
Beneath the Bottomless Bog

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Foreword

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If there was ever a place in the realms that lacked for an interesting story, it would be the bottomless bogs in the frigid northern land of Vaasa. It would be challenging to select a more bleak, unpopulated, and uninteresting locale than these moors in the Bloodstone lands. Yet the following adventurous episode springs from those very grounds, so I leave it for the reader to judge if this indeed provides an enjoyable tale.

This 3rd edition D&D® side-trek adventure is best used when the party is inside the Bloodstone lands and seeking some action between missions. It is designed to be challenging to a party of four 8th level characters, with a particular emphasis on combat and wilderness skills. Some of the opponents they could face will be significantly more powerful than usual, so the players will need to rely on guile and ingenuity to resolve some of the conflicts. The DM should read the entire scenario to determine if the players are ready for this challenge.

-[Bob Hall](#), 11/29/2000.

Life in the Moors

Yosyl Moss was a recluse by nature and he dwelled in the bleak, northern land of Vaasa, far from the corrupting influences of civilization. He sought only the purity and completeness he felt from his worship of Eldath and a simple life in a secluded bend of the Beaumaris River. With the rise of the Witch-King, however, Yosyl was compelled to escape the dark army of conquest and flee north and west into the hinterlands. By hiding within the bottomless bogs he would be able to avoid the all-conquering hordes and still eke out a marginal existence. During the unpleasant summer that followed, Yosyl sought a secluded place of refuge in the unpleasant moors of Vaasa. He gradually learned the safe paths through the boggy ground and eventually came upon an area where hot mineral springs

emerged upon the surface. Here the earth was stained with deep deposits of colorful minerals, ranging in hue from a chalky white to various shades of brown.

The pools themselves were quite beautiful to behold, with a magnificent azure color that seemed to beckon one to plunge into their depths. Many of the pools were far too hot for safe contact, however, while others were cooler but had a bitter taste. After some experimentation Yosyl discovered to his surprise that these springs were magical in nature. He quickly decided that this wonder must be the work of the goddess Eldath and thus felt a calling to become the guardian of these springs. He named this site the Silent Springs in honor of his goddess.

About one hour of marching to the east of the springs stood a small rise upon which Yosyl could safely dwell. To his surprise he discovered that others had lived on the mound before he arrived, as a round stone hut stood partially intact within a tangle of wiry brush. He also found several grave markers about the rise, the resting-places of those who had dwelled here in the past. Within the hut itself he discovered the body of the previous resident, and so properly buried the corpse with a solemn ceremony.

Life for Yosyl was little improved with his new secluded dwelling place, but inspired by his renewed faith in Eldath and her miraculous works he endured the swarms of insects and the meager amounts of food he was able to find. The springs proved a boon in this regard for some had the property of magically healing any sores and bite marks left by the insipid insects. Unfortunately he was soon to find that the waters of one especially clear and sweet-tasting spring were in fact addictive. He now must take a daily dose of these waters or grow deathly ill. No amount of prayer to Eldath would relieve him of this curse, and he thought himself doomed to dwell here until he died. The graves upon his mound now seemed especially prophetic.

Following the defeat of the Witch-King, the land of Vaasa returned to normal. The druid Yosyl was known by few prior to the war, and his existence was now all but forgotten. Many seasons passed and Yosyl grew gaunt and frail, despite the bounty provided by the powers of Eldath. Even a recluse must occasionally seek comfort in the company of others, and Yosyl grew lonely for his old animal companions. Thus when the first of the red-hued dragons arrived at the springs to bask in the heat, Yosyl did not immediately flee in terror. Instead he lingered to observe the mighty creatures from the cover of the scrub. He was strangely tempted to approach these beasts to slake his thirst for company, but resisted knowing he would be eaten almost immediately.

Over the following months the red dragons journeyed here many times, flying in from the ruins of Castle Perilous to bask in the warmth of the springs. The dragons ranged in age from young adult to old, but all were formidable. Yosyl grew to know each of the creatures on sight, but he took great care to make sure he was never sighted. By steadily observing the dragons he gained an insight into their nature, although of course he was still unable to comprehend their tongue.

Some Decent Company at Last

With the war now well over, the legend of the magical springs of Vaasa once more drew the occasional group of adventurers to these lands. Of course most such efforts completely failed to find any sign of the springs, for the bogs were vast and difficult to traverse. However a clever and unscrupulous wizard known as Brendal Wirth, accompanied by a pair

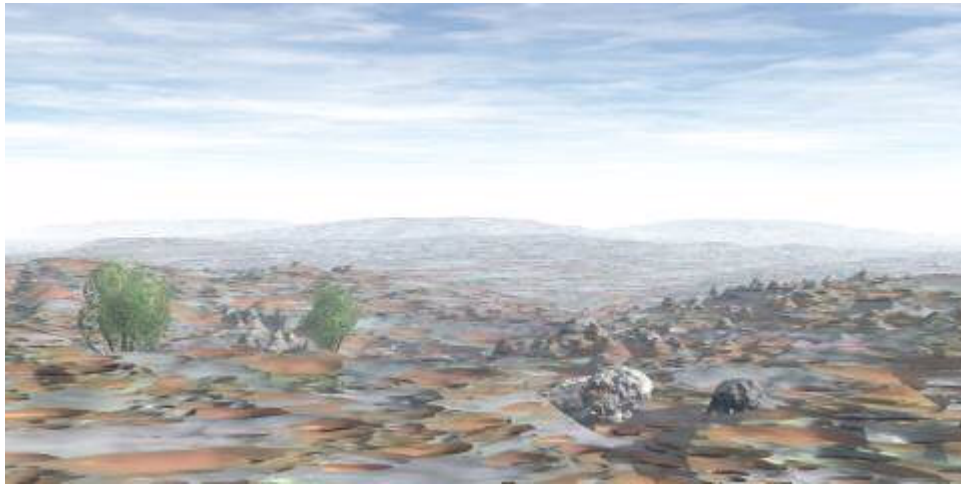
of burly warrior companions, accomplished what few others had managed and located the springs. Of course his skill in magic, as well as the sacrifice of most of his mounts aided him in this task. Constant fear of the red dragons had made Yosyl rather shy of company and he stayed out of sight of the adventurers despite the temptation of human company. He recalled his original task to guard the springs, and so arranged a series of natural accidents to befall the intruders. Brendal and his companions spent several days in the vicinity of the springs, investigating their properties and using magical means to search out their source. But the actions of Yosyl left their provisions completely ruined; one of the warriors with burns from a trip into a hot spring; and the second recuperating from snakebite.

Despite these seemingly random mishaps, Brendal was satisfied with the progress of his investigation. He gathered samples from each of the pools and finally set back toward the south with the intent to plan a larger return expedition. Fortunately for the wizard and his ailing companions, with their quick departure they narrowly averted a confrontation with four of the red dragons.

Upon reaching what passed for civilization in Damara, Brendal discovered to his disappointment that all of the liquid samples had completely lost their magical properties and were now just so much mineral water. He came to believe that the odd-looking nodules he had observed deep within the pools were the real source of the magical in the springs. Hence prior to his return trip he would obtain suitable gear needed to recover these nodules. For this purpose he spent a considerable portion of his expedition budget obtaining an unusual *ring of cooking* that offered protection against scalding temperatures of the springs.

For the return trip Brendal hired a handler to manage the wagon and the horses, as well as a pair of hardy laborers and a skilled diver. He decided to travel late in the year when the ground was frozen and the insect swarms would not prove a constant bother. Thus the team was fitted with cold-weather survival gear and an experienced hunter was also hired as a guide. Finally his two steady warrior companions were also persuaded to join this expedition, despite their superstitious belief that the springs were cursed.

Unfortunately for the expedition, however, the group was discovered during their northward journey by one of the dragons of Castle Perilous, and they were then relentlessly attacked. Despite the magical skills of Brendal, the expedition proved no match for such a foe and all but one were slaughtered. Only one of the warriors survived the onslaught, doing so because the dragon grew sated with the horses and the other men. After the creature finished pulling apart the goods on the wagon and selecting the few items it found interesting, the dragon flew homeward. The surviving warrior, a man known as Reginald Orreson, began travelling north toward the nearby hot springs. Severely wounded and burned by the dragon attack, he knew that his only hope of survival lay in drinking from one of the magical springs. His journey was an arduous one, and he barely made it to the springs before collapsing. It was here that Yosyl discovered the unconscious warrior and brought him back to his abode to gradually tend the man back to health.



During the long, cold winter that followed, Reginald slowly recovered from his ailments thanks to the herbal skills of Yosyl and his knowledge of the magical properties of the springs. Gradually and reluctantly the two became friends, and Reginald learned much of deep value from the bog druid. In return Yosyl discovered what had befallen the northern lands in his absence, and slowly became accustomed to this somewhat rude and blunt representative of the civilized world. Yosyl talked to Reginald at great length of his beliefs and the philosophy of Eldath. As a result the warrior gained a grudging respect, if not quite a burning faith, in the nature goddess.

Yosyl had learned from Reginald of the original plans of the wizard Brendal with regards to the springs. Thus he had gained some hope that if the magical ring could be recovered from the remains of the wagon then Yosyl could gather some of the nodules from the springs. In so doing perhaps he could also alleviate the curse of the addictive water.

With the arrival of summer Reginald was finally healthy and literally quite hungry to depart. However he agreed first to return to the site of the wagon and to attempt to find the magical ring. Unfortunately he found the ground there had softened and the wagon had largely sunk nose first beneath the bog. He did, however, find a couple of intact containers and a few other implements scattered about that he thought to give to Yosyl. Returning one last time to his druid friend, Reginald swore to keep the location of the springs a secret and to come back when he found a means to free Yosyl.

The day of Reginald's departure was a sad one for both men, for they had gradually become good friends. Nevertheless Reginald began his journey southward, heading for the sanctuary of Bloodstone Pass and the land of Damara. Yosyl had prepared a simple hide map for his journey, based on the scarce landmarks to be found in the bogs. The map was clearly marked with the location of the magical springs and would serve as a ready guide for Reginald when he chose to return. As a result Reginald avoided any mishaps in the bog and successfully navigated his way to the Beaumaris River.

Following the departure of his companion, Yosyl descended into a blue funk for several days. He couldn't even be bothered to watching the basking dragons. With the containers that Reginald had thoughtfully provided, however, Yosyl eventually decided to experiment with bottling the addictive spring water. He discovered to his joy that the liquid would indeed retain its magical properties for several days, which allowed the druid to journey much further afield. With his spirits raised he decided to venture forth into the surrounding

bogs, in search of he knew not what. But maybe he would find fresh opportunities out there and perhaps a new companion waiting to be discovered.

Unpleasant in Deed

In the outskirts of a town in Damara during late spring, some of the PCs stumble upon the backstabbing of a burly warrior. The vicious-looking murderer quickly reaches down to perform a hasty search of the corpse when suddenly he notices the characters. Depending on his odds the murderer will either fight ruthlessly for the unclaimed loot or rapidly depart the scene. If he does fight he will not put up much of a struggle, however, and will attempt to flee upon suffering serious injury.

Auric Dunfest, Male Human Rogue6: CR 6; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 6d6-12; hp 18; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +5 melee (1d8+1/crit 19-20, long sword) or +7/+2 ranged (1d4/crit 19-20, throwing dagger); SQ sneak attack +3d6, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 6, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 7.

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +1, Climb +10, Decipher Script +5, Disable Device +7, Forgery +7, Hide +10, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +9, Pick Pockets +8, Profession (fishing) +6, Ride +5, Search +7, Spot +6, Tumble +10. *Feats*: Ambidexterity, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack.

Possessions: Leather armor, long sword, garrote, 2 throwing daggers, +2 dagger, ring of chameleon power, potion of enlarge, cape, purse (15cp, 2pp, and an eye agate worth 12gp), soft boots, lock picks, forgery kit.

Auric is a decidedly shady-looking individual, with thick eyebrows, dark and shifty eyes, a prominent scar across his left chin, and a completely shaved head that is covered by a scorpion on a web tattoo. He wears heavily worn leather garments and a thick winter cape. His weapon of choice during an ambush is a magnificent magical dagger he owns, but in a stand up fight he will switch to his trusty sword and fight with a two-weapon style. If he flees from the scene, he will slip around the first suitable wall then activate his magical ring to blend into the surface. Depending on the opposition he faces, however, Auric may later choose to follow the party and try to steal back the map. His uncanny stealthiness makes him an especially dangerous stalker.

Assuming the assassin was dealt with in some manner, a search of the corpse will reveal the rudimentary map prepared by Yosyl, but very little else. The hide map is simple and crudely drawn, but it clearly shows a series of unique landmarks leading to special location. A successful Knowledge (religion) roll at DC 13 will identify a modified version of the holy sign of Eldath next to the marked spot. Also marked on the map is a river ford that serves as the starting point. Finally, a personal note along the bottom margin of the map asks that the reader provide whatever aid they can to a man named Reginald as a special favor to the Green Goddess.

Normally the characters would have no clue about the purpose of this particular map or where the ford is located. However the body of Reginald is equipped with a hide belt that an Wilderness Lore skill roll against DC 11 will reveal as originating from Vaasa. In addition a certain amount of investigation within the town will reveal that the man had arrived from the north early this morning and immediately become heavily intoxicated at a nearby pub. In this inebriated state he had spun some fantastical tale about a journey through the horrid bogs, fighting off some fire-breathing dragons and discovering the fountain of eternal youth.

Indeed it was this very tale that got the drunken warrior murdered, as his attacker overheard the tale and later sought to gain the valuable map Reginald had briefly waved about.

With a little help from the locals the characters should be able to piece things together. Most people in the region know that Vaasa is home to the bottomless bogs. Some may even have heard the tales about magical hot springs in the area, although they will not immediately mention this unless asked about what lies in the bogs. Finally the party will need to seek out an experienced traveler to find out about the Nigel's Ford crossing of the Beaumaris River. Beyond that they may also find some more details on the hazards of travel in Vaasa, but they will almost certainly not be able to find anybody willing to travel into the hazardous moors.

From here the progress of this adventure depends entirely on whether the characters decide to try following the map. Yosyl will undoubtedly remain at the springs for many years to come, but eventually he will be discovered by dragons or adventurers and will suffer some unknown fate. If the characters choose not to follow up on this good piece of fortune, they may hear many years later about the magical springs discovered in Vaasa and its marvelous benefits.

To reach the springs the characters will need to travel through the Bloodstone Pass and then follow the Dead Man's Walk until they reach Nigel's Ford. The land is a barren wasteland of frozen moors and sinkholes, with few settlers to speak of and little else of interest. The Dead Man's Walk is now little more than a faint trail, paralleling the Beaumaris River, that is slowly becoming overgrown due to several years of disuse. The trail serves as an alternate trade route that will soon be coming back into use following the demise of the Witch-King. As such it is still safe ground to walk upon, with only a few areas of muddy ground during the summer thaw. There are many opportunities for encounters along this path, as mentioned in the Bloodstone Lands accessory.

A cairn of rocks beside the path marks the river crossing of Nigel's Ford. When the characters arrive they will find the remains of a smashed cart besides the cairn, along with a well-used fire pit. Any cargo carried by the cart has long since been claimed by the denizens of the area. As the ford is little used, however, the odds of an ambush at this location are little higher than elsewhere along the trail.

The ford can be up to three feet deep in places and the footing is treacherous, so a badly failed Dexterity check will land a character squarely in the frigid waters. Drying off in this cold environment will prove especially difficult, as there is almost no fuel available to start a fire.

Crossing the Moors

Once they successfully cross the ford read the following aloud to the players:

Stretching before you far into the distance lies the notorious bottomless bogs of Vaasa. The rocky moors are depressingly monotonous with one slight rise following upon another, off toward the distant horizon. The ground is covered in tufts of hardy growth that can barely eke a living out of the frozen earth, forming sprawling patches of green, red, and brown. Many low bushes can be seen growing here and there among the rocks and snags, but hardly enough to provide much cover. Of trees there is little sign, unless you consider the scrawny, wind-bent branches poking out of the earth to be such. Finally

the very ground is suspect as it sinks deeply beneath your feet in places, threatening to slowly suck you into the bowels of the earth. To make matters worse a steady, frigid wind from the north draws away whatever little heat you possess, but does little to clear away the clouds of flying insects that relentlessly buzz around your face. The prospect of crossing endless miles of this forsaken terrain in such conditions thrills you not at all.

During the summer melt much of this land becomes a morass of soft muck that is almost impossible to traverse. Fortunately the characters have a few weeks yet before the full melt sets in, and so the ground is still fairly hard and frozen. In areas that are exposed to sunlight for most of the day, however, the ground becomes marshy and the characters can sink past their knees. Walking barefoot is almost preferable in these areas, despite the cold temperatures. The insects, however, have begun to rise from the occasional melted pool and prove a constant annoyance along the trip.

The characters will need to successfully follow the map signs in order to navigate their way through the bogs. There are four signs in all, with each stage consisting of a distant landmark that is distinct in some manner. (Such as a group of three rocks on a slight rise, or a box-shaped boulder.) A successful Wilderness Lore skill roll at DC 12 will guide the party through each stage of the map, but even then a safe journey is not ensured. Many hazards lie in wait within the bogs, not the least of which is the marshy ground that can swallow a horse and its rider whole in places. Use the table in appendix A to determine random encounters that occur while the characters are travelling across the moors.

The party will either successfully navigate their way to the springs or become lost in the bogs. If they lose their way, however, all is not lost, as there is a 1 in 6 chance each day that they will be found by Yosyl. Due to the flatness of the bogs it is relatively easy to observe men moving about, and so Yosyl has a reasonable prospect of seeing the party somewhere in the distance. He may also notice certain natural signs of a large group moving through the bogs, or be contacted by one of his bird spies.

Yosyl Moss, Male Human Druid5: Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 5d8+10; hp 29; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (-1 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +1 melee (1d8/crit x3, shortspear) or +1 ranged (1d4, sling); SQ nature sense, animal companion, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, wild shape (1/day); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +7; Str 8, Dex 9, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Spells: 5x0th - *Create Water, Know Direction, Light, Mending, Resistance*; 4x1st - *Cure Light Wounds, Entangle, Invisibility to Animals, Obscuring Mist*; 3x2nd - *Charm Person or Animal, Produce Flame, Speak With Animals*; 2x3rd - *Neutralize Poison, Summon Natures ally III*

Skills: Animal Empathy +9, Craft (leatherworking) +5, Handle Animal +7, Heal +8, Intuit Direction +9, Knowledge (nature) +8, Spellcraft +5, Swim +1, Wilderness Lore +8. *Feats:* Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Run

Possessions: Leather armor, sling, spear, *ring of freedom of movement*, boots, and shoulder pouch.

The druid is a short, slender man with long, stringy auburn hair and a ragged beard. He wears fur-trimmed leather garments that both protect against the elements and ward against attack. His boots are thick leather, boiled in oil to protect against snakebites. Yosyl is not a handsome man, as his face is weathered and leathery. Nevertheless he can be quite charming and good company when he chooses to do so. For the most part, however, Yosyl enjoys solitude and the accompaniment of some local bird companions that also serve as his

lookouts. While preferring a vegetarian diet, sometimes suitable plant food can be scarce so he hunts small game with a sling, and uses a spear against larger targets.

Animal Companions, Hunting Birds (3): Tiny Animal (2.5 ft. by 2.5 ft./0 ft.); HD 1d8; hp 5, 4, 7; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 60 ft.; AC 17 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +5 melee (1d4-2, claws); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6. *Feats*: Weapon Finesse (claws).

Needless to say Yosyl will approach the party with caution, seeking to stay hidden until he can observe their behavior and intent. He will approach closer during the night then withdraw in the daytime, giving somebody with night sight or infravision an opportunity to catch sight of him. When he is convinced it is safe to make contact, he will do so on the ground of his own choosing. This will most likely be across a stretch of particularly boggy ground that will trap any pursuers.

If the party is reasonable to Yosyl, he will lead them toward the springs and offer to tend to any injuries they might have incurred. He will also question them about news from the south. He is particularly interested in what happened to Reginald and will ask them as to his whereabouts. If shown the map he will, of course, immediately ask them where they had obtained it. If told that Reginald is dead, he will grow glum and quiet for the remainder of the journey, perhaps even moving a safe distance from the party and leading them from the front.

Silence of the Springs

Upon approaching the hot springs for the first time, read the following aloud to the players:

Ahead on the otherwise monotonous and drab moors lies an area that is alive with a riot of colors. Random areas of white, red, yellow, and various shades of brown overlap each other in a startling mosaic. Within this area lie several springs and pools, from which wisps of steam constantly rise into the cool northern air. The springs are quite beautiful to behold, with a deep azure hue that gradually darkens toward the center. The outer rims of the pools are coated in colorful mineral deposits that form a lip over which the waters slowly seep. The waters from the springs descend downward toward the outer edge in a series of step-like pools. The slight, shifting winds carry the occasional sulfurous odors and some disturbingly unidentifiable scents from the springs.

Once they reach the springs the druid will take the first opportunity he can to slip away and circle around to his hut. He would prefer not to reveal the location of his home for the moment and he needs a period of quiet contemplation to consider his next actions. After a day the druid will return to cautiously make contact with the party once more. He will warn them (perhaps too late) that one of the pools contains a highly addictive liquid that prevents him from leaving the region, while others can have caustic effects.

If the party now threatens him to obtain the knowledge of the addictive liquid, he will flee into the bogs using his nature spells to obstruct the party. Later he will circle around and watch the springs for the inevitable confrontation with the red dragons. The party is now left to its own resources and must suffer the consequences. (The details of such a deadly encounter are left for the DM.) It is highly unlikely that they will find many of the

interesting locations in the area, and they will have to learn about the springs through risky trial and error. On the other hand if the party is decent to the meek Druid and offer their help in exchange for knowledge, Yosyl will become slightly more trusting. He will warn the party that dragons occasionally come to the springs to bask in the heat and that they should take great care while in the area. In particular he tells them the direction to watch for the arrival of the dragons and where to hide when they come. (The thicket of bushes to the northwest is the best hiding place.)

With the party warned of the dragons, he will agree to tell them of the location of the addictive pool in exchange for two tasks they must accomplish. The first task is to deal mercifully with the two-headed troll located in the lake to the north who is scaring away all of the local game. The second is to recover a magical ring from a sunken wagon to the south. If asked he will give them a crude map of the area that shows the location of the four stone magical mounds that project out of the bogs, as well as the lake and the bottomless pit.

At this point the characters can either accomplish the druid's tasks or take their chances while drinking from the springs. Yosyl will not reveal the location of his hut, but a skilled tracker may be able to follow the steps of the druid back to his home. The druid will provide what aid he can to the party while they are in the vicinity of the springs, but he is reluctant to leave the immediate vicinity. He will help keep watch for the approach of any dragons should the party want to try the spring waters, although he will also seem a little irked that the party is not away accomplishing his tasks.

Once the tasks are completed, he will expound at length on what he has learned of the properties of the various springs. He will tell the party how long the waters will retain their magic and, of course, point out the location of the addictive and toxic springs. Once this is complete and the party has no further questions the druid will depart for several days to experiment with the magic ring. When he returns he will begin diving down into the springs to begin exploring what lies below.

Left Hand of Mystra



Figure 1. The hot springs and surrounding terrain features.

Beneath the bottomless bogs, in the vicinity of the hot springs, is a secret so ancient that it has been all but forgotten. A magical construct of immense size and formidable power is buried so deeply beneath the marsh that only a few traces of the artifact can be observed. These effects include the hot springs themselves, a result of the magical energies seeping from the construct and intermixing with the ground water.

This construct is one of the few surviving concentrations of the essence of the original goddess of magic known as Mystra, and seems from the outline to have the form of a buried hand. Its original purpose is a total mystery and now it lies dormant, wrapped in a cocoon of magical restraints deep within the earth. The cocoon keeps the object immobile and hides it from all forms of magical detection. These wards interact with the outflow of magic from the construct, resulting in some contamination of the hot spring such as the pool of addictive water.

In addition to the springs, the ends of four digits of the construct just barely protrude out of the bogs, forming an arc running from the north to the west. The immense radius of these tips gives a clue to the dimension of the construct, as they lie almost four miles from the springs. If these protruding surfaces were indeed fingertips, then the hot springs rise from roughly the location of the palm of a buried hand. At the location where the wrist would be found is a deep round pit in the ground.

It is not clear if this area forms the entire construct, or is perhaps even the tip of a limb or even an entire body. In the later case the construct is immense indeed.

1. Hot Springs

The magic springs emerge from the depths of the moors to form a series of mineral pools lying within an area several hundred meters in diameter. The mineral deposits from these springs have raised the lips of the pools several meters above the ground level, and the run-off has formed a series of walled pools that radiate outward in a random, step-like manner. The outermost such pools are cool enough so that they can be enjoyed as a warm bath. However the actual magic springs are scalding hot and would boil an unprotected individual alive within a few minutes, doing 2d4hp of heat damage per round.

There are a total of ten hot springs, each with its own unique magical property as shown on the table below. Mixing the waters from these springs has the same effect as combining magical potions, so the outcome should be determined by rolling on the Potion Compatibility table in the Dungeon Master's Guide. In addition, none of these springs will provide a counteragent for the effects of the others. Thus drinking from spring (f) will not counteract the effects of spring (b).

Table 1. Effect of drinking from the magical springs.

1. Same as a *potion of cure moderate wounds*.
2. The water is a powerful ingested poison DC 13 with initial damage 2d6 Con and secondary damage 1d6 Con.
3. Same as an *insanity* spell cast at 15th level.
4. Same as drinking an *potion of lesser restoration*.
5. This liquid is addictive DC 15 causing a temporary but cumulative loss of 1 Con/day until the spring is drunk from again.
6. Same as a *potion of neutralize poison*.
7. Same as a *potion of endurance*.
8. Same as a *restoration* spell but will only function once per person.
9. Same as a *regenerate* spell but will only function once per person.
10. The water is a potent ingested poison DC 12 with initial damage 1d4 Str and secondary damage 1d6 Str.

Drinking more than one cup per day from any of these powerful magical springs can have major deleterious effects on a character, and a Fortitude saving throw at DC 14 is required to prevent a severe reaction. If the saving throw is successful then the liquid has its normal effect. However those who fail their saving throw will be violently ill for the next 1d6 rounds, and from then on will immediately and violently expel the contents of their stomach whenever they drink from that same spring.

The cascading pools beneath the springs have had their magical power diluted, and so a larger dose must be swallowed for the same beneficial effects. The spring waters will retain their magical properties for a brief period after they have been removed from the springs, typically lasting 2d6 days if stored in a tightly sealed container. There is nothing about the content of the springs that will overcome this limitation, and the nodules lying on the bottom are merely a "red herring" as described below.

Since the discovery of the springs by the red dragons that have been roosting near the ruins of Castle Perilous, they have been coming here regularly to bask in the warmth, sometimes two or three at a time. Being the chaotic creatures that they are, the dragons arrive at unpredictable intervals and stay for various lengths of time. However on a clear summer day they can easily be spotted approaching from many miles away, giving everybody sufficient time to hide in the dense thickets that Yosyl has prepared. However, spotting the dragons requires that somebody remain on constant guard.

One of the red dragons, a female adult known as Kyrpharox, was impregnated by one of the more amorous males in the clutch. With the predilection for one of the male dragons for consuming infant drakes that are not his own, however, Kyrpharox decided to hide her eggs within the hot springs. Carefully checking each of the pools, she found the primary springs that had a suitable temperature to sustain her eggs.

Since that time she has been back periodically to check on her eggs, and she always arrives alone when she does so. However the mineral waters have had an unusual effect on the tough dragon shells, and they have become so heavily discolored that they now look like strange mineral nodules. Further, the insidious magic in the waters has had some most unusual effects on the unborn red dragons, a fact that will cause Kyrpharox to immediately kill her "defective" hatchlings when they emerge. Were some of these altered hatchlings to be raised in an appropriate environment, they might even be described as "good" in nature.

To the north and west of the springs is a wide, dense thicket of shrubs that Yosyl has magically grown to provide cover. These shrubs are wiry and covered in thorns, making them quite difficult to enter. But once into the interior there are several low, narrow passages leading through the entanglements. The field of shrubs gradually thins out with increasing distance from the springs. The shrubs allow Yosyl to traverse almost the entire trail between his hut and springs under cover.

2. Stone Hut of Yosyl

This low rocky mound of earth about a half mile to the west of the springs serves as a home for Yosyl. Scattered about this earthen rise are the gravesites of several previous inhabitants of this site. The graves are marked only with a pile of stones, and the identity of the occupants is unknown. However the gravesites have obviously been well maintained, as they are clear of brush and other debris.

On the west slope of the rise, surrounded in a dense thicket of growth, is a round stone hut. The stones of the hut have been cemented together with mud then sealed and hardened with fire. The roof of the hut is made from a tangled weave of dried wood, large animal bones, and branches. It seems crudely made, but is in fact watertight. In the center of the roof is an opening that serves as a chimney. There is a low opening on the northern face and a small window opening to the southwest.

The contents of the hut are spartan at best. There are two large flat stones that are covered in a bed of leaves and several blankets. (One of these is obviously little used.) In the center a ring of stones forms a fire pit. A pile of drying firewood, mostly consisting of thick twigs, slumps against the wall near the entrance. Several hide bags hang from pegs along the walls, and two shelves are overflowing with various herbs and crude clay bowls. Some animal hides are curing along the walls, and a number of well crafted hide garments and leather boots are stored on a platform next to the bed. There are five crude, flint-tipped spears

standing against the wall at the foot of the bed. Bits and pieces of Yosyl's crafts can be found all over the hut, giving it a more comfortable and homely feel. The hide bags contain the few tools that Yosyl possesses, including a worn knife, a bone needle, three sealed glass bottles, several packets of seeds, an ivory comb, and some pieces of flint. The herbs include local edibles as well as various medicines that Yosyl has collected from the bog. Some of these herbs are surprisingly effective for their purpose, while others have little noticeable effect.

3. Finger Tips

These low stone mounds gradually rise out of the surrounding ground, each forming a wide, domed surface that is almost a hundred meters in diameter and completely free of growth. The mounds form an arc about a kilometer from the springs, ranging from the north to the east. Not even moss or lichen has gained a foothold on these odd surfaces, and the ground surrounding the mounds seems blackened and dead. A careful examination of the stone will show a faint pattern of swirling parallel lines that wrap around a central point. In the exact middle of the mounds lies a darkened area of gray that forms a giant rune. The exact nature of the rune is difficult to make out unless seen from a height, but these are in fact ancient characters representing the four elements.

- a. **First Finger** - The northern-most finger represents water and transformation. The surface is constantly damp and glistening, making the surface somewhat slick. No fires of any kind can be lit within 10' of the stone, and any torches or other light sources brought close to the surface will quickly wither and snuff themselves out.

The finger has an attraction to items of a magical nature, and any such items in the vicinity will be tugged gently toward the stone. If a magic item is actually placed on the surface, it will be drawn into the rock much like a heavy object sinking beneath the bogs. As the item is drawn inside it becomes increasingly difficult to pull it free. After the first round a successful Strength check (DC 15, +3 for each round thereafter) is required to break the object free. After 2d6 rounds the object is completely submerged within the rock.

When the finger has absorbed a magic item the surface of the rise will stir slightly, causing it to move up and down and seem unstable for a round or two. The stronger the magic in the item, the greater the amount of stirring performed by the rise. This effect is cumulative with each successive item absorbed, but only an artifact has the magical power required to fully awaken and arouse the hand from its long rest.

After the finger has once more come to rest, the individual who gave the magic item to the finger will have a sensation of emotions radiating from the rock. Much of the sensation will seem alien to any mortal mind, but it includes a sense of gratitude combined with puzzlement. Slowly the emotion of puzzlement will predominate, varying in strength according to the thought patterns of the gift giver.

If this person should happen to think about a particular magic item, the emotion will either shift to a sense of understanding or one of regret, depending on whether the item considered is less powerful or more powerful than the gift. (Power as measured in terms of the experience point value of the object, although the DM can veto the selection.) A moment after the sense of understanding is felt the magic item in

question will emerge from the finger. Otherwise the finger will soon return to a state of puzzlement.

- b. **Second Finger** - The next finger down from the north represents earth and massiveness. It has a magical propensity for enlarging solid objects. Indeed, the local insects that constantly seem to hover about in the bog are unusually large and annoying hereabouts. On occasion one of the snakes that dwell in the bog will also climb up this stone to bask in the sun, then later return to the swamp as a giant snake.

Any items making direct contact with the stone will very gradually begin to increase in all its dimensions. The rate of this growth is slow, however, so it will take a few minutes to notice the effect. The increase in dimension of an object is 1% per round. Objects will continue to increase in size until they reach a maximum of three times their original dimension. They will remain at this size as long as they are left on the stone surface. Once they are removed, however, the process will reverse itself and the object will eventually shrink back to a normal size. The length of time for the item to revert to normal is the same as the interval it was left on the stone.

When the characters first touch this stone they will not immediately notice an effect. After a few rounds, however, they might notice that their shoes are suddenly growing looser. Their feet will not grow to match the size of the enlarging shoes because they are not making direct contact with the stone with their flesh. Anything enlarged in this manner must be a single, contiguous object or being, as the magic does not propagate from item to item.

The characters might find an ingenious use for this enlargement effect in raising the wagon from the bog. However, for each such doubling of the size of an object, the total mass will increase by a factor of eight. Heavier beings, or those weighted down with a large load will have a much more difficult time stopping themselves from sinking into the bog.

- c. **Third Finger** - The third finger from the north represents fire and change. The air around the finger is noticeably warm and the ground nearby is not just blackened, but charred and covered in a dusting of ashes. Indeed the ground next to the finger is completely dry and as hard as rock. The surface of the finger is also completely dry, and any moisture that falls upon the surface slowly evaporates or turns to steam.

Objects that are placed on this finger will slowly but inexorably grow hotter and hotter until they are ultimately vaporized. The rate of heating caused by this finger is quite low, however, and it requires a few rounds before it even becomes noticeable. Items will increase in temperature at the rate of one degree per round. Thus a character can easily leave the rock before his temperature becomes uncomfortable. In the meantime, the heating provided could be quite a comfort for a group that has been exposed to these frozen surroundings for many days. The finger could potentially be used to heat metals to the point of melting and then use the molten alloy to cast simple tools. It can also be used to bake clay figures, boil water, and even dry meat. However the items being heated must be constantly monitored because the heating effect is inexorable and will eventually burn away anything placed on the surface.

Much like the first finger, this stone exerts a slight but noticeable tug on any items of a magical nature. Unlike the first finger, however, the items are not absorbed into the rock. Instead they are briefly wreathed in harmless magical flames, which flare up and then quickly die. The flames have the magical property of chaotically modifying the magical properties of a magical item for the brief duration of 1d6 days.

Items with a magic modifier, such as a *ring of protection +1*, either have their plus reduced by one or increased by one with a 50% chance of either outcome. Minor cursed items will temporarily become uncursed should their minus be reduced to zero, and this effect can be used to remove such items. Charged items have their number of charges increased or reduced by 1d10, with appropriate consequences for the item. The effect on other types of magic items will need to be adjudicated by the DM. Items that are modified in this manner are no longer tugged by the stone and repeated applications have no further effect until the duration has expired.

It might seem that the red dragons would enjoy perching on this particular rock, but as it happens they have never discovered this particular source of heat despite flying over it many times. If this location were to be pointed out to them they would undoubtedly come here instead of the springs because of the dryness and the greater heat. Of course actually finding a way to communicate the location of this rock could be quite hazardous to one's health. Even the dragons are vulnerable to the stone, and the rising heat would claim even them should they linger too long.

- d. **Fourth Finger** - The last finger, and the one almost directly east of the springs, represents air and weather. As this mound is approached the winds will seem to pick up, swirling about in random directions. In fact the air is in constant motion about the finger, whirling slowly about the central rune. Small flying creatures attempting to cross the rock will be blown about by the rising winds, and any missile fire will be deflected.

Those who stay upon the rock long enough to observe its magical effects will eventually notice that the air about the mound subtly changes prior to shifts in the weather. When precipitation is heading toward the plains, the air will feel especially damp and a slight mist will form. Likewise if a dry, sunny period is approaching then the air will warm slightly and the winds die down. Whether there is a direct connection between the behavior of the weather and the power of this mound is unclear, but it can be used to predict weather with a Knowledge (nature) skill roll or an Intelligence check against DC 12.

4. Deep Pit

A deep, wide pit can be found to the south and west of the springs. The pit stretches about twenty feet across, and drops out of sight far into the earth. It is a surprise that this pit exists at all, since the surrounding boggy ground should have slumped down and filled it in. However the dirt about the pit is surprisingly dry and hard, with a mix of rocks and stones firming up the ground.

The bottom of the pit can not be seen from the lip, as it is cloaked in shadow. The pit drops over two hundred feet, narrowing gradually as it descends and eventually becoming a twisting chimney. At the end of the pit is a cavern with a very deep pool of boiling hot water, heated by the magic of the buried hand of Mystra. Wisps of steam float up the pit,

coating the walls in moisture. Most of this steam dissipates by the time it reaches half way up the pit, coating the stony walls with moisture. However some rising clouds can occasionally be seen at the surface.

Nothing lives within the boiling pool, and little of interest can be found by exploring the waters. An investigator could, however, confirm that the buried hand is the source is the heating and that it extends far into the earth. The waters themselves radiate a strong magic and a quaff from the liquid will cause any spells cast by a wizard to automatically suffer from the effects of a wild magic surge. (See table 2 of the Tome of Magic.) Each dose of the potion will only last for 1d6+1 days, whether it is consumed or stored in a container.

5. Buried Wagon

In an otherwise undistinguished area of the moors, the tail of a four-wheeled wagon is projecting slightly above the boggy surface. The wagon is actually resting on a large boulder buried under the mulch, and so is unlikely to sink further. Most of the goods that were being carried in the wagon have been torn apart by the claws of the dragon and so are completely unusable. However a watertight compartment under the wagon seat was somehow completely missed during their search. This compartment contains the *ring of cooking* as well as a thick roll of parchment for a journal and some personal valuables belonging to Brendal.

The ground around the wagon is no more firm or soft than the remainder of the bog, and it required several days for the wagon to submerge beneath the ground. However trying to lift the wagon from the bog will prove especially difficult, as it is weighted down by the muck. Any attempt to dig into the bog will eventually cause the surrounding boggy earth to suddenly slump into the hole, making this a dangerous task. Water will constantly seep into any pit, filling it completely within less than an hour. The surrounding earth is also heavy with water, and digging will be especially tiring. Finally, attempts to pull the wagon straight up from the earth will be all but impossible without firm footing.

There are several approaches that can be taken if suitable magic is available. Spells of lowering or transforming water, such as *control water*, can temporarily dry out the surrounding ground and make it much easier to dig. Earth-based spells such as *soften earth and stone* or *move earth* will also help. However the best approach is to find a way to magically locate the ring, then just excavate directly down to the compartment.

6. Undead Quagmire

In the area where the thumb of the immense hand of Mystra would be located is instead what at first glance appears to be a placid circular lake. The thumb of the hand is actually located just a few meters beneath the water, however, and its magic serves to keep the lake melted year round. The result is a body of water that looks very inviting to thirsty animals. Actually taking a drink from this lake would be a great mistake, however, since it is merely a shallow cover across a deep quagmire. Those who step onto the lake edge will immediately begin to sink into the muck and will have a good deal of difficulty trying to make their way out.

To make matters worse, the thumb has the effect of magically animating any creatures that die in the immediate vicinity. Thus literally thousands of undead slowly seethe and move about just beneath the surface. When a victim becomes stuck in the mire, the mass of undead

rise to begin drawing the victim below the waters. Most of these undead are located in a deep, ring-shaped pile near the outer edge of the lake.

The highest point of the submerged thumb can be found at the center of the lake, lying about ten feet beneath the surface. An unusual two-headed Troll has become trapped near the center, and is currently perched in water up to his neck. The left head of the troll was born defective, and is heavily misshapen with one bungling eye and a large, lumpy nose. This head is known as Syd, and it has the intellect and sensibilities of a childish imbecile. The other head appears quite normal and fully functional, but has been transformed by a *helm of opposite alignment*. This head is called Toron, and he is about as honorable a Troll as you will ever find.

Toron and Syd, Two-Headed Troll: CR 5; Large Giant (5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.); HD 7d8+30; hp 52; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +7 natural); Atk +9 melee (1d6+6/1d6+6, 2 claws) and +4 melee (1d6+3/1d6+3, 2 bites); SA Rend 2d6+9; SQ regeneration 5, scent, darkvision 90 ft.; AL LG/CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 23, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6/12.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5. *Feats*: Alertness, Ambidexterity, Iron Will.

Syd and Toron got trapped in the quagmire when they were hunting for game along the lake banks. They sank into the waters and were dragged under by the undead mound. Being a Troll, however, they survived the assault and managed to fight their way to the higher ground in the middle. Now they are trapped with no apparent way to get out of this quagmire. Whatever treasure they carried is now at the bottom of the lake.

The lonely Yosyl recently discovered the troll, and they have become friends of a sort. Yosyl doesn't quite believe that Toron is as honorable as he says but the druid does have some sympathy for the plight of this monster. He would gladly let somebody more wise than he render judgement on this beast and either help it out of its plight or dispatch it from its misery.

The two-headed Troll could potentially be useful to the party, assuming the two can learn to trust each other. Syd doesn't help matters much because his favorite food is humans, and he often drools and smacks his lips together in their presence. About the only words he knows in the native tongue of the region are "Me like humans. Taste good." However Toron is the dominant partner of the two and Syd will follow his instructions as long as they are sufficiently simple. Together the two might be able to drag the wagon from the bog, given a suitable firm base on which to stand.

Conclusion

This side trek adventure is successfully completed when the characters have found a way to send the dragons away from the springs and make it available for use. For completing all the tasks of the Druid and removing the dragons the party should receive a bonus experience reward of 2,000 experience points. If they manage to properly navigate their way between the springs and the ford, an additional 1,000 experience points should be rewarded.

Appendix A. Random Bog Encounters

Encounters in the bog occur on a roll of 1 on a 1d10 for every 8 hours of travel. When an encounter occurs, roll on the table below:

4d6	Encounter
4	<p>(EL 6) A juvenile white dragon from the glacier is out hunting for a meal when she sights the party in the distance. If the sun is out she will climb into the sky to dive out of the sun for a surprise breath attack. Otherwise she will circle the group until she finds the best avenue of attack. She will remain airborne as much as possible during the attack and will fly off if heavily damaged. Otherwise if the group puts up strong resistance simply grabbing the plumpest member of the party will satisfy her appetite.</p> <p>White Dragon: CR 5; Juvenile Dragon (5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.); HD 13d12+26; hp 110; Init +0; AC 21 (+11 natural); Atk +16 melee (1d8+3, bite) and +11 melee (1d6+1/1d6+1, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d4+1/1d4+1, 2 wings); SA breath weapon (60 ft. x 30 ft. cone of cold, 4d6, DC 18); SQ double damage from fire, icewalking, immunities, blindsight, darkvision 400 ft.; SD cold immunity; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 8. <i>Skills:</i> Bluff +14, Concentration +14, Escape Artist +7, Listen +17, Search +15, Spot +17. <i>Feats:</i> Alertness, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (claw).</p>
5	<p>(EL 8) A small herd of Oliphants is grazing their way across the frozen bog lands when some wolves attack an infant. The Oliphants rush to the defense of their youngster but it is too late. In its rage the bull begins chasing one of the wolves across the open ground toward the party. With it's eyes reddened with anger, it attacks anything that moves.</p> <p>Oliphant Bull: CR 8; Huge Animal (10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.); HD 11d8+55; 104 hp; Init +0 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (-2 size, +7 natural); Atk +16 melee (2d6+10, slam) and +11 melee (2d6+5, 2 stamps), or +16 melee (2d8+15, gore); SA trample 2d8+15; SQ scent; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 30, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 7. <i>Skills:</i> Listen +6, Spot +6.</p>
6	<p>(EL 8) The wandering party stumbles upon the lair of some intelligent giant owls and they rush to the attack. There is only one hatchling in the communal nests. They have picked up 2 pieces of amber (100gp ea.) and potions of <i>invisibility</i> and <i>cure moderate wounds</i> from another intruder who was unlucky enough to disturb their nesting ground.</p> <p>Giant Owls (5): CR 3; Large Magical Beast (5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.); HD 4d10+4; hp 21, 28, 27, 24, 19; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 70 ft. (average); AC 15 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +7 melee (1d6+4/1d6+4, 2 claws) and +2 melee (1d8+2, bite); SQ superior low-light vision; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10. <i>Skills:</i> Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +16, Move Silently +9(+17 fly), Spot +10(+14 low light). <i>Feats:</i> Alertness.</p>
7	<p>(EL 6) Dire Rats (33): CR 1/3; Small Animal (5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.); HD 1d8+1; hp 5 ea.; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d4, bite); SA disease; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will</p>

	+3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4. <i>Skills:</i> Climb +11, Hide +11, Move Silently +6. <i>Feats:</i> Weapon Finesse (bite).
8	(EL 5) Ochre Jelly: CR 5; Large Ooze (5 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.); HD 6d10+27; hp 60; Init -5 (Dex); AC 4 (-1 size, -5 Dex); Atk +5 melee (2d4+3, slam; 1d4, acid); SA improved grab, acid, constrict 2d4+3 and 1d4 acid; SQ blindsight, split, ooze; SV Fort +4, Ref -3, Will -3; Str 15, Dex 1, Con 15, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.
9	(EL 8) Brown Bears (4): CR 4; Large Animal (5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.); HD 6d8+24; hp 51, 48, 55, 42, 48; Init +1 (Dex); AC 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +11 melee (1d8+8/1d8+8, 2 claws) and +6 melee (2d8+4, bite); SA improved grab; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 27, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6. <i>Skills:</i> Listen +4, Spot +7, Swim +14.
10	(EL 1) One of the party members disturbs an unusual white-furred poisonous snake. Its bite is just as toxic however, requiring a Fortitude save (DC 11) or initial and secondary damage is 1d6 temporary Constitution loss. The snake is protected by the equivalent of an <i>endure elements</i> spell against cold damage. White-furred Snake: CR 1; Medium-Size Animal (5 ft. by 5 ft. (coiled)/5 ft.); HD 2d8; hp 12; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d4-1, bite; poison); SA poison; SQ endure elements (cold), scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2. <i>Skills:</i> Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +12, Listen +9, Spot +9. <i>Feats:</i> Weapon Finesse (bite).
11	(EL 4) A lone Ogre is out hunting for his tribe and has become lost in the moors. He is quite hungry, making him especially brave but somewhat weaker than normal. This should be easy pickings for a group of brave adventurers. Ogre: CR 2; Large Giant (5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.); HD 4d8+8; hp 19; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide); Atk +8 melee (2d6+6, huge greatclub); AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 19, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7. <i>Skills:</i> Climb +4, Listen +2, Spot +2. <i>Feats:</i> Weapon Focus (greatclub). <i>Possessions:</i> Greatclub, 23gp, 243sp, 271cp.
12-13	<i>DM choice or make up an encounter.</i>
14-15	(EL 8) Some huge wolves are tearing apart the corpse of a warrior when they spot some new prey. The body of the corpse contains 530pp, 4 pieces of turquoise (15gp), 4 fire opals (900gp), and a <i>ring of jumping</i> . The leather armor was magical but has been torn beyond repair. There is also a broken long sword, a wooden shield, and some travel rations in a pouch. Winter Wolves (3): CR 5; Large Magical Beast (5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.); HD 6d10+18; hp 31, 34, 33; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +9 melee (1d8+6, bite); SA breath weapon, trip; SQ scent, cold subtype; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10. <i>Skills:</i> Hide +6, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +1. <i>Feats:</i> Alertness, Improved Initiative.
16	(EL 6) Night encounter with a hunting party of Gnolls. They will use their bows to

	<p>whittle down their surprised opponents before closing with swords drawn. They are carrying a haul of loot consisting of a <i>pearl of power</i> (1st), 49gp, 394sp, and 109cp.</p> <p>Gnolls (7): CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.); HD 2d8+2; hp 11 ea.; Init +0 (Dex); AC 17 (+1 natural, +4 scale, +2 large shield); Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, battleaxe) or +1 ranged (1d6, shortbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0. <i>Skills</i>: Listen +3, Spot +3. <i>Feats</i>: Power Attack. <i>Possessions</i>: Battle axe, short bow, 12 arrows.</p>
17-18	<p>(EL 5) At this location on the otherwise bleak moors of Vaasa stands a small walled farm. The ground nearby is unusually fertile, and a half-orc farmer built his home here to eke a meager existence out of the wilderness. The cottage is built like a stone fortress, and the owner is a well-armed and experienced warrior who once served in the military. If not taken by surprise, Gorun will quickly don his magical scale mail armor and arm himself with a crossbow and mace.</p> <p>Gorun Ishtark, Male Half-Orc Warrior5: CR 5; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 5d8+15; hp 36; Init +0 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 scale, +2 shield); Atk +7 melee (1d8+1, heavy mace) or +5 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL LN; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 6. <i>Skills</i>: Intimidate -1, Profession (farming) +3, Ride +2. <i>Feats</i>: Power Attack, Weapon Finesse (heavy mace). <i>Possessions</i>: +1 <i>glamered scale mail</i>, large wood shield, heavy mace, light crossbow, 12 quarrels, 5gp, 3sp.</p>
19	<p>(EL 5) Cautious but decent-natured, wilderness scout Irene will track the party for a few days and try to discern their intent. If they later get into trouble against an evil foe she will lend assistance. She is quite knowledgeable about this countryside and can set the party in the correct direction to reach a specific destination.</p> <p>Irene Salamar, Female Half-Elf Ranger4: CR 4; Medium-Size Humanoid (4 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 5d10+10; hp 32; Init +3 (Dex); AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 armor); Atk +5 melee or +7 missile; SQ favored enemy (Ogre); AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12. <i>Spells</i>: 1x1st - <i>Entangle</i>. <i>Skills</i>: Craft (trapbuilding) +3, Hide +5, Intuit Direction +4, Knowledge (nature) +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +10, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +7. <i>Feats</i>: Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Track. <i>Possessions</i>: Chain mail, long sword, long bow, dagger, 20 arrows, warm garb, 14gp, 3sp.</p>
20	<p>(EL 7) These trolls are dragging a large log through the muck for some mysterious reason. The log is actually hollow and wedged deep inside is an iron box. The trolls are unable to fit their arm through the opening and reach the box, so they are dragging the log to firmer ground and intend to smash it apart. The box is old and the lid and hinges are completely rusted shut. It once belonged to an itinerant priest on a holy mission, and contains 847gp, a gem-encrusted holy symbol (1,100gp), a <i>golembane scarab</i>, and a frozen <i>potion of speak with animals</i>.</p> <p>Trolls (2): CR 5; Large Giant (5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.); HD 6d8+36; hp 64, 55, 59; Init +2 (Dex); AC 18 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +7 natural); Atk +9 melee (1d6+6/1d6+6, 2</p>

	<p>claws) and +4 melee (1d6+3, bite); SA rend 2d6+9; SQ regeneration 5, scent, darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 23, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6.</p> <p><i>Skills</i>: Listen +5, Spot +5. <i>Feats</i>: Alertness, Iron Will.</p>
21	<p>(EL 8) This group of half-orcs out of Palischuk is heading west on interesting business of their own. They will warily approach the party but will do so with arms cached. If the party does not attack they will briefly ask about the terrain ahead then seek to pass. They are disinclined to loiter or to seek company. Should the characters decide to attack, they have their work cut out for them. The members of this party are surprisingly intelligent and will act accordingly.</p> <p>If combat seems inevitable, Xobinder will attempt to use the <i>enthrall</i> spell to immobilize as many of the enemy as possible while the fighters prepare. Once ready, Kroqu and Thuh will fire their missile weapons and then close with the spell casters. The priest will then cast <i>silence</i> on any unengaged wizard or sorcerer, followed by <i>obscuring mist</i>. Inorigh will maneuver to use the cover of the mists to attempt a sneak attack. At an appropriate moment he will cast <i>summon monster III</i> to summon a small earth elemental ally. If combat is going against the half-orcs they will regroup and perform a fighting withdrawal. If necessary Xobinder will use his potion to escape and may return in a few weeks with a large war party bent on revenge for this outrage.</p> <p>Kroqu, Male Half-Orc Fighter7: CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 7d10; hp 52; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +5 armor, +1 shield); Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+3/crit 19-20, long sword) or +8/+3 ranged (1d6/crit x3, short bow); AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 9, Cha 9.</p> <p><i>Skills</i>: Climb +6, Craft (stonemasonry) +8, Handle Animal +4, Jump +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Move Silently +3, Ride +9, Spot+2, Swim +5, Wilderness Lore +3. <i>Feats</i>: 5 Improved Initiative, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (long sword).</p> <p><i>Possessions</i>: Chain mail, small steel shield, long sword, dagger, short bow, 18 arrows, backpack, supplies, 11gp.</p> <p>Xobinder, Male Half-Orc Clr4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 4d8+8; hp 19; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (-1 Dex, +6 armor, +1 shield); Atk +4 melee (1d10+1/crit 19-20, heavy flail, favored weapon) or +2 missile (1d4, sling); SQ rebuke undead; AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 6.</p> <p><i>Spells</i>: 5x0th - <i>create water, guidance, light, purify food and drink, resistance</i>; 5x1st - <i>command, cure light wounds, endure elements, magic weapon, obscuring mist</i>; 4x2nd - <i>enthrall, silence, spiritual weapon, summon monster III</i>. <i>Domains</i>: Chaos, War.</p> <p><i>Skills</i>: Concentration +10, Diplomacy +4, Heal +8, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (religion) +11, Ride +2, Spellcraft +11. <i>Feats</i>: Combat Casting, Martial Weapon Proficiency (flail), Scribe Scroll.</p> <p><i>Possessions</i>: +1 chain mail, small steel shield, heavy flail, sling, 9 bullets, <i>potion of gaseous form</i>, priest scroll (<i>cure serious wounds, dispel magic, dominate animal, water walk</i>), backpack, supplies, 16gp.</p> <p>Small Earth Elemental: Small Elemental (5 ft. by 5 ft./ ft.); HD 2d8+2; hp 11;</p>

Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (+1 size, -1 Dex, +7 natural); Atk +5 melee (1d6+4, slam); SA earth mastery, push; SQ elemental; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5. *Feats:* Power Attack.

Thub, Male Half-Orc Barbarian4: Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 4d12+8; hp 32; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 12 (-1 Dex, +2 armor, +1 shield); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+6/crit 19-20, magic long sword) or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); SQ rage 2/day, fast movement, uncanny dodge; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 4, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +6, Craft (leatherworking) +9, Intimidate +6, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +7, Ride +5, Spot +0, Swim +6. *Feats:* Combat Reflexes, Iron Will.

Possessions: +3 long sword, light crossbow, 16 quarrels, leather armor, small wood shield, backpack, supplies, 11gp.

Inorigh, Female Half-Orc Rogue2: Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 2d6; hp 5; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +1 melee (1d6/crit 19-20, short sword) or +3 ranged (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); SQ sneak attack +1d6, evasion; AL CN; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +4, Climb +5, Disable Device +4, Disguise +2, Hide +7, Jump +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +7, Pick Pockets +5, Tumble +5. *Feats:* Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, 3 daggers, backpack, supplies, lock picks, 3gp.

Shtung, Male Half-Orc Fighter1: Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 1d10; hp 13; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 armor); Atk +2 melee (1d8+1/crit x3, battle axe) or +2 ranged (1d8/crit x3, shortspear); AL LN; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +5, Handle Animal +3, Jump +4, Ride +5, Swim +3. *Feats:* Power Attack, Toughness.

Possessions: Chain mail, battle axe, spear, backpack, supplies, 9gp.

22

(EL 8) A six-headed Pyrohydra has been magically bonded to protect a low cairn at the top of a rise. The Pyrohydra dwells in a partially submerged cave at the base of the rise and is summoned whenever the cairn is approached within 10 ft by a creature of intelligence 4 or greater. The Pyrohydra will never move more than 100 ft. from the cairn even if provoked. A search of the cave will reveal the corpses of several victims frozen against the sides. The corpses contain a total of 241gp, 388sp, 749cp, a moonstone gem (55gp), a star ruby gem (510gp), and a *wand of shatter*. The last is a knobby length of ivory with a silver tip shaped like a fist, wrapped in a rotting bundle of red silk. Runes embedded along the length of the shaft in jet spell out the activation word "*Crikle*".

Pyrohydra: CR 7; Huge Beast (20 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.); HD 6d10+30; hp 70; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., swim 10 ft.; AC 15 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +6 natural); Atk +5 melee (1d10+3, 6 bites); SA jets of frost; SQ cold immunity, double damage from fire, scent; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 9. *Skills:* Listen +6, Spot +6. *Feats:* Combat Reflexes.

Digging up the cairn will unearth an intact but magically frozen corpse of an

	elegantly garbed woman. She is in a pose of rest with her arms crossed over her chest. The woman was dying when she was frozen and left here, but she can be magically resurrected and healed. The details of who this woman may be are left to the DM.
23	(EL 7) This beast has been burrowing through the frozen earth. When it senses surface vibrations it erupts to attack. Remorhaz: CR 7; Huge Magical Beast (10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.; HD 7d10+35; hp 70; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.; AC 20 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +11 natural); Atk +13 melee (2d8+12, bite); SA improved grab, swallow whole; SQ heat, tremorsense; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 26, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 10. <i>Skills:</i> Listen +10, Spot +9. <i>Feats:</i> Power Attack.
24	An unfortunate member of the party has an encounter with the diabolical Wandering Pit of Vaasa , as detailed in the Bloodstone Lands accessory.

Appendix B. Magic Items

Ring of Cooking

This wide silver ring has two smooth bands with a series of knobs in between. The inner surface of the band contains three runes representing fire, water, and spirit, as well as the activation phrase. The ring completely protects the wearer against the health effects of normal boiling water and steam, similar to a *protection from elements* spell. The ring can also allow the wearer to safely taste any edible substance, even toxins, merely by touching it with the same finger. Finally the ring provides a bonus of +2 to any Profession (cook) skill check, and a minimum Profession (cook) rank of 3. A quirk of the ring is that if it is worn constantly then it can cause a certain obsession with food and as a result the wearer will gradually become obese.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Forge Ring, *protection from elements*, *detect poison*, creator must have 5 ranks of the Profession (cook) skill; *Market Price:* 3,000gp.

The End