will have detailed information on schedules for shift changes of guards, times when they know a barge from the north will be approaching the gate, and so forth—making the PCs' job a little less risky but still dangerous enough to leave them as the only characters who can possibly succeed.

- The lieutenant in command of a nearby mile castle has reported to the lord mayor of a city fort with disturbing news: some mysterious and terrible creature has been seen prowling around—and under!—the ground on the Tracian side of the wall. Although the wall has not been breached and none of his men has been hurt, the officer fears for the continued safety of himself and his men if this threat is not met. Clearly, it is not something he and his soldiers can deal with by themselves. The call goes out for help.

The mysterious creature is, of course, a *bulette*. The lieutenant is right to be concerned, because the monster could burrow beneath the wall whenever it wanted—and if it emerged on the Martaigne side, no one in the area would be safe.

**Bulette (1):** AC -2/4/6; MV 14 (3); HD 9; hp 66; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 4d12/3d6/3d6; SA 8' jump; SZ L (10' tall, 12' long); ML steady (11); Int animal (1); XP 4,000; MM/33.

Because it ranges over such a wide area in search of food, the monster may be nowhere in the vicinity when the PCs and the lieutenant get back to the mile castle; it may be necessary for characters to traverse the wall for miles in either direction, looking for evidence of the monster's recent passage and collecting information from other guard posts. If characters elect to descend into Tracian territory to track the creature, they may be set upon by a band of barbarians—and if they

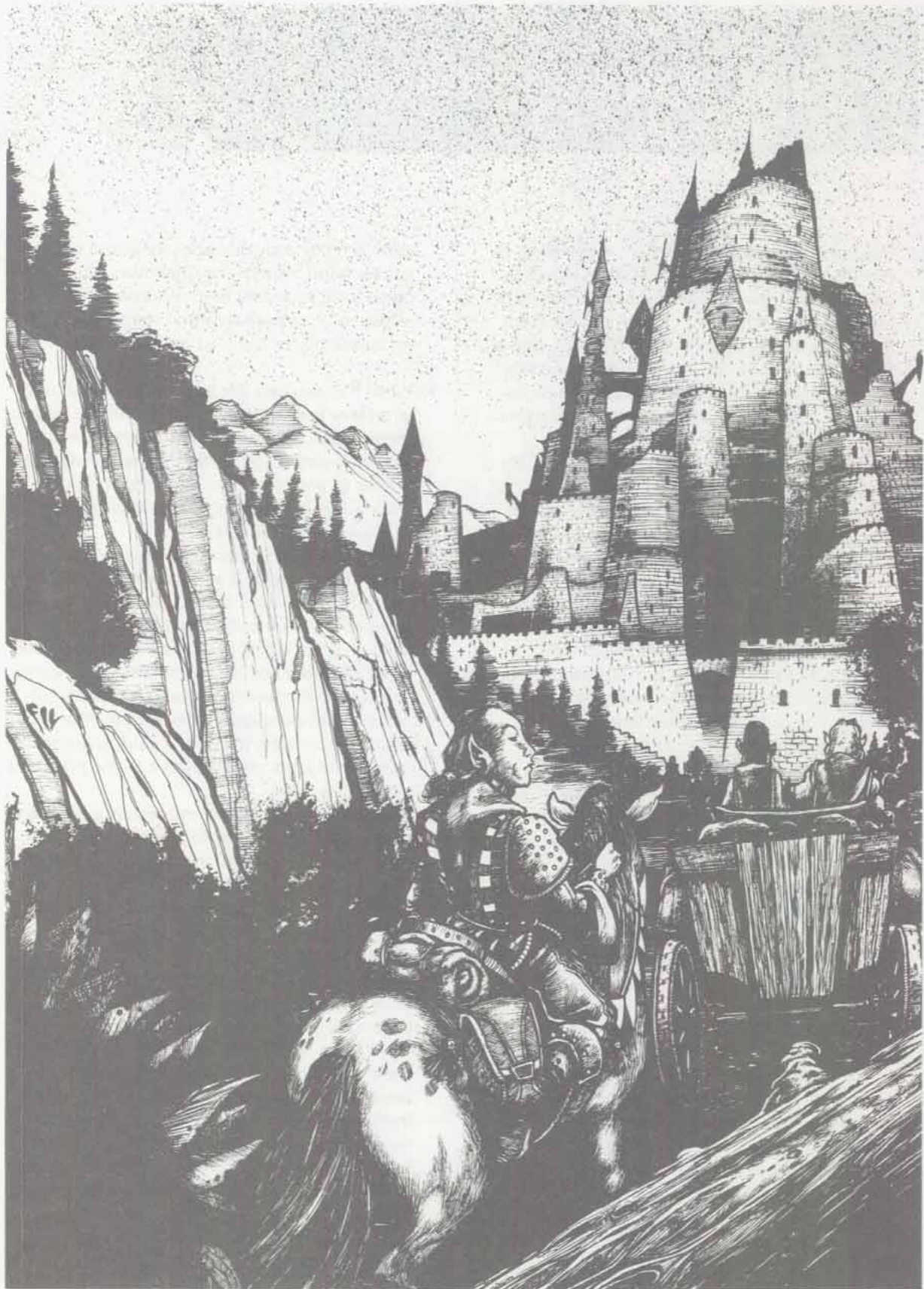
stray too far from the mile castle and try to get back into Martaigne, they may meet resistance from guards who don't know (and refuse to be persuaded) that they are actually on a mission for the lord mayor.

- Word has reached the lord mayor that barbarians have been conducting small-scale raids a considerable distance inside Martaigne. The terrorists strike and vanish, either going into hiding or somehow getting back across the wall without being detected and stopped. The PCs are hired to investigate.

The truth of the matter is that the members of the detachment of an inconspicuous watch tower have decided that it's lucrative to allow themselves to be bribed by the Tracians. They let a small group of barbarians come up over the wall under cover of darkness (even going so far as to throw ropes down to them), collect their blood money, and wait for the Tracians to return from their raid, whereupon they allow them passage back to the northern side of the wall.

If characters visit several watch towers and mile castles in the general area where the raids are taking place, they will learn that skirmishes with the barbarians are fairly common—except at the watch tower occupied by the mutineers. The disloyal soldiers will remark that there has been no hostile activity around their tower for several weeks (which is, as far as it goes, quite true). This should be a tipoff to the PCs that something isn't right.

Occupying the watch tower will probably not bring the PCs any closer to a solution, because the guards have a system for signaling the barbarians (using a lantern) when it is not safe for them to approach. If they suspect what is happening, they may realize that the way to catch everyone in the act is to pretend they are leaving, then sneak over to the Tracian side of the wall and wait for the raiders to show themselves.



# The Place of Broken Dreams



Perched on a lonely crag, overlooking a wide plain where peasants toil, is a bizarre structure. Its architect must have been quite mad, for many of the features of the complex seem to have no purpose: monoliths that jut out at odd angles, arches that support nothing but themselves, staircases that climb into the sky and end.

## Overview

During Earth's Middle Ages, disease was ubiquitous, claiming lives on an everyday basis. Many children died in infancy, and adults fell prey to sweeping plagues, such as the Black Death of the 14th century, which wiped out entire cities. Disease was not well understood; no one knew about germs or viruses. Instead, bad air or an imbalance of "bodily humors" (the body's fluids) was blamed for an illness. Most treatments were ineffective; sometimes all that could be done for (or with) sufferers was to separate them from the healthy, in hopes of checking the spread of the disease.

In the world of fantasy, things are somewhat different. Clerical healing and curing are widespread; while disease is certainly something to be wary of, it is not as serious a threat. But—precisely because it is a world of fantasy—illnesses can exist that are not cured by a simple application of everyday magic. In fact, clerical magic of any sort may be of no assistance; perhaps nothing short of a *wish* or divine intervention will counteract the disease.

## Broken Dreams

*Nulvayahar* is a condition unique to elves and half-elves; those without elvish blood can be neither victims nor carriers. No one knows what causes it or how it spreads. *Cure disease* does not stop it; sages speculate that it is not a disease of the body, but an affliction of the spirit, something between possession and insanity. It is highly contagious from one elf to another. Entire communities have been obliterated by the disease.

The name means, in an ancient elvish dialect, "broken dreams," a typically poetic elvish way of describing the symptoms. A stricken elf suffers memory loss, increasing in severity over time, accompanied by and contrasted with episodes of mental fixation on his or her moments of greatest regret (which are not among the memories that are lost). When victims emerge from these fits of distress and melancholy, they describe them as terrible nightmares in which they are paralyzed, witnessing again and again their life's greatest errors, unable to escape or even to act.

## A Tragic Love Story

A solemn reminder of the elven plague, *Nulvayaharan*, "The Place of Broken Dreams," is also an inescapable relic of a painful past. Perched high atop the craggy cliffs, *Nulvayaharan* can be seen from anywhere in Shepherd's Valley. Locals have an irrational fear of the place; they are apprehensive of its purpose, its history, its bizarre facade.

Construction began on the place 40 years ago. Then it was known as Villaura. Duke Berault, its creator and the nephew of King Aigar, was a soldier by profession and also a noted diplomat: a kind man blessed with understanding and unique powers of persuasion.

Before Villaura existed, King Aigar sent a force of soldiers commanded by his nephew to Shepherd's Valley. From there, the contingent would move into the nearby Yellaya Forest and root out the bands of elves that had been attacking the humans' caravans as they moved through the forest. Upon his arrival, the Duke fell in love with the valley; nowhere on earth had he seen such natural beauty, and he was determined that the area not be spoiled by combat. As a result, he stopped thinking of the problem as a military one and began to seek a solution through diplomacy.

The Duke researched the situation with his closest aides. They learned that, according to



## The Place of Broken Dreams

local elders, the elves of the forest had coexisted with the humans of the valley for centuries. The recent troubles started when human merchants began sending their caravans through the forest instead of around it (which was a much longer route). Resentful of having their forest despoiled in this way, the elves began ambushing the caravans. The caravan drivers fought back. Hostilities escalated on both sides.

Duke Berault interpreted the situation as a classic case of misunderstanding. With the King's approval, the Duke opened a line of communication to King Illaran, the elven monarch. He listened to the concerns of King Illaran, formulated a compromise, and drew up a treaty. Humans would be able to use the forest road so long as they paid the elves one-tenth of all the goods being transported. The elves, in turn, agreed to cease all hostilities and provide an escort for each caravan to protect the travelers and make sure the forest was not harmed. The treaty was signed by both kings and enacted promptly.

As a result of the Treaty of Yellaya, Duke Berault was lauded by both races as a leader of great compassion. King Aigar showed his gratitude by making the Duke his vassal, granting him dominion over Shepherd's Valley. King Illaran showed his thanks by offering the hand of his daughter Lorraine in marriage.

The Duke was initially inclined to turn down Illaran's offer, having a basic distrust of pre-arranged marriages. But all that changed when he first laid eyes on Lorraine—it was love at first sight, both for him and for her. It was almost as if the two were destined to be together: a match of souls made beyond time and place.

As tribute to his bride-to-be, Duke Berault ordered the construction of Vellaura, a castle built by two races, the likes of which had not been seen. Construction began as the valley residents celebrated their newfound peace and anticipated the upcoming wedding.

With the first tower built and the wedding only a fortnight away, good fortune took a turn

for the worse. Shortly after Lorraine's public betrothal to Duke Berault, a strange condition afflicted the young elven maiden. She began to have bad dreams that quickly grew in intensity. Lorraine weakened as a result of the affliction, losing sleep and strength, and gradually losing touch with her surroundings.

Concerned with the declining health of his betrothed, Duke Berault brought doctors and clerics to Lorraine's aid. They learned nothing of the cause, only of the symptoms and their effects. Lorraine's health declined rapidly, and she fell into a raving madness.

King Illaran had his daughter locked away, to protect her (and himself) from the embarrassment of her being seen in public. Duke Berault tried to visit Lorraine, beseeching her father to let him see her—at the very least, to let him speak with her—to no avail. Lorraine died shortly afterward. At the request of her father, the Duke did not attend Lorraine's funeral.

In the quiet tradition of the elves, King Illaran hosted a solemn ceremony marking his daughter's death. During the day, small fires were burned in honor of the dead princess. The colorful smoke curled slowly through the trees on a symbolic journey to the heavens. At night, candles were lit and hung from the limbs of every tree in the forest.

Unwillingly, but out of respect for King Illaran, Berault stayed away from the forest during this ritual, watching from the seclusion of the unfinished castle. As the lights flickered in the forest below, the Duke mourned the loss of his true love from high upon the hills.

The young elven princess was buried the following day, precisely one day before she was promised to marry the Duke.

### A Change of Course

The death of Lorraine drove the Duke into a deep depression. Uninterested in sleeping or eating, he spent most of his time wandering the

## The Place of Broken Dreams



incomplete halls of Villaura, sobbing loudly and lamenting the death of his love. He ordered the continuation of Villaura's construction, but began giving strange orders about how the place should look. The workers followed the Duke's instructions, careful not to upset this man who seemed on the brink of collapse.

King Aigar ordered the Duke to cease his irrational deeds. The Duke ignored the order and continued draining the public coffers to build his bizarre castle. When the royal family finally refused to humor his madness any longer, the Duke chased the builders from Villaura and locked himself away from the public he had once served so honorably. Duke Berault remained in this seclusion for more than a month. Then, rumors of his death began circulating.

Investigators were ordered to Villaura by King Aigar. When they arrived, they found the place abandoned. They assumed the worst—that the Duke had wandered off and died of starvation or been killed by some predator. They ordered the castle and its grounds turned over to the family Marsal, the Duke's closest living heirs.

Members of the family Marsal moved into Villaura and stayed there for several months. Eventually, they grew uncomfortable within the bizarre setting. Locals believed the castle to be haunted by the Duke and his elven betrothed. At first ignorant of these claims, the Marsals soon began hearing strange sounds: plaintive wails in the halls and the creaking of footsteps on the many winding stairs. Though these could be easily explained away as noises of the wind, the setting slowly proved too disturbing for the family to endure. The Marsals asked to be allowed to move from the premises. This they did with great haste upon receiving the King's approval, leaving Villaura once more an empty shell.

Villaura lay empty for a decade. During that time, the "dreaming madness" became more prevalent among the elves of the forest. Frightened by the spread of the disease and realizing that it did not affect humans, the elves began

blaming the humans for bringing the disease into their forest.

The humans, for their part, accused the elves of using the disease as an excuse for keeping keeping caravans out of the forest. Tempers flared on both sides, and skirmishes broke out within the valley. Duke Berault's treaty was dissolved, the humans and elves fought, and the disease continued its deadly course.

As *nulvayahar* grew, it consumed the elven population at a greater rate. With increased numbers of elven deaths came a cessation of the violence. Where once they blamed the humans, the elves now blamed themselves. Surely it was the will of the gods, many of them thought. Who else could foment such pestilence upon a single race? The elves accepted their fate with a sense of bleak fatalism. The skirmishes diminished and the elves withdrew deeper into the forest, soon avoiding humans completely.

Even though the elves withdrew, the disease progressed. Cases of *nulvayahar*, formerly seen only in full-blooded elven populations, began appearing in half-elves living among the humans of the valley.

No longer the place of 20 years prior, the valley now was home to many younger people of mixed blood; nearly every human in the valley could claim at least one half-elven friend or relative. So common were the half-elven youths that the valley people jokingly referred to them as "Duke Berault's children." The jokes dwindled, though, as the humans found they were no longer entirely unaffected by the disease. Death upon death brought greater sadness to the valley. With that sadness came a better understanding.

Honoring the memory of Duke Berault and his beloved Lorraine, the new King Enric reinstated the Treaty of Yellaya, an act noted more as a goodwill gesture than a legislative edict: with so few elves left in Yellaya, who cared if caravans passed through the forest? As a further goodwill gesture, King Enric donated Villaura to the elves as a hospice for victims of *nulvayahar*.





## The Place of Broken Dreams

In the beginning, only a handful of half-elven valley-folk went to stay in the castle. With time, however, more came and stayed. Elves came in rare cases only at first, then in greater numbers as their population further diminished. Villaura came to be known as *Nulvayaharan*. Once home to the mad Duke, to empty halls and howling winds, the place now echoed with the wails of the dying masses.

### *Nulvayaharan*

Originally built for human occupation, *Nulvayaharan* is not the best environment for elves and half-elves due to its large, enclosed areas. Mother Inyana has done her best to make the place more hospitable by crowding it with flora of every variety. In addition, many of the castle's doors and windows have been removed to create the feeling of open space. Every effort has been made to fashion the place as if it were an elven environment; an admirably generous intent, but obviously not in its original design.

Most of the tower is incomplete, or bizarre in its design. For simplicity, these areas are left undeveloped on Map 10. If you wish, you may add onto the castle as you like, developing any functional or nonfunctional elements deemed fitting.

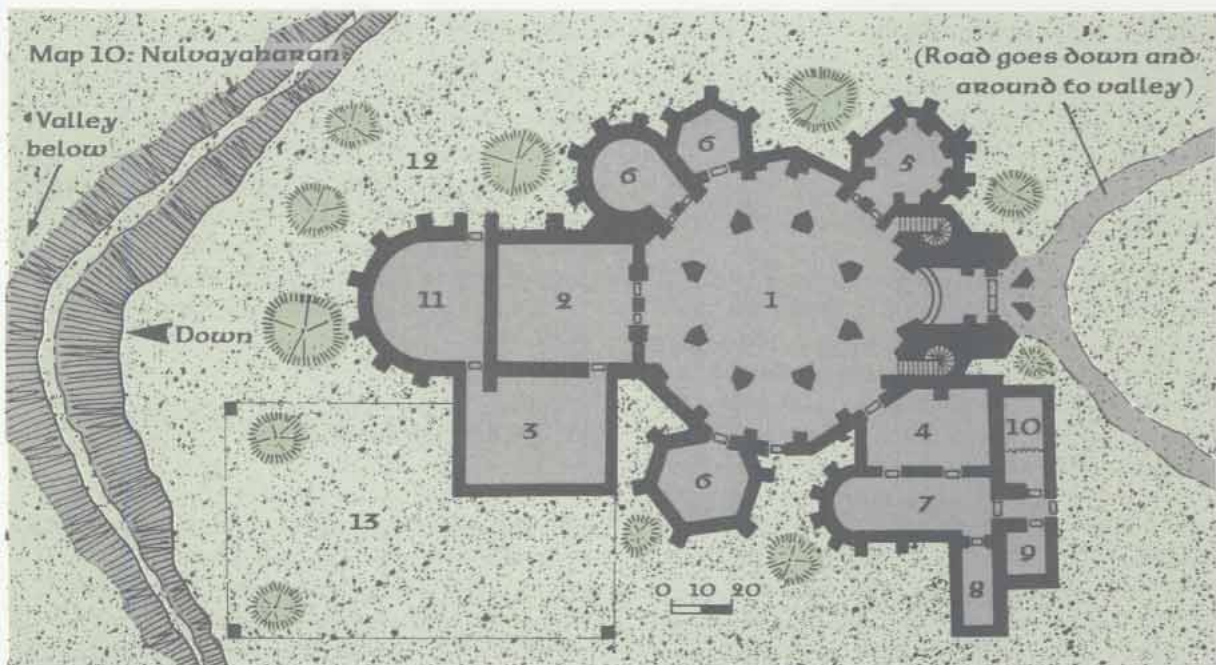
Much of *Nulvayaharan* is a mishmash of style. Visitors often see it as a structure built without logic, purpose, or design. At times, the Place of Broken Dreams seems more the work of a madman than a hospice for unfortunate souls.

The place has many oddities: halls that wind in upon themselves, then end abruptly in stone walls; rooms built with three walls and often without ceilings; stairs that ascend and then descend for no apparent reason, then ascend again suddenly and end in open air; towers built without windows, roofs, or floors. As a matter of expedience, the DM may simply describe these portions as jutting off strangely in all directions—a bizarre composite of elements and styles that defy logic and architectural sense. The

rest of the structure and its grounds had, and now has, purpose: the main tower and its adjuncts, for example, as described below.

- 1. Infirmary:** This large hall serves as the main hospital. It has 100 beds, each one outfitted with a footlocker and bedside table.
- 2. Meeting hall:** This hall has been converted to serve as a room for large meetings and as a setting for daily leisure activity. It contains 10 small tables with four chairs at each table.
- 3. Private cells:** The eight cells in this room serve as confinement for the more violent and difficult victims of *nulvayahar*, usually those in the stages of the disease preceding death. Each 10-foot-by-15-foot cell has a bed, a small table, and a chair.
- 4. Dining area:** Patients who can get around without assistance (less than one-fourth of the current population) are encouraged to take their meals in the dining area. The room contains four large tables with 12 chairs at each one.
- 5. Chapel:** This multid denominational facility has been designed to allow elves and half-elves to worship the deities of their choices.
- 6. Volunteer staff's quarters:** These military-style rooms contain bunk beds, desks, bedside tables, and lockers. As illustrated in design, privacy is not the primary goal here.
- 7. Kitchen and food storage:** All meals are prepared herein.
- 8. Mother Inyana's quarters:** This small, simply furnished room is clean and well ordered. It contains a bed, a chest, a desk, a table, and two chairs. The only other items of note in the room are paintings of a handsome young man: Mother Inyana's dead son.

# The Place of Broken Dreams



**9. Dr. Indragon's quarters:** The doctor's quarters are sparsely furnished and not well kept. The bed is small and messy, and often goes unused when the doctor is in the middle of some bit of research. The room also contains a small wardrobe, a table and chair, a writing desk covered with books and notes, and a small bedside table.

**10. Dr. Indragon's lab and study:** Originally a single room, this rectangular area has been divided by a heavy tapestry hung across its middle. The front laboratory, closer to Dr. Indragon's quarters, is filled with tables and desks, each of which is covered with beakers, tubes, canisters, books, notes, and other items common to a medieval-era laboratory. At present, the doctor is conducting a number of experiments: the contents of beakers are bubbling above small candle flames, and liquids are coursing through an array of pipes and tubes.

The back of the room serves as Indragon's study. There is a desk against one wall, various

tables and shelves littered with books, and a small, unmade cot, also covered with books. The room has a musty, unkempt smell, as if its occupant does not often leave its confines.

**11. Conservatory:** The ceiling over this area has been knocked out so that the room may house trees and large plants. The conservatory is used as a place of rest and as a setting for reflection—a substitute for the outdoors for *Nulvayaharan's* less mobile patients.

**12. Yard:** This large, open area offers the ailing a place of respite outdoors.

**13. Cemetery:** This fenced-in burial ground is far from filled. Only a few victims' bodies are interred—mostly those of half-elves, at the request of human relatives. Most elven bodies and many half-elven ones are cremated on a stone pyre located next to the chapel; traditional elven bur-



## The Place of Broken Dreams

ial rituals are forgone, with the exception of casting the ashes to the wind. This ceremony is performed at the edge of the downslope to the west; the ashes float out over the precipice and spread across the lush, green valley below.

### Personnel

The Place of Broken Dreams is run by a small group of clerics, mostly human. These men and women have dedicated themselves to the care of the unfortunates who here live out their sad remaining days. As humans, the caretakers are immune to the disease—but not always its residual effects. The founder and leader of the hospital, Mother Inyana, is a human woman whose half-elf child fell prey to *nulvayahar* nearly a decade ago. Some clerics on the staff have similar personal ties to victims of the disease; others serve out of benevolence and altruism, or as part of their own spiritual journey to understand the place of suffering in the world.

One semipermanent resident is Doctor Indragon, a mage-physician who studies the disease and is the author of the definitive monograph on the topic. Dr. Indragon hopes one day that his studies will lead to a cure, or at least more treatments to ease the suffering of victims.

### Mother Inyana

A 6th-level female human cleric

Alignment:	Lawful good
Move:	12
AC:	10
THAC0:	18
Hit points:	36

Strength:	12	Intelligence:	16
Dexterity:	13	Wisdom:	18
Constitution:	16	Charisma:	12

Proficiencies: Dagger, staff; healing (16), herbalism (14), local history (12), religion (18)

Languages: Common, elvish

Armor: None

Weapons: Dagger

Preferred spells (5/5/3): 1st—*create water, cure light wounds, detect poison, endure heat/endure cold, remove fear*; 2nd—*barkskin, goodberry, know alignment, resist fire/resist cold, slow poison*; 3rd—*create food & water, cure disease, magical vestment*

Equipment: Scroll of *protection from water*, various nonmagical religious items, personal effects  
Age: 55

Height: 5'4"

Weight: 130 lbs.

Hair/eyes: Gray/blue

Mother Inyana does the best she can to ease the suffering of the patients under her care. She is dedicated to this task, and refuses to be discouraged by the fact that all her work will be ultimately futile—unless, of course, a cure for the disease can be found. She spends most of her waking hours strolling through the hospital and the adjoining areas, offering moral support and whatever physical comfort she is able to provide for patients. She thinks of her dead son almost constantly, and considers her work to be a tribute to his memory.

Staff members (C2): AC 10; MV 12; hp 8 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ M; ML 12; AL LG; S 8; D 9; C 13; I 11; W 12; Ch 13

Equipment: Dagger, personal effects

Preferred spells (2): 1st—*create water, purify food & drink*.

Three to six staff members will be in residence at the hospital at any time. Described above is a "generic" low-level cleric who can serve as one of Mother Inyana's assistants. Others may be of lower or higher level, as you see fit. None of the staff members wears armor; each one carries a dagger, which is only to be used defensively (for instance, to keep from being injured by a patient who goes berserk).

# The Place of Broken Dreams



## Dr. Indragon

An 8th-level male human mage

<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral good
<b>Move:</b>	12
<b>AC:</b>	10
<b>THAC0:</b>	18
<b>Hit points:</b>	26

<b>Strength:</b>	9	<b>Intelligence:</b>	11
<b>Dexterity:</b>	10	<b>Wisdom:</b>	12
<b>Constitution:</b>	9	<b>Charisma:</b>	15

**Proficiencies:** Dagger; herbalism (9), reading/writing (12), spellcraft (9)

**Languages:** Common, elvish, kobold

**Armor:** None

**Weapons:** Dagger

**Spellbook (4/3/3/2):** 1st—*alarm\**, *armor*, *detect magic\**, *hold portal\**, *message*, *read magic*, *unseen servant\**; 2nd—*continual light*, *ESP\**, *invisibility\**, *know alignment*, *locate object\**, *rope trick*, *strength*; 3rd—*clairvoyance\**, *item*, *protection from normal missiles*, *suggestion\**, *wraithform\**; 4th—*dimension door\**, *emotion\**, *extension I*, *wizard eye*

\* indicates favored spell.

**Equipment:** Laboratory supplies, books, various personal effects

**Age:** 62

**Height:** 5'10"

**Weight:** 170 lbs.

**Hair/eyes:** Gray/black

The doctor's latest hypothesis is that *nulvayahar* is the effect of an otherworldly parasite that attaches itself to an elvish spirit and lives off the elf's psychic energy. The energies of other beings must somehow not satisfy the parasite.

Indragon often wonders how much of his fascination with *nulvayahar* is for the sake of his patients, and how much is his own lust for knowledge. He has never allowed himself to become emotionally attached to patients—he prefers to avoid any such entanglements, for fear that they

would introduce a dangerous element of subjectivity into his dispassionate observations.

**Patients (100):** AC 10; MV 6; hp varies (1–3 each); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ varies (S or M); ML varies (2–6); Int varies (3–18); AL varies (NG, LG, or N); XP 7 each

*Nulvayahar's* victims do not require detailed stats or equipment; more important are their personalities. For example, you may include:

— A half-elven priest who, when she learned she had *nulvayahar*, committed herself to the hospital and became a member of the staff. As long as she can, she continues to minister to the needs of the other patients.

— An aged elven prince who has had the disease for as long as he can recall—and carries the clue to its genesis as a result.

## Adventure Hooks

"The Place of Broken Dreams" is off the beaten track of the usual scenario; its emphasis is less on big heroic deeds and more on personal tragedy with a romantic (or melodramatic) tinge.

Ideally, the place should be linked with the personal issues of the PCs: a loved one may be consigned to the place, or it could even be a "rest home" for a retired PC who may still have an occasional cameo in the campaign.

Here are additional suggestions:

- A quest for exotic items, needed by Dr. Indragon, that might provide a cure to the disease. This could involve the PCs meeting elves living elsewhere who are also infected with *nulvayahar*—a fact that may lead to its cure.
- A patient in the place may hold the key to the nature of the disease; or a variation of the disease (resulting from Dr. Indragon's experiments) may result in oracular powers that suggest a cure.



## The Fiend's Bridge

Arching high over a mountain gorge is an impressive stone structure known as the Fiend's Bridge. The river at the bottom of the gorge is 200 feet beneath the apex of the bridge's arch. The bridge offers passage from one set of mountain trails to another.

### Overview

The Fiend's Bridge serves as one of the few reliable passages between mountains in the region. Where other bridges are flimsy in comparison and not able to support more than the weight of a human, the Fiend's Bridge is a relatively risk-free passageway. Though the path leading to and from the bridge is narrow (no wider than an ox-cart), the bridge serves as a valuable lifeline for dwarven and human settlements on both sides of the chasm. Caravans of llama and oxen are often seen making the passage in both directions, in all seasons, and carrying all types of supplies.

### The Legend

The origin of the Fiend's Bridge is shrouded in legend. According to one popular tale, from which its name is derived, the bridge was built by a fiend from the nether regions. (No humans, it is thought, could have accomplished such a feat of engineering.) In exchange for his labor, the townsfolk who lived atop one mountain promised the fiend the soul of the first being to cross the bridge.

The fiend took only a day to build the bridge. Then he sat below it, waiting for his reward. The townsfolk were clever (at least in their own estimation); rather than sacrifice the soul of a human, they sent a dog across the bridge. The fiend erupted from the depths of the gorge and quickly devoured the animal.

Although the bargain for the bridge was followed to the letter, the fiend realized he had been tricked, and he was not happy about it. He next set about performing some more moving of

earth and water, this time for free. Summoning all of his unearthly powers, the fiend assaulted the mountainside town, washing it away down into the river.

The only folk who survived the onslaught were those who were quite short, and could scamper for shelter in the natural nooks and caverns that pock the mountainside. This is why the west side of the gorge is populated by dwarves. Fearing the fiend may someday return, the dwarves to this day tunnel their homes into the mountainside. That way, if the monster wants to destroy their homes, he'll have to knock down the entire mountain!

Humans live on the east side of the gorge, but their village is on the far side of the mountain, far from the risk of fiendish floods. Still, they know of the gorge's supernatural history; in consequence they have erected two chapels on the opposite sides of the bridge. Humans (and sometimes other travelers) stop in a chapel to make a small offering to their guardian divinity before using the bridge. The truly devout also pay their respects in a chapel immediately after crossing the gorge, to show their appreciation for the safe passage.

### Other Theories

What is the *true* origin of the Fiend's Bridge? Alternative hypotheses include:

1. Supernatural assistance was required, but no fiends were involved. Perhaps a wizard used earth elementals to bridge the gap.
2. This is simply an extraordinary piece of human (or dwarvish) architecture. As sometimes happen, people forget just how skilled and ingenious their ancestors were.
3. The bridge wasn't so impressive when it was built. But thanks to the geology of the river bank (made of especially soft rock), the gorge has become much deeper over the centuries. What was once an unspectacular bridge has been made into something remarkable through the natural erosion of the landscape below it (see Map 11).

# The Fiend's Bridge



## Setting

**1. Upper chapel:** The higher of the two chapels, on the dwarven side of the mountain, is also the smaller. Superficially it appears to be a smaller version of its cousin below. Two pews inside face a simple altar.

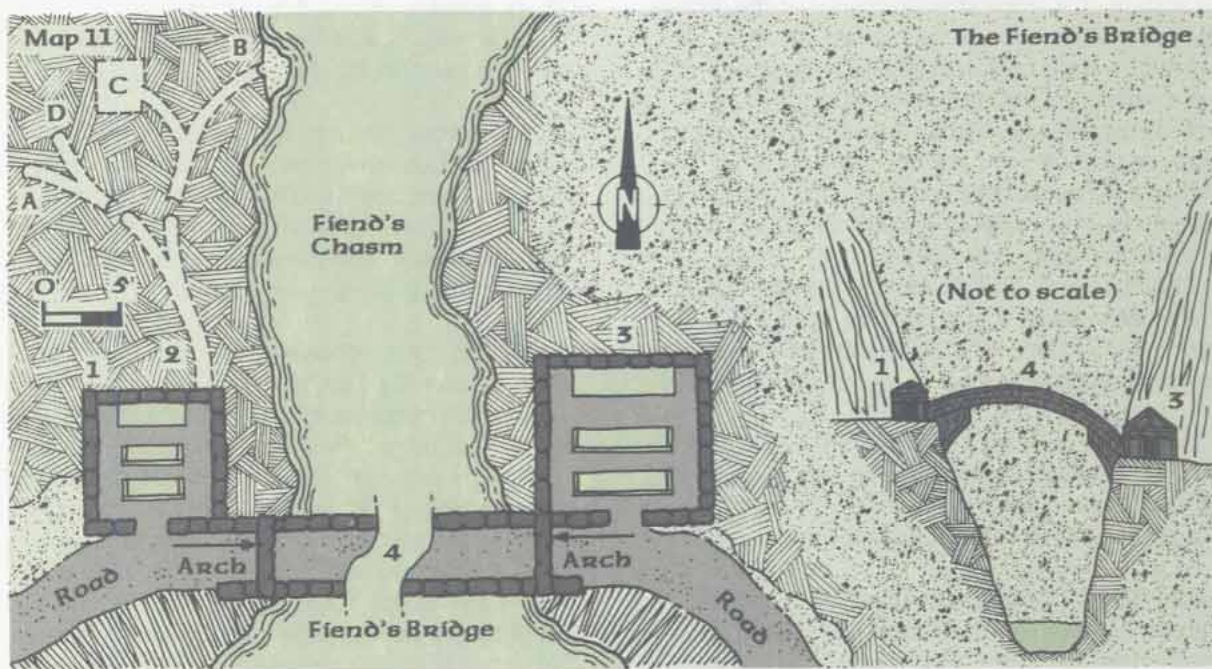
Those who have familiarity with architecture or masonry will notice that this chapel was built on the foundation of an older structure, one made with much larger and more carefully cut stones.

The foundation is all that's left of what was once a dwarven watchtower. This ancient construct commanded a complete, strategically advantageous view of the gorge, both mountains, and the paths that lead off in both directions. From here, one could signal to the dwarven community on the north bank, warning the settlement of advancing armies or bands or brigands.

**2. Ancient dwarven tunnels:** Beneath the floor in the northeast corner of the upper chapel is a secret trap door. Anyone who discovers and then pulls up the door will see a 5-foot-deep shaft that drops into a tunnel leading off to the north. This tunnel burrows some distance into the mountain before splitting off into two smaller tunnels; then each branch splits again into two more tunnels. If the PCs try to travel along any of the tunnels, they will most likely be hampered by the fact that each passage is only 3 feet wide and 3 feet high.

The tunnel leading away from the building was originally built as a hiding place for the watchtower guards. Over the years this passage has been extended and made to serve other purposes. See Map 11 for a rough schematic diagram of how they branch and where each one leads.

Tunnels A and D go deep inside the mountain and eventually connect with a maze of intertwin-





## The Fiend's Bridge

ing tunnels: the dwarves' mines. Any character who travels into the maze will find it impossible to backtrack and will become hopelessly lost without magical or dwarven assistance.

**Tunnel B** follows a level course for a while, then twists and turns as it drops sharply. Eventually, it opens onto a small embankment 20 feet above the river one mile north of the bridge. A bucket-and-winch arrangement is located here, as is a small, open-air latrine. This tunnel has been used as an escape route, and also as a way of fetching water from the river.

**Tunnel C** descends for a short distance after branching off, then ascends sharply, leading to a hideaway filled with long-spoiled food stores and ancient weapons. The hideaway is small and cramped (a 6-foot cube), but cozy enough for dwarves. If anyone begins searching for secret doors or panels inside this chamber (by tapping on the stone to look for hollow places, for instance), a stone slab drops out of the ceiling and seals off the doorway. Prying or lifting the slab will raise it back into place in the ceiling, but a combined Strength of 50 is required to accomplish this, and only three characters can work on one side of the slab at one time. Fortunately for anyone trapped inside, the room is ventilated, but of course the hole is too small to admit any player character.

The hideaway does in fact have a secret panel. On the other side of a small door is a lever that can be used to raise the stone slab, plus a decanter that contains a *potion of invisibility*.

**3. Lower chapel:** The lower chapel is identical with the upper one except for its larger size and the fact that it is built into the face of the mountain and not on an older foundation.

**4. The Fiend's Bridge:** The bridge is a narrow, high-arched construction. Crossing it requires no small effort: the path slants sharply on either

side of the apex. Making the crossing also calls for a strong stomach: from any point on the bridge, a traveler is offered a full, disorienting view of the gorge below.

### Adventure Hooks

- The bridge has been occupied by an enemy of both the humans and the dwarves living in the mountain pass. The cruel lord charges an exorbitant toll. Most locals are too poor to afford passage, as are the caravan drivers who keep the two communities supplied with food and tools. With winter approaching and supplies in both communities becoming dangerously low, someone must either get a shipment through—or take the bridge. Doing the latter won't be easy; 10 guards are stationed there at all times, five on either side.

**10 guards (F2):** AC 8; MV 12; HD 2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; ML steady (12); Int average (8); AL NE; XP 35 each

**Equipment:** Leather armor; spears, short swords, bows and 20 arrows.

- Use the same setup as above, except that the bridge is closed to anyone but the lord's men. A local merchant's son was in the dwarven village when the bridge was taken. The PCs are hired for a secret mission: to slip past the guards and bring the son home.
- While poling a raft down the river, the PCs come across the small embankment that marks the northern exit of Tunnel B. From that point on, let the players' curiosity run its course as they explore the tunnel in backward fashion and (perhaps) eventually find themselves coming out inside the upper chapel—only to discover that (as described in the previous adventure hooks) the bridge is being held by a tyrant who refuses to believe their presence here is accidental.

# The Toll House



A squat tower sits beside a highway along an important trade route. A banner flying from the roof displays the arms of Lord Kelfert, the Baron of Culberry and overlord of this region. Guards lounge on benches outside the toll house, ready to extract payment from travelers passing along the road. Two swift horses are tethered at the front of the building. They are used to chase down those who try to avoid paying the fee—and the guards will do more than lighten the purse of anyone they catch.

## Overview

Roads are necessary for prosperous trade, but they are also expensive to maintain. In medieval times, the cost of roads was often borne by the travelers who paid tolls to use them. Officially such tolls were earmarked for keeping up the roads, perhaps even improving or expanding the system. Too often, the toll money simply lined the pockets of the nobles or officials who collected it. These “robber barons” and their extortion could be a greater hindrance to trade than their roads were a help.

Lord Kelfert is just that sort of noble. The men who collect the tolls believe the funds go toward road maintenance. In fact, Kelfert is stealing the income to procure the services of mercenaries and to stockpile weapons, with which he plans to launch a war against his eastern neighbor, the Marquis d'Antoine, who rules a longer, better-maintained stretch of the highway. Kelfert believes trade is the future, and he who controls the roads effectively controls trade itself.

Kelfert does not live in the toll house; a bailiff and several guards are stationed here to collect tolls and, if necessary, to use force to accomplish this. The bailiff, Norbert, oversees daily business and reports to the baron twice a month. (Kelfert's manor is half a day away by horseback; Norbert usually stays overnight when he travels there.) When Norbert is gone his second-in-charge, Luke the guard sergeant, handles the place.

## Setting

**1. Front:** Two men are posted here day and night. Each guard has one 8-hour shift in front of the building, another shift on alert, and one 8-hour period each day in which to rest. Norbert often joins the guards on duty during the day. Luke's shift outside is in the daytime (roughly sunrise to mid-afternoon), along with one ordinary guard; at other times, two ordinary guards are stationed here. Guards on duty carry a long sword, a crossbow with 20 bolts, and a dagger. A weapons rack on the outside of the building contains a half dozen spears and two additional long swords.

**Luke, the sergeant (F4):** AC 4 (3 w/Dex bonus); MV 9; hp 18; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA long sword specialization; ML elite (14); Int high (14); AL N; XP 270

**Equipment:** Chain mail, shield; long sword, spear, crossbow, dagger

**5 Guards (F2):** AC 5 (4 w/Dex bonus); MV 9; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; ML steady (12); Int high (13); AL N; XP 120 each

**Equipment:** Chain mail; long sword, spear, crossbow, dagger

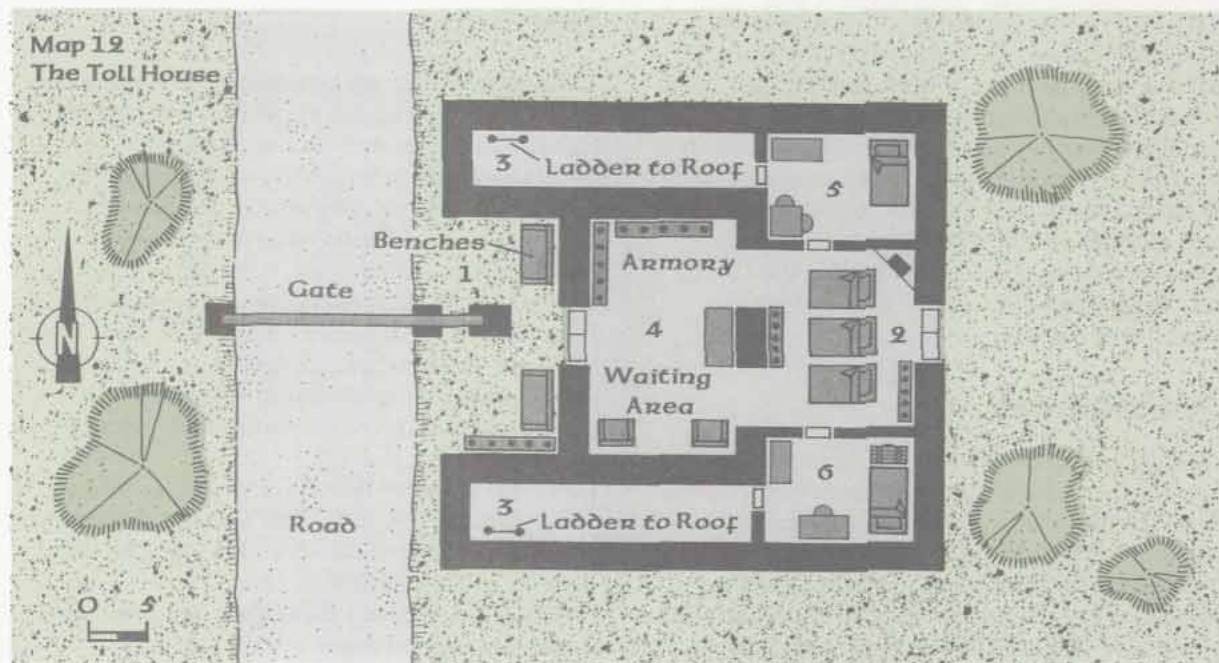
**2. Guards' room:** A total of six guards—five ordinary ones and Luke—have their meager sleeping and living areas in here. A weapons rack on the southeast wall holds five spears. On the northeast wall is a firepit used for cooking all the meals prepared inside the toll house.

**3. Corridors to roof:** These long, relatively narrow areas are used for storage of equipment (shovels, rope, etc.), but the guards are always careful to leave a clear path to the ladders that provide access to the roof. The roof of the toll house is sometimes used as a vantage for missile fire in the event of an assault. If riders on horseback are seen approaching, an alarm will be raised and one or both of the guards on alert





## The Toll House



will go to the roof with crossbows—as a deterrent to travelers who might try to ride through the toll station and escape.

**4. Storage and waiting area:** This large chamber contains shelves and cabinets that hold food, eating utensils, and other basic items. Along the southern wall are two overstuffed chairs, supposedly for the use of wayfarers who would like a moment's comfort. In actuality, the chairs are seldom offered to visitors and often used by Norbert and Luke.

**5. Norbert's quarters:** This decent-sized but simply appointed room contains a bed, a wardrobe, and a table with two chairs. Norbert sleeps here and spends about half his waking hours inside the room. The rest of the time he can be found strolling through the toll house and the grounds or lounging in one of the chairs in location 4. The doors into and out of this area are always unlocked and open during the day, locked at night.

**Norbert the bailiff (F6):** AC 7 (5 w/Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 36; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LN; S 14; D 16; C 12; I 13; W 7; Ch 12; XP 650

**Proficiencies:** Dagger, short sword; agriculture (13), animal handling (6), hunting (7), local history (12)

**Languages:** Common, gnomish, orcish

**Equipment:** Leather armor and shield; short sword, dagger, *short sword* +2, *shield* +1

Norbert is beginning to suspect that his lord, Baron Kelfert, is a bit of a scam artist. It's been two years since he last saw a crew actually working on the road he supervises. Lately he has had to contend with angry merchants complaining because the road is so much more filled with pits and ruts than it used to be.

**6. Hubert's quarters:** When Norbert's brother Hubert came to stay at the toll house, this area was "requisitioned" from the regular guards'

# The Toll House



bunk room (by putting up two walls and two doors) to create a room of the same size as Norbert's quarters. It contains a bed, a wardrobe, several books and other small items on shelves, and a table with one chair.

**Hubert the scholar (C6):** AC 8; MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL NG; S 10; D 10; C 12; I 12; W 15; Ch 9

**Proficiencies:** Mace, crossbow; agriculture (12), ancient history (11), animal handling (14), languages, ancient (12), local history (9), reading/writing (13)

**Languages:** Common, orcish, elvish, dwarvish

**Preferred spells (5/4/2):** 1st—*create water, detect snares & pits, light, locate animals or plants, sanctuary*; 2nd—*charm person or mammal, find traps, know alignment, speak with animals*; 3rd—*locate object, speak with dead*

**Equipment:** Leather armor; footman's mace, light crossbow; robes, religious objects, various personal effects; bronze *math head* (see below).

Hubert is a wandering scholar. He came here for a visit three months ago, intending to stay only a week or two, but Norbert encouraged him to stay longer, even going so far as to have a room built for him. (The full truth is that once Norbert saw how Hubert's *math head* worked, he wanted to keep his brother around so he could have constant access to it.)

Although nominally a cleric, Hubert is motivated by an insatiable lust for learning that has carried him on journeys far and wide. He has acquired a smattering of knowledge in each of countless fields, but depth and expertise in almost none. He has a weakness for adventure, and will probably stay here only until he meets a group of travelers willing to take him along on some sort of great mission. So far in his stay here, he has not seen any people he cared to join with.

The PCs are sure to be interesting to Hubert. He may ply them for word of their travels, especially if they have visited any great universities,

libraries, shrines, or distant and exotic lands that may hold secrets yet unknown to him. Hubert is basically an intellectual dilettante, but there's a chance he may know the answer to any specific question. You can use Hubert to give the PCs clues and thereby advance your campaign plot, or you can determine randomly if he knows some particular information they are seeking.

**Math head (XP value 1,000):** This very heavy (60 lbs.) bronze casting looks like the life-sized bald head of a middle-aged human male. Once per day, the head is able to perform one complete string of simple mathematical calculations for the user, involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and/or division. The *math head* is the equivalent of a simple calculator. Norbert, who has no head for figures, likes to call upon it regularly to help him keep track of how much money Baron Kelfert is bringing in from the toll house (and how much he isn't spending on road upkeep).

To Hubert, the *math head* is simply a curiosity; he purchased it in a distant bazaar from a shady-looking character. To others (such as architects and sages) it might be very valuable indeed.

## Adventure Hooks

- The toll house is assaulted by "brigands" who may in fact be disgruntled merchants upset at the high tolls they pay, and the road's increasing state of disrepair.
- Having learned of Kelfert's plan to attack his borders, the Marquis d'Antoine issues a pre-emptive strike on the toll house.
- Hubert's *math head* is stolen property—and someone wants it back! Hubert doesn't realize the head belongs to someone else, and would readily return it to its owner. But misunderstandings easily arise when valuable items are at stake. The PCs may prove useful in helping Hubert avoid being the target of vengeance.



## River's Edge

On the shore of a slow river is an inn known as River's Edge. It serves as a ferry house, warehouse, and way station for barges. The lodge also serves a clandestine purpose as an offload point and safe house for smugglers moving weapons and supplies across the river that serves as the boundary between two warring nations.

### Overview

The Jourdan River starts its leisurely course in the foothills of Thazia's northern regions, joins with several other streams, grows, and gains depth as it writhes between the hills and through the valleys. The river widens and slows as it flows southward, serving for most of its length as the border between Thazia and Martaigne. The land on either side of the Jourdan in the area of River's Edge is desolate and lightly populated, home only to the few brave souls willing to risk the dangers of the wild frontier.

### The Shifting Border

The Jourdan River is a crucial point of demarcation between Thazia and Martaigne, two empires that have been in conflict for more than 200 years. The two states have fought numerous battles over border definitions and river passage rights. Most of these fights are limited affairs, with engagements restricted mainly to the dense forests and murky swamps that make up the wilderness area of both countries.

The crux of the problem is that the river is a poor boundary. On many occasions after the high waters of the spring thaw have receded, people in the area find that the Jourdan's course has changed. For every bend that straightens out and every straight watercourse that now meanders, ownership of the land on one bank or the other changes ownership—not just between individuals, but between countries. This series of events has led to several disputes between Thazia and Martaigne, most of which are fought by bands of mercenaries from both countries.

Like the river that separates the two empires, these mercenaries have indistinct allegiances. Most combatants can claim to have fought for both sides, having pledged their fealty to whichever side offered better pay at a certain point. This frugal, apolitical approach is common to most of the survivalist inhabitants of this region, including NaThoma and Pons Dumond, the proprietors of River's Edge.

### River Travel

With much of this region's terrain impassable to large vehicles, the Jourdan River serves as a trading route and lifeline to the outer reaches of both empires. Horses, carts, and other overland transportation are limited to local use only; most long-distance shipments are moved on barges that ply the river.

When traveling downriver (south), barges use the river's gentle current for propulsion; when moving upriver, barges are poled or manhailed from shore by means of thick ropes. Several way stations have been built along this meandering route on both banks. River's Edge is one such, located on the Martaigne side of the river in a place where the banks of the Jourdan do not shift; it is typical in its design and in the services it offers to river travelers.

### The Lodge

This building is a simple, tri-level construct. The first floor serves as a way station and inn, the second floor holds bedrooms for residents and guests, and the basement is used mainly as a warehouse (see Map 13). The ground outside the building slopes sharply down toward the river, so that the exterior door leading into the basement is at ground level itself.

### First floor

**1. Bar:** This area is stocked with a wide range of liquors that the proprietors have obtained by

# River's Edge



trading with river merchants. NaThoma works behind the bar during the day; in the evening and during mealtime, her husband Pons takes over.

**2. Dining area:** Several small tables and chairs fill out this open area. NaThoma takes orders and prepares the meals herself, serving both as waitress and cook.

**3. Kitchen:** This room has a large preparation table, cupboards, food lockers, shelves, and other typical items. In the back wall is a fireplace that doubles as a stove. A bell-and-cord arrangement runs from the back wall of the kitchen into the dining area, and through a small hole in the floor into the basement. These simple devices can be used to request service (if the cord in the dining area is pulled) and to sound an alarm.

**4. Pantry/larder:** All foodstuffs used in preparing meals are stored here.

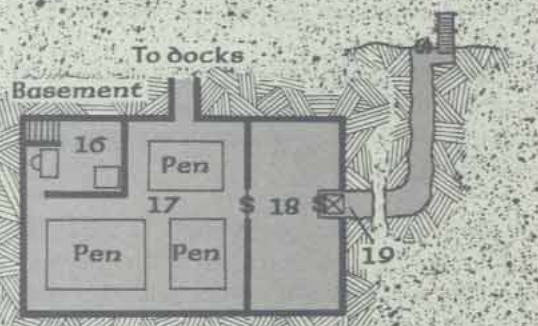
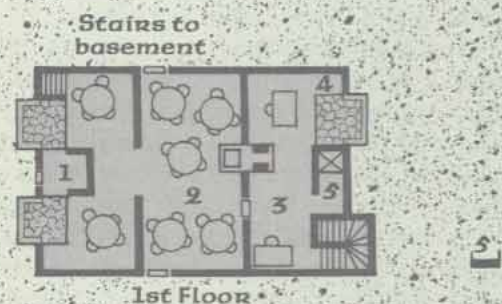
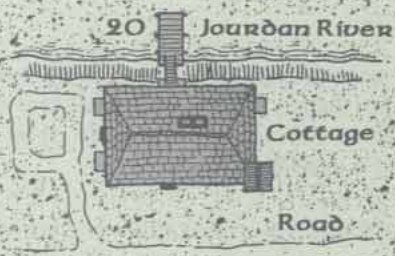
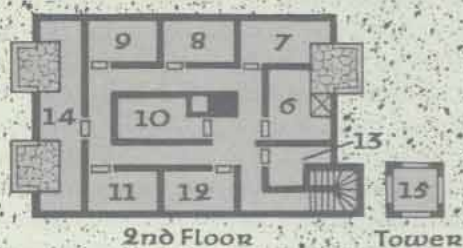
**5. Storage:** This small closet is used for storing cleaning equipment, dishes, and other basic items. A secret door in the back wall (opposite the room's entrance) leads to a dumbwaiter shaft that allows access to the basement and the nearby escape tunnel (see locations 18 and 19).

## Second floor

**6. Master bedroom:** Pons and NaThoma share this room, which contains a large bed, a dresser, a vanity, a desk, and a standing wardrobe. The back of the wardrobe is a false panel that opens to reveal a shaft and a ladder, which leads down through the kitchen and into the secret escape tunnel in the basement. Inside this shaft is a bell-and-cord alarm system that extends from here to the basement.

**7-13. Bedrooms:** These rooms, mostly used for guests, are furnished with a bed, a wardrobe, and a desk with one chair. Room 10 is the choic-

Map 13: River's Edge





## River's Edge

est of the lot because it gets heat from the chimney that extends up through it. NaThoma and Pons give this room to special guests (who usually don't have to pay for it), and sometimes move in here temporarily themselves when the weather turns cold. Rooms 7 and 13 are occupied by the hired help (two men in 7, one woman in 13, all 0-level) who assist the Dumonds with kitchen work, groundskeeping, and the hauling of goods back and forth from the dock to the basement.

**14. Balcony:** This railed balcony contains a few chairs for guests to relax in while getting some air.

**15. Lamp tower:** The stairs in the southeast corner of the second floor lead to a small tower that contains two lamps hung from the ceiling on hooks. The lanterns are used to help travelers locate River's Edge from a distance at night, and to warn smugglers. (Both lanterns lit means "Stay away—trouble!")

### Basement

**16. Office & general storage:** A desk, a file cabinet, and a set of scales are all the furnishings in this simple office. Behind the desk is an open area that can be used for storage.

**17. Locked storage:** These lockable pens are used for secure storage of goods and small livestock. Larger animals are kept in a pen outside the inn.

**18. Secret storage:** A secret panel in the south wall of location 17 leads to this chamber where various restricted goods, contraband, and smuggled trade are stored.

**19. Escape tunnel:** A secret door in the north wall of the dumbwaiter shaft allows access from the basement into this tunnel (and vice versa). The tunnel winds underground, and ends at

another secret door in the bank of the river. A small skiff is tethered to a pier here with a length of chain; both Pons and NaThoma have keys to the lock that binds the chain to the pier. This area is within easy walking distance of the lodge from the outside.

**20. Dock:** This sturdy wharf has enough bulkheads to accommodate three barges at a time. A small crane with block and tackle is used by Pons and the bargemen to unload goods.

### NPCs

River's Edge is owned and operated by Pons Dumond and his wife, NaThoma. A former mercenary, Pons spent several years in his youth fighting in border skirmishes on both sides of the Jourdan, selling his services to whichever side offered the most. An arrow wound in his right shoulder ended his brilliant career as a soldier, forcing him to seek other means of employment.

For years afterward the former mercenary worked the river as a bargeman, hauling goods up and down the river. It was through this profession that Pons met his wife-to-be, NaThoma Carell. The woman was working at River's Edge as a waitress, barmaid, and dockhand for her widowed mother and aged uncle. NaThoma took an instant liking to Pons, a dashing man her age (both were 30 at the time), possessed of good humor and a good-willed attentiveness. This attentive nature sparked the romance that eventually led to their betrothal—and to Pons settling into River's Edge as a helper.

The death of NaThoma's mother brought a change of ownership to River's Edge. Following the accepted legal practices of the region, Pons Dumond (the oldest, and only, male associated with the place) became the official owner of River's Edge. As Pons readily acknowledges whenever the subject comes up, NaThoma is the rightful owner of the property—a role she is well suited for thanks to her shrewd business

## River's Edge



manner, strong character, and industrious nature. Pons and NaThoma work well as a team, and their marriage is considered one of the more successful liaisons along the river.

**Pons Dumond (F3):** AC 8; MV 12; hp 19; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon +1 (Str bonus); AL N; S 16; D 14; C 14; I 13; W 10; Ch 12

**Proficiencies:** Long sword, dagger, pike; direction sense (11), navigation (11), survival (13)

**Languages:** Common, gnomish, halfling

**Equipment:** Padded armor, dagger, pike, long sword

Pons Dumond is a strange combination of vainglorious romantic and hardened realist. A hard worker, Pons helped his wife expand River's Edge, rebuilding and revitalizing the business with his own hands and through his own financial means. Though not possessing the sharpest entrepreneurial mind, Pons has an advantage in that NaThoma provides the financial sense in their business relationship. Pons acknowledges this reality and deals easily with the jokes and lighthearted ribbing it entails.

**NaThoma Dumond (F2):** AC 8; MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL N; S 15; D 13; C 15; I 15; W 13; Ch 14

**Proficiencies:** Dagger, short sword; agriculture (15), reading/writing (16)

**Languages:** Common, gnomish, halfling

**Equipment:** Padded armor, dagger, short sword

NaThoma is the unofficial but true owner of River's Edge and the real intelligence behind its operation. A single-minded and ambitious woman, her determination is inspiring to those who know her well. Though she shares her husband's political idealism, NaThoma is skeptical enough to think logically. As a result, she keeps her and her husband's self-interest at the front of her mind. This practical self-centeredness is why

River's Edge is never at the center of any commercial or statutory conflict.

The commercial success of River's Edge is a tribute to NaThoma's financial skill and her stern approach with customers. Never one to take an IOU, NaThoma has followed up on many of her husband's business dealings—affairs that could have gone sour without NaThoma's special attention. NaThoma views Pons's occasional miscues with humor.

### Adventure Hooks

- The inn is commandeered by a group of Martaigne's soldiers intent on using it as a base of operations in their ongoing war with Thazia. The DuMonds and the PCs have no say in what goes on. If the soldiers learn that the inn is used as a front for smugglers, all the inn's occupants will be suspect.
- The PCs' discussion of their monetary woes is overheard by Pons DuMond, who offers them a generous opportunity to make some cash. All the PCs need do is deliver a bargeload of goods—with no questions asked, and no mention made of River's Edge if they are accosted while traveling. The contents of the barge are sealed; the contents aren't discovered until the group is attacked by river pirates, or stopped by border guards interested in seeing the PCs' cargo.
- A group of prisoners on the way to Gedding Gaol (see "Island of Lost Souls") manage to break free of their bonds and make their way to River's Edge. Portraying themselves as travelers who were set upon by bandits (hence their lack of money and bedraggled appearance), they elicit the sympathy of Pons and NaThoma, who allow them to stay for a few days. The criminals begin acting suspiciously when PCs arrive on the scene, fearing them to be guards out to bring them to justice.



## The Cashel

A cashel is a round fort made of stone without mortar, built in an age before castles as a home for a powerful human chieftain and his household. Many of these structures remain in good condition long after they have outlived their original purpose.

### Overview

Cashels are found in rocky country. In other places, where stones for building are harder to come by, ring forts made of earth and wooden buildings would have been favored—and also would likely have fallen prey more quickly to the forces of decay and erosion. Though long abandoned, some cashels dotting the countryside of your campaign world may remain relatively intact. They are easy sources of material for construction of newer buildings, especially since the stones in a cashel are not even bound together with mortar. They may provide shelter for desperate travelers, or for monsters.

This cashel was built almost a thousand years ago by a hardy tribe of humans who needed protection from roving bands of humanoids. When they grew strong, these humans abandoned their home for the more fertile lowlands, where crops and livestock provided an easier living.

The circular stone building sits atop a plateau on the west edge of an oval-shaped mound that rises 30 feet above the surrounding terrain. A 10-foot-deep, 10-foot-wide pit runs around the perimeter of the mound; this was once a moat but is now a dry hole. Even so, it still helps to make the cashel difficult to assault and easy to defend. The remainder of the mound is taken up by two groups of odd structures (described below).

Because the location is remote, there haven't been any builders around to remove the cashel's stones for new structures. Some hill dwarves live within a few miles of the site, but they are perfectionists who want to quarry their materials from living rock to precise specifications; to them, the cashel is like a house made of discarded scraps.

The abandoned fort has become the temporary home of a band of wood elves. These demihumans were driven from their forest home into these wild hills by rapacious humans who are now cutting down the forest's trees for firewood and building materials, and tilling the newly exposed soil for crops.

The elves dislike the cashel. They find its cold stone uninviting, compared to the sunlit glades and playful brooks they once knew; but they need it for protection. Marauding gnolls are often seen in these hills, and several elves have already fallen in skirmishes with the humanoids. The elves have no idea who built the cashel or why, and they hope to move to a more agreeable place as soon as they get the opportunity.

**Wood elves (10):** AC 8; MV 12; HD 1+1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19 (18 w/sword or bow); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SZ M (5' tall); ML elite (13); Int high (14); AL NG; XP 420 each; MM/108

**Equipment:** Long sword, short bow & arrows

PCs who come here seeking shelter, or just to pass in peace, must use careful diplomacy to get around the prejudice of these elves, whose only previous contact with humans was negative.

### The Setting

The interior of the cashel has a hard-packed dirt floor. All of the walls are built of closely fitted stone blocks; interior walls are half as thick as exterior ones. The only doors in the place are thick wooden double doors on the east and west exterior walls that open in from the outside. They can be barred from the inside but not locked. All of the furnishings and equipment inside the cashel are old and in poor condition. Most items made of wood inside the structure are primitive but fairly sturdy; since the wood has been protected from the elements, it has not rotted or deteriorated as much as it would have otherwise.

# The Cashel



**1. Common area/dining hall:** This central area is used by the elves as a gathering place and a dining room. A large wooden table in the middle of the room is surrounded by 10 chairs.

**2. Galley:** In the center of the room is a large fireplace with two openings, one across from the other, creating an opening straight through the firepit. Two long tables sit against the exterior walls. Shelves and cupboards line the other walls, and a small doorway leads to a storage area.

**3. Storage:** This room serves as storage for pans, cauldrons, and other cooking utensils. Much of the area is empty at the present time.

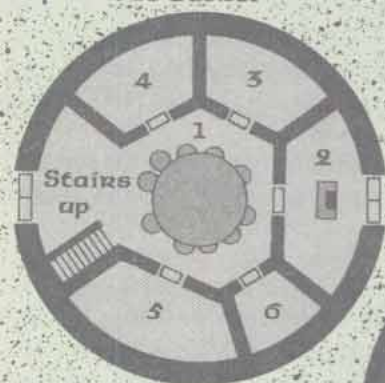
**4. Master quarters:** A large wooden pallet occupies most of this area. It is covered with smelly animal hides for bedding, under which is a layer of straw that serves as a crude mattress. Six of the wood elves sleep in this room.

**5. Additional quarters:** This room, perhaps once meant as a children's bedroom, contains four small wooden pallets covered with straw and hides. The other four wood elves have their quarters here.

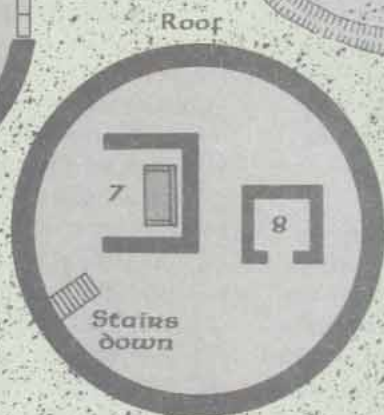
**6. Armory:** This small room holds several weapons, many of them not usable or not dependable. Among the items are six crude hammers whose stone heads have become separated from their wooden shafts (because the bindings have rotted away). Two dozen arrowheads, three deteriorated short bows (the strings are still usable, but the bows will break if they are drawn), and five clubs (fashioned from tree limbs) also litter the room. The elves have no use for these things, and have not disturbed the contents of the room.

**7. Guard station:** A staircase in the west entryway leads up to a thick wooden roof that was covered with pitch by its former occupants and thus is still in good condition. The guardhouse is

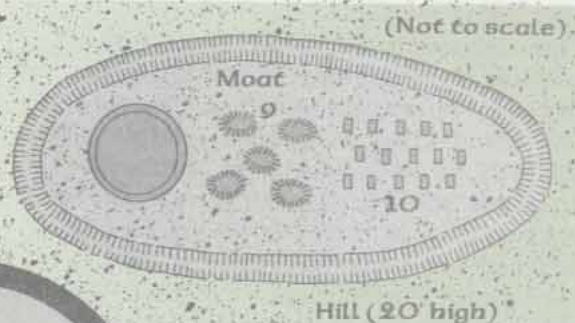
Map 14: The Cashel



Ground Floor

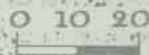


Roof



(Not to scale).

Hill (20' high)







## The Cashel

a three-sided enclosure with 5-foot-high wooden walls and no ceiling. Someone seated on the wooden bench inside the structure has a clear view of the landscape to the west of the cashel.

**8. Storage:** This 10-foot-square, open-topped shed contains various implements of war, including metal cauldrons (meant to be filled with oil), torches, braziers, stone-headed axes, rotted truncheons, coils of rotten rope, and other items in various stages of decay.

**9. Barrow mounds:** Five small hillocks dot the plateau just to the east of the cashel. These small mounds are separated by 5 feet on a side, providing enough room to walk between them. The mounds are oval in shape, roughly 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, and no more than 5 feet high. They are arranged in a symmetrical pattern. There are no distinguishing markers on the mounds, and no marks in the grassy turf. To the east of this area, the plateau ends and the ground slopes gently down to the level of the surrounding terrain.

Buried beneath each mound is the body of one of the cashel's former human inhabitants. The bodies are sparsely attired and wrapped in cloth shrouds. They have little of worth on them. Each body, however, holds in its hand a piece of wax-sealed, rolled parchment. The parchment detects as magical. If the PCs disturb the bodies and remove the parchments, they invoke one *curse* for each parchment thus disturbed. The *curse* affects the first person to break the wax seal (see Appendix 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER*<sup>®</sup> *Guide* for examples of *cursed* scrolls).

**10. Standing stones:** This field of standing stones looks like three rows of statues built in descending fashion down the east slope of the mound. Each of these roughly shaped obelisks projects 5 feet out of the ground. Vague, indecipherable glyphs cover the stones; they are virtually unreadable, thanks to the forces of erosion.

From the top of the mound eastward, the stones descend in a simple, yet curious pattern. They are evenly distributed in three ranks of five stones each. The layout of each row is staggered slightly from the first (northernmost) rank to the third, giving the impression that the last two rows have slipped a bit. The stones stand perfectly erect, however, and on that basis show no signs of slippage.

### Adventure Hooks

- A high-level PC is granted lordship over this track of wild and hilly country as a fief from the king or emperor. (If no PC is suitable, an NPC to whom the PCs are connected could be used.) The lord is expected to subdue the native dangers (in particular, the gnolls), set up a stronghold, and make the place as hospitable as possible for human settlers. (In truth, settlement is of less concern to the overlord than subduing the region and stopping its use as a base for attacks on more populous regions.)

**Gnolls (30):** AC 5; MV 9; HD 2 (3 for leader); hp 10 each (13 for leader); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (by weapon); SZ L (8' tall); ML steady (11); Int low (6); AL CE; XP 35 (65 for leader); MM/158

**Equipment:** Each has one of the following weapons: broad sword, bardiche, or morning star

- The wood elves could be a hindrance to development of the region; or they could be turned into an advantage, if the PCs can be savvy negotiators. The cashel could serve as a temporary stronghold, if the elves move on . . . and the elves would be delighted to do this, if the PCs can find a better place for them to settle. The elves could be allies or mercenaries in the struggle against the gnolls, if it leads to their obtaining a new woodland home. But winning their trust may not be easy.

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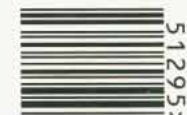
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