

YE01-03



Blighted Winds

A One-Round D&D 3rd Edition LIVING GREYHAWK™ Adventure

by August Hahn

A strange disease is killing farmers' crops near the town of Hardwick, and if the disease isn't stopped, the entire harvest will be ruined. Can the PCs discover the source of the blight and eliminate it before the region is plunged into economic ruin? A regional adventure for characters level 1-6.



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

Preparation

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

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

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

Instruct the players either to prepare their characters now, or wait until you read the introduction, depending on the requirements of the scenario as described in the introduction.

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

Once you are ready to play, it is handy to instruct each player to place a nametag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players (and the DM) to keep track of who is playing which character.

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

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

Scoring

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

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

When using voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities. It's a good idea to have the players vote while you determine treasure and experience awards for the scenario.

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

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

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

LIVING GREYHAWK Tier Structure

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

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

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

Lifestyle

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

- Destitute** You have no living space, and must carry all your gear everywhere. You eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, your only change of clothes.
- Poor** You sleep in poor accommodations, and eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, and have two sets of clothing.
- Common** You have common lodgings, and eat common quality food. You have normal clothing for your profession (adventuring); nothing fancy. You probably have two or three sets of clothing.
- High** You stay in good quality lodgings, and eat good quality food. You wear anything in value up to courtier's outfits, and generally buy a new set of clothing every two weeks.
- Luxury** You have luxurious accommodations (twice the cost of good accommodations), and you eat excellent foods. You can throw a banquet for your friends every day, and frequently do. You wear clothing up to the value of noble's outfit, and buy a new set of clothes every week.

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

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

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

Adventure Background

Four weeks prior to the beginning of this adventure, a husband and wife team of Dustdiggers uncovered the find of their lives—actually, they uncovered the last find of their lives. Several miles north of Hardwick and near the Escarpment, Kalo and Mithree Cantlegrey unearthed a sphere of rock and dried mud several feet in diameter.

Chipping some of this detritus away proved to be their undoing. The protective layer of soil had kept at bay an ancient and terrible weapon. This weapon, the *blightstone*, was crafted centuries ago as a final way of rendering a populace unable to resist conquest. Its power was insidious but inexorable—it slowly killed all plant life within its ever-growing radius. It accomplished this horrible feat by poisoning the air around it.

Exposing the *blightstone* sealed Kalo Cantlegrey's doom. The pent-up power of the *blightstone* surged out of the crack he opened in its rocky shell. This sickly beam of power struck him full force and killed him instantly. Unfortunately for Mithree, he did not stay dead long...

Elsewhere, the now partially freed *blightstone* began to work its vile magic. Slowly, a new form of plant rot emerged. The closest farms to the *blightstone*, those along the north road from Hardwick, are now suffering from this leaf rot. Appearing first as wide purple swathes across the leaves of any plant, this rot is also souring fruit and tainting roots.

By the time the adventure begins, these farms are steadily losing their crops. If something isn't done soon, the 'leaf rot' will claim the harvest from every farm in Hardwick—every farm but one.

Denwith, a hard working Yeoman farmer with a family of six, toils alongside his sons and does everything his neighbors do. He prays to the same gods, plants the same seeds, and gives his tilled earth the same care. He doesn't differ from the other farmers of Hardwick in any way. His farm, on the other hand, is very special indeed.

None of his crops are suffering from the leaf rot. His tubers are plump, his corn is full and fine, and none of his peaches have soured in the slightest. He is at a loss to explain this good fortune.

His fellow farmers are becoming more jealous and suspicious by the day. As their crops rot on the stalk, the rumors begin to fly of farmer Denwith's involvement with 'dark powers'. While no violence has occurred yet, it is only a matter of time before one of Denwith's neighbors strikes out in frustration and fear. He isn't in league with any powers, but his protests are falling on deaf ears.

What Denwith doesn't know is that while he may not be in league with 'powers', his daughters are. A few years ago, they found a trunk belonging to their Grandmother in the attic of their home. In this chest, along with the memories of a lifetime, lay a dusty tome of secrets and lore. Grandmother was a witch, like her mother before and her daughters thereafter. With their mother's instruction, Ilena and Kalia have been practicing the nature magic that is their birthright.

One of the rites they have worked involves a home blessing called "walking the circle". Every full moon, the twins walk a circle around their family's land. This has set up a ward that, among other things, has staved off the effects of (weakened from age and almost still-total confinement) the *blightstone*. Thus, while other farms suffer from this ancient magic, the Denwith land prospers.

This state of affairs cannot last. Eventually, the building power of the *blightstone* will overwhelm the simple druidical witchery of the Denwith twins. By that point, the magic of the *blightstone* will be strong enough to reach the towns of Dart and Sule. Crops farther and farther out will begin to wilt and die unless someone can track down the source of this evil magic and put a stop to it. Starvation looms... unless some one can still the *Blighted Winds*.

Adventure Synopsis

While traveling west of the Little Hills, the heroes stop for a meal at a general store outside Hardwick. There, they overhear an argument between other patrons. The source of their anger, a lone farmer with crops to sell, leaves sullenly.

If they follow the fellow, the heroes hear a strange tale indeed. It seems most of the farms in the area are suffering from a virulent leaf rot. Of all the ones he knows of, only his farm seems to be spared. He doesn't know why, but his good fortune is quickly turning to suspicion and shame. He is afraid that if something isn't done about the leaf rot soon, he and his family will have to move.

Provided the PCs take the farmer, Aldon Denwith, up on his offer of hospitality, they soon meet his family. His wife and four children greet the adventures with even more than typical Yeoman warmth, inviting them to spend the night for as long as they like. Denwith's twin girls, Ilena and Kalia, are taken with any charming men amongst the heroes.

The next morning, Denwith asks the PCs to come with him on a tour of his lands. They are not extensive, but a lot can be learned on this trek. Close examination can determine that not every corner of Denwith's land has escaped the effects of the rot. In fact, the *corners* of his land are suffering from it. If checked, there seems to be a circular ward or field protecting the majority of Denwith's crops. *Detect magic* will reveal a minor magic permeating the land and extending up to the edges of this 'circle'.

Farmer Denwith pleads honest ignorance of this ward if it is mentioned. If in earshot of such talk, his daughters will also pretend to know nothing. Either by immediate examination or by catching them going out at night, the heroes will have an opportunity to find out the truth.

Going out after the girls may have the heroes run afoul of Aldon's sons, Brennon and Danon. Ages 14 and 12 respectively, they are old enough to be very protective of their sisters. While they do not understand why their siblings walk around outside on the nights of the full moon, they certainly don't like the

thought of strangers accosting them for doing so. Unless cooler heads prevail, the pair may violently confront the heroes.

Once cornered, the girls admit to their witchcraft. If pressed, they will even reveal their grandmother's book. This tome is essentially a druid's handbook, written in simple country terms and filled with rites and basic incantations. Anyone making a successful; Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge: (religion) check (DC 10) will quickly discern the non-baneful nature of this material. While this magic might be the source of the protective wards, it certainly could not be causing the 'leaf rot'.

If the PCs express concern for the family's welfare and do not seem inclined to punish them, Ilena and Kalia take them to see their mother. More powerful in the craft than her daughters, she tells the PCs more about the 'blight'. Nadia Denwith has seen the *blightstone* in a vision and has a vague idea where it is. Not wishing to endanger her family (or herself, as how could she know any of this if not by witchcraft), she has kept silent.

Armed with a direction to travel and a description of the *blightstone*, the PCs make haste to the Escarpment and from there to the Cantlegrey dig. Tracking skills are helpful here as is Wilderness lore, but anyone can follow the fields of dying plants. This 'trail' leads the party to its ultimate destination.

Arriving on the scene, the PCs have to contend with what remains of Kalo and Mithree—both of who are now undead creatures under the control of the *blightstone*. In addition to its two 'protectors', the fell artifact can emit a deadly ray against would-be attackers.

Defeating the *blightstone* is actually quite easy. Its power only works if it is exposed to the air. Covering the crack Kalo opened will render the thing inert once again. If this occurs, the undead either fall dead immediately or (at the GM's option) continue fighting insensibly until destroyed.

Once the *blightstone* is dealt with, the danger to the land passes quickly. The 'leaf rot' was an unnatural disease fueled by magic. Once deprived of the artifact's power, the blight can be easily countered. Hardwick's farmers can recoup some of their crops and this year's harvest will not be nearly the disaster it could have been.

DM's Introduction

This adventure is extremely role-playing intensive. Gaining the information needed to successfully combat the influence of the *blightstone* will be very difficult if the PCs do not interact with Aldon and his family.

Note that Wizard, Sorcerer, Druid, and Cleric heroes may have some knowledge about witchcraft, especially if they have at least four ranks in Knowledge (arcana). Other PCs may be ignorant of such things and will be perfectly in character if they act fearful or even suspicious of the 'witches'.

In the case of the NPC witches of this module, their practice is in no way evil. Indeed, it is basically *druidical* magic with an

emphasis on healing, herbalism, and protection. The witches do not detect as evil, nor does their magic, or any of their spell's effects. They are simple folk using the lore and spellcraft passed down to them through generations. Indeed, such is their emphasis that if checked for, the ward protecting the Denwith farm has a good component.

There is not a lot of combat in this adventure. Except for the final conflict around the *blightstone*, which can be avoided through quick thinking and a handful of thrown mud, the PCs may never need draw a weapon. As such, most of the game's time slot will be taken up by talking and interacting. Feel free to improvise conversation with any of the NPCs, keeping in mind their personalities and motivations.

On the subject of 'witchcraft', the power for the Denwith family's magic comes from their devotion to nature and their inner gifts. Like druids, they are able to affect their rural surroundings through rite and ritual without directly worshipping a god. If asked who they serve, all three of the Denwith ladies would answer "the land" immediately.

The *blightstone* is a dark artifact of ages past. It was bound and buried centuries ago by the brave men that drove the cruel lord Asberdies out of the Yeomanry. This artifact was bound, because it could not be destroyed. The magic-rending effects of time and a number of global magical events (the return of Vecna being a primary factor) have shattered almost all of its bindings.

Now, all that holds back its fell power is a mundane covering of mud and stone. Hidden in an ancient vault, this was enough to keep it at bay. The *blightstone's* primary power is that of poisoning the air to affect any plant it comes in contact with. Without air, the artifact is powerless.

The Cantlegreys' excavation has inadvertently freed the *blightstone* and exposed a small part of it to the air. Its power immediately killed Kalo Cantlegrey and raised him as an undead servitor. The new undead's first act was to kill its former wife in a fit of madness and unholy hunger. Now, the stone has two slaves to serve it.

Unfortunately for the *blightstone*, one of its bindings still exists. The least direct of the wards placed on the artifact prevents it from using its powers to free itself. This extends to any creatures the artifact controls. Thus, it can not guide the two undead to tear any more of its 'shell' off.

Given time however, the magics streaming through the small hole will erode the shell and free it further. If this occurs, the *blightstone* could seriously threaten the land around it in an ever-widening circle of devastation. While the artifact eventually has a limit to its area of effect, its power is more than enough to seriously cripple the Yeomanry's food production and ecology for years to come.

Encounter 1: The Breeze Begins

It's quite a relief, after a lengthy journey, to come in off the road. Kegron's Supply, a small general store of sorts catering to the folk of Hardwick, has provided just such a place. You were greeted warmly and sent to a table to rest your feet.

Half barrels line the walls around you. Each set at a slight incline. They hold items of import to the people of this land. Seed, grains, and dry goods are on open display, with larger items up on tall shelves. A farmer would be hard pressed to need something this store doesn't have. You do note, though, that most of the produce bins are low or downright empty.

Travelers are also well served here. Goods aimed at making a long journey more pleasant are available near or above a counter on the back wall. You spy bedrolls, tack, and other journeying gear ready for purchase.

A young boy has asked for your choice of refreshments and in the back you smell stew coming to a boil. Nothing to do now but relax and let an idle afternoon hour slip past.

This is an opportunity for players to describe their characters and have a brief time of role-play before the adventure gets underway. Give them time to do so, even 'prompting' them to get in character by having the serving boy (Timmain is his name, which he will give if asked) ask them if there's anything they'd like to see or purchase while they wait for lunch.

It may be useful to say that each of the PCs met farther up the road from Hardwick and have been traveling together for safety's sake. While the heartland of the Yeomanry isn't known for 'monster trouble', the threat of bandits exists everywhere.

PCs can also shop here, buying anything reasonable (excluding mounts) from the Player's Handbook Goods and Services equipment list (*Player's Handbook*, page 108) at list price, and also any simple weapon (though Kegron only stocks two of each type). When the players are comfortable with each other and finished with introductions, continue.

A man burdened with two heavy sacks comes in from the hot afternoon sun and sets them down with a sigh. Even as he does, two of the men seated at a table near yours fix him with a derisive stare.

Pause here to let anyone who wishes to act do so. If anyone tries to talk to the two men, continue on. If anyone moves to help the newcomer, he thanks him or her kindly, but gets interrupted before he can speak again.

One of the glaring men shouts, "Get out of here, Denwith! We don't need your hell-spawned crops here!"

The newcomer looks hurt by the words, but he glares back. "I don't know what you mean, Ivel, but my crops are as good as yours!"

"No!" Ivel retorts. "Yours are better! Mine rot on the stalk while yours don't! Why is that, Aldon? What are you in league with?"

Again, pause for reactions. Aldon Denwith is taken aback by the accusation and anyone who succeeds at a Sense Motive check (DC 20) can tell his outward emotions are genuine.

"I don't know why," the man called Aldon says quietly. "I just don't know."

"Well, I do!" With that, Ivel stands up and balls a fist. "You've called down dark magic on the rest of us, haven't you?"

Ivel begins to come away from his table, intent on getting to Aldon. As he does, his companion hefts an ax handle from a nearby barrel.

PCs can react to this as they like, but if no one moves to break up what is obviously about to be a fight, continue with the next text section. Otherwise, paraphrase it once Ivel is calmed down.

All Tiers (EL 1)

Ivel and Gunnar, human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d4+5; hp 8 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks +1 melee (1d6+1, club); AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref 0, Will 0.

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

Skills: Climb +2, Profession (farmer) +4, Ride +1, Swim +3;

Feats: Great Fortitude, Toughness.

Equipment: ax handle (club).

Aldon Denwith, human Com3: Medium-size Humanoid; CL 3; HD 3d4+9; hp 17; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks +3 melee (1d6+1 x3) halfspear; AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +3.

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

Skills: Climb +2, Profession (farmer) +6, Ride +3, Swim +4;

Feats: Great Fortitude, Toughness, Weapon Focus (halfspear).

Equipment: halfspear.

Ivel and his friend Gunnar are both near their wits' end. They have watched their well-tended crops wither and rot, taking with them the food and revenue their families desperately need. They are not evil but they are desperate. They would, in this state, try to beat anyone in their way (subdual damage, the will stop as soon as their opponent reaches 0 or lower hp) but before fighting can really begin:

The sound of a crossbow string dry firing catches everyone's attention. "I won't have this!" says the storekeeper; his left hand holding the bolt he could have just fired. "I've known you three all your lives and this is just plain crazy."

Pointing to the empty tables, he tells everyone to sit down and shut up.

This would be the point where PCs should also stop fighting, if they do not, Ivel and Gunnar will defend themselves while the barkeep loads and fires his crossbow at anyone who is not striking to subdue. Should anyone be killed, the barkeep will send his son out the back and tell him to ride for Hardwick to fetch the guard.



Key Locations for the events of "Blighted Winds" - DM's Eyes Only

As long as the PCs do not commit murder and as long as they behave themselves, move to the next text section. If they have killed Ivel or Gunnar, the adventure is essentially over, as they must now flee the scene before Hardwick's guards arrive. If this occurs, adjudicate that mess as you see fit.

The two men leave the store, grumbling sullenly and shooting dark glances at Aldon before striding off purposefully.

Turning to Aldon, the storekeeper sighs heavily. "Aldon, I don't know what to tell you. The leaf rot's got everyone like this and I ain't much better." Looking down, he adds, "I can't take your goods, Aldie. No one'll buy them. I think you'd better go."

Visibly stunned, Aldon just stares at the barkeep for a moment. Then, glancing at Ivel and the rest of you, he kneels down, gathers his load, and leaves quietly.

Denwith will spend some time reloading his cart, giving the PCs time to ask questions if they like. Ivel and Gunnar can only tell them about the leaf rot: what it looks like, the fact that it seemed to come from nowhere, and that Denwith's land seems immune to it.

The barkeep (Kegron Burnswell) can confirm everything the other two have said, but adds that goods coming from Sule and Dart don't seem to be affected like the ones here. He also makes a request.

"I hate asking strangers for things, but I am worried about Farmer Denwith, Aldon that is. He's a good man, and I can't believe he's dealing with dark powers or the like. I ain't sure he'll make it home all right, tempers being what they are around here."

Reaching under the bar, he takes out a handful of coins. "Would you lot take a gold apiece to walk him home and keep an eye out for trouble while you do?"

Assuming the PCs agree, go but decline the reward, or have already gone outside to speak with Denwith, proceed to Scene Two. If not, Denwith will be easy to catch up with, as he is not eager to return home quickly.

Encounter 2: Wafting Homeward

For one reason or another, the PCs have likely joined Denwith as he makes his way home. He is a genuinely friendly person and does not mind the company. Still, he is in low spirits and should be played that way.

Aldon looks up as you approach. "Hail, folk," he said somewhat despondently. "What can I do for you?" As he speaks, he packs the wagon and steps up into the coach seat.

Denwith accepts any offer of escort, well aware that the mood of his fellow farmers has turned against him.

The journey home should be played as a paranoid one, with Denwith constantly scanning the road for angry neighbors. Let the players make whatever precautions they like. Some of Denwith's neighbors have become so desperate as to ambush him on his way home, but they've got trouble of their own, as will quickly become apparent.

You should also take a moment to describe the land the PCs are traveling through. At first, the ground is a gentle rolling field with slight hills and thick grass. Then, as they near the farms heading north, things change slightly. The grass has increasingly larger spots of purple along the blades. In some cases, the leaf itself has rotted away in the center of these spots.

Any PC with the Nature Sense class skill, or who makes a Knowledge (nature) check at DC 10 or a Wilderness Lore check at DC 15 will immediately note that this rot is not natural. *detect poison* will reveal nothing, but *detect magic* will find a faint aura (Necromancy and Alteration) on the wind. There is also a faint trace of evil, as if the wind were somehow corrupted. If they ask, the breeze is blowing at about 3-5 miles an hour from the north.

Denwith will answer any questions he can, but he isn't of much help about the leaf rot. He is at a loss to explain his good fortune, nor does he understand where the blight is coming from.

If asked, he will gladly allow the PCs, if they have behaved

well and have not been overly rude, to come onto his land and examine his plants. If they can provide some answers, he would be very grateful.

While he can not offer much, he will give shelter and meals while the PCs investigate this matter. He also mentions that his wife is an excellent seamstress and could probably do any repairs of simple needlework they might need.

One thing he insists on is that the party, even if they have not volunteered to investigate the leaf rot, join him for dinner as his way of thanking them for the escort. Dinner is served in Scene Three.

Once again, this is an opportunity for role-play with Denwith and with the other PCs. Let the players have time to enjoy it, then move to the combat encounter below.

Coming around a thinly forested bend in the path, you spot a brutal scene up ahead. Several men are apparently engaged in combat with a pack of wild beasts. The men look to be other farmers, desperately holding off the creatures with pitchforks and cudgels.

One of the people under attack sees you in the distance and cries out for aid. "Help us!" echoes into the air even as he is pulled down by a savage dog-like form.

Denwith immediately rushes to help defend his neighbors. If held back, he will only stay back if the PCs are obviously going to intervene. If the PCs close, they get a better look at the attacking creatures—large animals with splotched white coats and a cat-like stance. All Yeomen know of these beasts at least by reputation - the tyrg, or "spotted hound" (They actually are cats, the Krenshar from *the Monster Manual*—they are called by a different name in the Yeomanry). Succeeding at a Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (nature) check (DC12) will indicate that these tyrg are not screeching, which is most unusual behavior for tyrg (as is attacking a group of armed men).

Run this combat with each of the tyrgs in contact with a farmer and the PCs entering the fray at a distance of sixty feet (unless PC precautions or ranged attacks would dictate otherwise. If the tier indicates more tyrgs than farmers, the extra beasts have broken off from those attacking the farmers and are moving to intercept the PCs. Also, any tyrg attacked while fighting a farmer will turn to fight its new aggressor (the PC or PCs). The tyrgs are sick and mad with hunger and fight until the very last.

Make a note of all the farmers who survive this encounter and how the PCs treated them during the fight. If the PCs fought bravely to defend them or used healing magics to heal them, use 2-a to conclude this scene. If the PCs endangered them, hurt them with area attacks, or disregarded their safety, use 2-b.

Anyone investigating the tyrgs after the combat will find out that they are obviously sickened and hungry, with swollen glands constricting their throats and purple lesions on their bodies under their fur that look very similar to those on the plant life in the area.

Tier 1 (EL 4)

Tyrg (Krenshar) (6): CR 1 (1/2 currently due to sickness), Medium-size Magical Beast; HD 2d10, hp 11 each, Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +2 melee (1d8+4, bite) and +0 melee (1d4, claws); SA Scare; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1.

Str 11, Dex 14, Con 11 (currently 10 due to sickness), Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 3.

Skills: Hide +4, Jump, +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, *Feats:* Multiattack.

SA: *Scare (Ex or Su)*—As a standard action, a Tyrg can pull the skin back from its head, revealing the musculature and bony structures of its skull. This alone is usually sufficient to scare away foes (Treat as a Bluff check with a +3 bonus). Combining this scare ability with a loud screech produces an unsettling effect that works like scare cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer (save DC 12). If the save is successful, that opponent cannot be affected again by that tyrgs scare ability for one day. The shriek does not affect other tyrgs. Due to the sickness, these tyrgs cannot emit their shriek.

Farmers, Com2 (5): CR 1; Medium-sized humanoids; HD 2d4+7; hp 12 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks, +2 melee, (1d6+2, x2); SA none; SQ none, AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1.

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

Skills: Climb +2, Profession (farmer) +5, Ride +2, Swim +3; *Feats:* Great Fortitude, Toughness.

Equipment: Clubs, Leather Armor.

Tier 2 (EL 6)

Tyrg (Krenshar) (6): CR1 Medium-size Magical Beast; HD 2d10, hp 11 each, Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +2 melee (1d8+4, bite) and +0 melee (1d4, claws); SA Scare; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1.

Str 11, Dex 14, Con 11 (currently 10 due to sickness), Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 3.

Skills: Hide +4, Jump, +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, *Feats:* Multiattack.

SA: *Scare (Ex or Su)*—As a standard action, a Tyrg can pull the skin back from its head, revealing the musculature and bony structures of its skull. This alone is usually sufficient to scare away foes (Treat as a Bluff check with a +3 bonus). Combining this scare ability with a loud screech produces an unsettling effect that works like scare cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer (save DC 12). If the save is successful, that opponent cannot be affected again by that tyrgs scare ability for one day. The shriek does not affect other tyrgs.

Farmers, Com2 (5): use stats above.

Tier 3 (EL 7)

Tyrg (Krenshar) (8): CR1 Medium-size Magical Beast; HD 2d10, hp 11 each, Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +2 melee (1d8+4, bite) and +0 melee (1d4, claws); SA Scare; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1.

Str 11, Dex 14, Con 11 (currently 10 due to sickness), Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 3.

Skills: Hide +4, Jump, +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, **Feats:** Multiattack.

SA: Scare (Ex or Su)—As a standard action, a Tyrg can pull the skin back from its head, revealing the musculature and bony structures of its skull. This alone is usually sufficient to scare away foes (Treat as a Bluff check with a +3 bonus). Combining this scare ability with a loud screech produces an unsettling effect that works like scare cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer (save DC 12). If the save is successful, that opponent cannot be affected again by that tyrgs scare ability for one day. The shriek does not affect other tyrgs.

Farmers, Com2 (5): use stats above.

If no farmers survive this encounter at all, Aldon will shake his head regretfully and ask that the party come with him back to the roadhouse. There, he will inform the shopkeeper of what occurred on the road. He'll also agree to stay home until authorities from Hardwick proper can come to question him. Then, he'll head back home with the party (if they wish to come). This takes the PCs to Scene 3.

If the PC save the farmers read the following:

The bloodied survivors of the tyrg attack look woefully toward Aldon. "We was comin' to give you what for over your crops, Denwith, and now you've gone and saved our lives..."

With that, they turn back towards town and begin walking home. Aldon offers to take them back to his house to wash up and eat, but they shake their heads in shame and ignore his words.

Aldon sighs, but holds up a hand. "Their prides are hurt worse than they are, I'm afraid. Let's not push the issue. Come. I can at least offer you good folk a feast."

Unless PCs insist on aiding the farmers, aid that they accept silently before going on their way, move to Encounter 3.

If the PCs do not lift a finger to help the farmers, and they live, read the following:

What farmers remain pull themselves together and turn on the lot of you. "You all are no better than that cur Denwith! I'd not be surprised if his dark master had sent those tyrgs to stop us from doing what's right!"

With that, they brandish their weapons again. Even bloodied and battered, they seem determined to do what they came here for.

Run a second combat now, with the statistics from the previous tiers. Be sure to tell the players that the farmers are obviously fighting to subdue. These farmers are not here to lose their lives and will run if the PCs kill one of them. Otherwise, they fight to subdue and will run after rendering the entire party unconscious (if they can). They will not kill Denwith, but they will beat him to -3 hit points before fleeing the scene.

When this fight is over, either because the PCs have regained consciousness or defeated the farmers, you may move to Scene Three. Denwith will be visibly shaken and uncomfortable if the PCs killed any of the farmers, but he is a man of his word and he promised them hospitality.

Encounter 3: Lull in the Coming Storm

The Denwith home is a nice spacious two-story home, built in the local plantation style. It has a separate cart house and a full barn behind it. A new house rests beside the somewhat aging barn and past all of that, the fields begin.

Even from here, as you come down the hill towards the farm, you can make out the corn stalks and wide branches of peach trees. A thin fence, more a marker of territory than an effective barrier, runs along the sides of this expansive lot.

"Home at last." Aldon Denwith smiles. "Let's put the wagon away and tend to my horse. Then we'll dine. You've more than earned it."

Denwith seems much happier now that he is back on his land. Smiling and relaxed, he takes to the task of settling his cart and horse with the air of a happy man. Again, the genuine nature of these emotions can be sensed (Sense Motive, DC 20).

When finished, he walks the PCs from the cart house to the front door of his home. Once on the lands, those who think to check will no longer Detect Magic in the air. Now they will feel a faint aura (Abjuration) seemingly in the land itself. If asked about this, Denwith will express honest ignorance.

Eager to eat and be with his family after such a long day, Denwith will try to bring the party inside.

Once inside, Aldon wastes no time introducing you to his family. His wife, Nadia, is a pleasant looking woman in her thirties. She greets you warmly. "Thank you for bringing my husband home safe. I worry about him these days."

Next are his sons, who eyed you suspiciously as you entered. "This is Brennon and this is Danon," he says proudly. Both boys have the build of farmers, with Brennon's sixteen-year-old frame already supporting a strong set of shoulders. Danon, two years younger, isn't as large. He seems well on his way to it, however.

The last two to enter the room are twin girls, already approaching womanhood at the age of fifteen. They smile sweetly as their father introduces them to you. "There are my pride and

joy, good folk. Ilena and Kalia, say hello to our guests.”
 “Now”, he says. “What’s for supper?”

What follows is a hearty country dinner. This will likely be the best food the PCs have had in days. Rations will keep an adventurer alive, but they aren’t exactly fine cuisine. Nadia is an excellent cook, and makes sure to share credit for the meal with her daughters.

During the repast, the girls unabashedly stare at the guests. They especially look at any men in the party and non-humans of either of gender. They will flirt softly if given the chance, but their father usually quashes such behavior if he sees it. Play this up as much as you wish and as much as the players seem to want.

In contrast, the boys do not act very friendly at all. They are not outright rude, but they will not much acknowledge the PCs existence. At the first opportunity, they excuse themselves from the table and go to their rooms. Aldon apologizes for his boys’ behavior and assures the PCs that he’ll ‘have a talk with them’.

Brennon and Danon do not trust the PCs and aren’t sure how to cope with them. Once in their room, they discuss what they should do. Brennon thinks they should try and convince the party to leave come morning, but Danon (the more levelheaded of the two) talks him out of it. Instead, they decide to wait and watch.

The girls are being honestly friendly. They are also approaching marriageable age and they know it. They do not find any of the options for betrothal around Hardwick interesting and don’t really want to be separated. Thus, they are feeling rather helpless and the party provides a welcome distraction. However, flirtatious or not, they obey their parents and leave the PCs alone unless approached.

After dinner, Aldon calls the PCs into his den for a smoke and a chat. He gladly discusses his family, his land, and the leaf rot, but he doesn’t have any more answers than he did before.

The girls (and the boys, and his wife) are all listening in from other parts of the house if they can. Thus, pay close attention to what is said. If magic is ever mentioned, this will get the women’s attention. If the party mentions the magic they felt on Aldon’s land, the girls will panic and go to their mother for advice. This motion might cause a sound that succeeding at a Listen check (DC 15) could detect.

After this conversation, Aldon puts the characters up for the night and thanks them again for the escort home. If they volunteer to look around his farm, he tells them that he will see them in the morning for breakfast before he shows them around the land. Otherwise, he tells them that he’ll give them breakfast before they head out.

At around midnight, the girls try to slip outside for their full moon ritual. An alert guard amongst the PCs (assuming they set one) will likely catch them leaving. If the girls are followed, run Encounter 5. Otherwise, let the PCs rest, wake up refreshed, enjoy a good breakfast, and run Encounter 6. If the party decides not to stay at the Denwith farm for any reason or otherwise get

off the main thread of the plot, run Encounter 8.

Notes about further encounters: Encounters 4 and 5 can be run in any order or not at all. Encounter 4 should be run if the characters ever follow the girls during the next three nights. Encounter 5 is essentially the investigation the party can do on Denwith’s lands. Both scenes may need to be paraphrased to account for the PCs actions.

Encounter 6 can occur for a number of reasons. If the PCs gain the girls’ trust, they may take them to see their mother. If they can get into Nadia’s confidence, she will approach them herself. Encounter 6 will *not* occur if the PCs make a nuisance or threat of themselves. If they do, they will have to solve the mystery of the leaf rot without Nadia or the girls’ aid.

Encounter 7 is only run if for any reason the PCs do not stay with the Denwiths and gain the clues to the *Blightstone’s* location from them. The only thing one can predict about PCs is that there is no predicting PCs. Thus, Encounter 7 exists primarily as damage control. If the PCs have lost their chances for clues through belligerent out-of-character or abusive play, do *not* give them Encounter 7 to bail them out. This scene only exists to get the game back on track if the PCs stray from the main plot.

Encounter 4: Moonlight Zephyrs

Remember that this only happens if the party follows the girls out of the house and remains undetected doing so. If they have previously panicked the twins by mentioning magic around the farm, the girls are on alert and will get Listen/Spot Checks. Otherwise, they are too caught up in the ritual and will not see the PCs.

It is also possible that one or more of the party have been able to gain the girls’ trust. If this is the case, they might invite the PCs to watch this rite. If that is the case, be sure to alter the description accordingly.

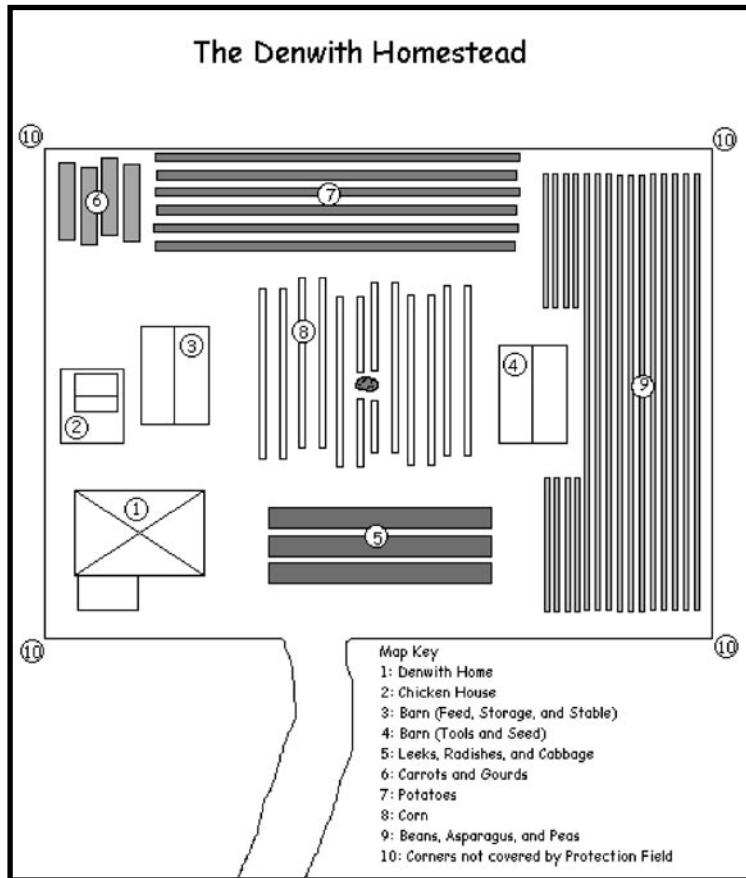
One right behind the other, the two girls creep out into the night. They move cautiously, watch around themselves for the slightest sign of movement. When they seem satisfied that they are alone, Ilena and Kalia move away from their home and quietly into the cornfield.

Following them proves difficult as the walls of leafy stalks rustle from the slightest touch. Luckily, they are making enough noise of their own to mask your passage.

Creeping along behind them, you slip past several small clearings where large stones make the soil unusable. Suddenly, as you pass another of these rocks, you realize you are no longer alone.

Brennon and Danon often come out to watch their sisters do ritual. While they do not entirely understand what the girls are doing, they trust them and mostly watch because they find it fascinating.

This night, however, they are out for another reason. They



expected the strangers (the PCs) to come out after their sisters, so they came out and hid themselves near where they knew the girls would be.

They intend to scare the party away, perhaps even convince them to leave. As such, Brennon will come across as threatening while Danon acts as quiet reinforcement.

Farmer Denwith's sons slip down off the rock and approach you. The eldest, Brennon, has a wood axe in hand. "You're guests here, and guests don't go creeping around at night. High tail yourselves back inside 'fore somebody gets hurt." He is speaking quietly, as if not wanting to alarm his sisters.

Behind him, Danon drops a smooth river stone into his sling and says nothing.

Brennon's speaking quietly, to keep from alerting his sisters. If the girls catch them out here, they will be furious. The ritual is a very private thing to them, as they are to their mother. Brennon and Danon do not want to get in trouble for being out here. PCs can play on that to get the boys to back off. Diplomacy (DC 15) could also work, if the role-playing behind it is good and convincing enough.

Neither boy really wants to fight, but they feel themselves protectors of both their sisters and their land. If the PCs get violent, they have no compunctions about fighting back. If things

go too badly, Danon will begin screaming for his parents. Adjudicate that mess as you see fit.

All Tiers (EL 1)

Brennon Denwith, human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium-sized Humanoid; CL 1; HD 1d4+5; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks +2 melee (1d6+2 [crit. x3], halfspear); AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0.

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

Skills: Climb +2, Profession (farmer) +2, Ride +2, Swim +4; **Feats:** Toughness, Weapon Focus (unarmed).

Equipment: halfspear, sling with 20 bullets.

Danon Denwith, human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium-sized Humanoid; CL 1; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks -1 melee (1d6-1 x3) halfspear; AL LG; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +2.

Str 9, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +2, Profession (farmer) +2, Ride +3, Swim +3; **Feats:** Dodge, Iron Will.

Equipment: halfspear, sling with 20 bullets.

Provided the party can keep things calm, the boys may even decide to trust them (Bluff or good honest role-playing would help greatly, as will genuine concern for their family). If the situation stays quiet, the PCs will be able to watch the girls as they perform their full moon ritual. [If the girls are alerted by raised voices or sounds of a struggle, they will race back to the house as fast as they can. If a fight is going on, they will awaken their parents.]

Note: The women of the Denwith household, while considered adepts, use the spell list for the Witch variant spellcaster, as per page 26 of the *Dungeon Master's Guides*.

Ilena Denwith, human Adpr (witch): CR 1/2; Medium-sized Humanoid; CL 1; HD 1d6; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks -1 melee (1d4-1 [crit. 19-20], dagger) dagger; AL LG; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3.

Str 9, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills: Climb +2, Hide +2, Profession (farmer) +2, Spellcraft +5; **Feats:** Spell Focus (Abjuration), Skill Focus (spellcraft)

Equipment: dagger

Spells Prepared (3/2; Spell DC = 11 + spell level): 0-lvl—*dancing lights, daze, detect poison*; 1st-lvl—*cause fear, sleep*

Kalia Denwith, human Adpr (witch): CR 1/2; Medium-sized Humanoid; CL 3; HD 1d6+1; hp 6; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks -1 melee (1d4-1 [crit. 19-20], dagger); AL LG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3.

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills: Climb +2, Hide +2, Profession (farmer) +2, Swim +4; **Feats:** Dodge, Spell Focus (Abjuration).

Equipment: dagger.

Spells Prepared (3/2; Spell DC = 11 + spell level): 0-lvl—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, light*; 1st-lvl—*cure light wounds, silent image*.

Once more, the girls pass a large stone in the field. This time, they stop and move around it, one to either side. Ilena draws a tallow candle from her nightclothes and places it in a small tin holder.

Kalia reaches out, takes the candle and sets it in the center of the stone. Whispering a brief prayers to the 'Guardian of the South Gate', she fixes the wick of the candle with an unflinching gaze. With a bright flash, the candle lights.

Anyone who succeed at a Knowledge (religion) (DC 15) or Knowledge (arcana) (DC 20) can identify the phrase "Guardian of the South Gate" as being one of the ritual names for the element of fire. Druids have a +2 insight bonus to this roll.

One by one, the girls take small tools and items from their clothes and set them up on and around the stone. When they are done, a small dish, a pottery goblet, a bowl of salt, and several other things form a circle between them.

The dish, a circular silver plate, rests in the center of this ring. Kalia has placed it to reflect the moon, high over head. Once it does, Ilena begins sprinkling salt around the clearing. Her sister fills the goblet from a waterskin.

"Let's begin," she tells Ilena. "We have to do this perfectly. There's no room any more for mistakes."

Ilena agrees with a nod. "I know. It's getting harder to keep back the darkness." A quick nod is the only answer she gets.

Then, the two girls slip off their shoes and walk three times around the stone. When they stop, they smile to each other, gaze up at the moon, and begin to chant.

Again, succeeding at a Knowledge (religion) (DC 15) or Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20) with druids getting a +2 insight bonus to the roll will reveal the elemental nature of this ritual. Detect Evil will reveal nothing out of the ordinary. Detect Magic will show that a spell is being worked of the Abjuration school.

The ritual takes ten minutes and is successful if not disturbed. PCs watching will feel a strange sense of peace and safety wash over them. The sensation is very similar to being the target of a *protection from evil* spell (succeeding at a Spellcraft check DC 10 will realize this).

Once finished, the girls will pack up and wearily return home. If approached after the rite, they will tiredly try to plead ignorant of any knowledge of the ritual or what they were doing. If confronted, they will admit to being witches but beg the PCs not to tell their father. He doesn't know, and they are afraid of how he would react if he knew.

If the PCs agree or hesitate before promising not to tell, the girls will offer to wake their mother and let them talk to her.

"She's much stronger in the gift than we are, and she might be able to help you more. Please, say you won't tell... Please?"

This offer is of more help than the PCs can imagine, and it behooves them to agree. Still, the players must decide for themselves. If the boys are with them, they stick up for their sisters, also asking the party to remain quiet. Brennon will even threaten to 'thrash' loudmouths if he has to, but Danon will calm him down.

If the PCs insist on telling Aldon, they can certainly do so. The girls and their mother will not deny what is said, but if the party was expecting him to be angry, they are in for disappointment. Aldon loves his family very much and while he is a simple man, he is also not a judgmental one. While there will be many nights of family discussion about his wife's 'religion', he will not react badly at all.

If the party has been offered the chance to speak with Nadia, move to Encounter 6. If not, they may wish to confront her any way. That will also prompt a paraphrased Encounter 6.

If, however, the party would like to search the land as Aldon Denwith suggested, run Scene Two.

Encounter 5: A Seeking Storm

The action of this scene is mostly up to the players. As such, there is no set boxed text. Denwith's land is a simple square shaped plot, mostly divided into the home, the barn, the cart house and roped off orchard next to it, and the crops. Things that can be found by searching are summarized below:

- There is a large stone in the cornfield that dominates the center of Denwith's land. This stone has wax smudges, salt residue, and is surrounded by footprints. A Tracking (Wilderness Lore or Search) check at DC 5 will determine that the feet that made the tracks are likely human and a check at DC 10 will discern that they belong to someone young and female.
- Detection of Magic anywhere on the property will detect a very faint Abjuration magic but will not reveal a source or direction.
- Aldon's crops are indeed free of any taint or trace of the 'leaf rot'. In fact, they seem unusually full and healthy. Not unnaturally so, but the crops growing here are about as fine as nature allows. (Wilderness Lore [DC 15] or Knowledge [Nature] [DC 10])
- Not all of the good farmer's lands are so protected. At each of the corners of his field, the leaf rot has begun to encroach. If careful examination is made (Search [DC 15] or Knowledge: Nature [DC 10]), the rot seems to stop in an arc around the entire area of his property. *This is because the spell that the twins cast every full moon is a circular ward and thus can not protect the corners of his land. Even they do not know this.*

- A Spellcraft (DC 15) or Knowledge (arcana) (DC 10) check will reveal that the center of the apparent “circle of protection” is the stone Ilena and Kalia use as a focus for their rituals.
- Within the circle (i.e. on Denwith’s lands), the wind does not sense as magical. Once outside the boundaries of his farm or in the unprotected corners, the usual magic and evil can be sensed. Unfortunately, there is still no sense of direction.

Little more can be gained through a search of the farm. Denwith is truly an innocent in all this, and while he will offer any aid he can to the PCs, he can not be much help in finding the source of the plague.

If the players seem interested, be sure to describe various aspects of farm life, from the old hay in the loft of Aldon’s barn to the weary appearance of his carthorse (and part-time work engine) Meerie.

When the players are finished with the search, evaluate their behavior. If they have been courteous, shown concern, and have not been rude to anyone on the farm, Nadia will decide to trust them. (She certainly will do so if they have been nice to her daughters and/or did not hurt her sons when they brashly confronted the party.)

Have one of the girls come to a PC she fancies (Male with a Charisma bonus (Charisma of 12+) or demihuman of either gender, GM’s call) and ask them to bring the party to see her mother. Then run Scene Three when the PCs do so.

Encounter 6: Visions of Vile Skies

One way or another, the PCs should get around to speaking with Nadia. Her attitude may be cordial or hostile, kind or harsh, depending on how they have approached her. Either way, she knows that her daughters’ humble talents can not hold off the darkness in the land forever. Thus, she must trust the PCs with her visions.

The text below assumes that Nadia has accepted the PCs as trustworthy and noble. If this is not the case, be sure to paraphrase accordingly.

Nadia Denwith, human Adp6 (witch): CR 5; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 6d6; hp 23; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks +2 melee (1d4 [crit. 19-20], dagger); AL LG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +6.

Str 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills: Craft (cooking) +6, Healing +3 **Profession** (farmer) +2, **Profession** (Herbalist) +3, Ride +3, Scry +8, Swim +4; **Feats:** Skill Focus (Scry); Spell Focus (Divination); Toughness, Skill focus (Heal).

Equipment: dagger.

Spells (3/2+1/1+1): 0-lvl—*detect magic, detect poison, read magic*; 1st-lvl—*comprehend languages, cure light wounds, silent image*; 2nd-

lvl—*detect thoughts, enthrall*; 3rd-lvl—*clairvoyance*.

Aldon’s wife bids you enter the study with her. Seated in her husband’s chair, she lifts a mug of water to her lips. Then, gesturing for you to sit, she speaks in a low tone.

“My daughters tell me you know of our family secret.” She smiles faintly, a knowing gleam in her eye. “I think you would be surprised how many Yeoman families share this...legacy.”

Be sure to allow PCs time and opportunity to speak with Nadia. She will answer questions, but tries to remain on the topic at hand: her vision of the *blightstone*. Still, many players will want to role-play through this scene. Let them.

“My daughters share the gift of sight, but it will be years before it grown in them as strong as it has become in me. Before the leaf rot even began, I could sense its coming. In dreams, I could see its emerald eye opening... shedding its evil gaze over us all.”

Not that she knows it, but she is referring to the single rift being opened in the shell around the *blightstone* and the green light that now shines out of it.

Resting for a moment, she turns to face you again. “The blight that threatens this land will grow if it is not blinded once more. If the eye is not shut, it will watch as everything around it withers to dust. This too, I have seen.”

Then, she adds. “But I have also seen brave souls move against the eye of rot and cast it back into darkness. Perhaps that is the future that will be. I pray that it is. I pray you are ones to do it.”

In this case, she has had two conflicting dreams. In one, the *blightstone* is not stopped and its power ruins the fertile lands of the Yeomanry heartland for years to come. In the other, people reseal the hole in the protective cover surrounding the *blightstone* and cancel out its power before it can do lasting harm.

Which dream comes to pass is a matter for the PCs to decide.

“I have one last bit of news, one more thing I can share from my dreams. I have seen the eye and I have seen its lair. I can describe both to you.” As she speaks, she murmurs an incantation and slips into a deep trance.

A successful Spellcraft check (DC 23) will recognize the incantation as a witch’s variant of *clairvoyance*.

Her daughters move to either side of her, obviously concerned for her safety. She goes limp for a moment, resting heavily on the girls, then begins to speak in a soft whisper.

“Seek the rent in the earth, the ancient wound. Travel its eastern side to a newer scar. Here will you find the Blightstone you seek. Long in the ground, it taints now the air through its

open eye. While the green light shines, it shines only upon death.”

Then, as suddenly as she entered the trance, she comes out of it. Ilena lifts the water to her mother's lips and waits until she has drunk her fill. Then, Nadia looks you at you once more.

“I hope this vision aids you. Speed to the place I described, if you know it, and close the eye. It is our only chance... and yours.”

If pressed for more, Nadia will recall a feeling of traveling north and west in her dreams of the ‘eye’. That is all the aid she can give.

It should be enough. A successful Knowledge (Local) (DC 5) will bring to mind the Escarpment, a major feature of this area of the Yeomanry. Hardwick is southeast of the Escarpment and less than a day's ride away. The PCs path should be clear to them.

If it isn't, you may wish to have Aldon (or alternately, Danon, especially if the boys have been antagonistic up to this point) recognize the ‘rent’ reference as something his mother-in-law once called the Escarpment.

Under no circumstances will the Denwiths allow their children to go with the PCs. Brennon will proclaim loudly that he isn't afraid, but the parents' decision is final. If the PCs press the point, they will meet an impenetrable wall of parental resistance. The children are well behaved enough to accept the decision, regardless of desire to go.

In any case, the PCs should now be on their way to the climax of the adventure, Encounter 8.

Encounter 7: Errant Breezes

Should the party leave the Denwiths without the information on the origin of the blight, or otherwise be sidetracked off the main line of the adventure. Use this encounter to help them back on the trail of the evil besetting the area.

Up ahead, you can see a dark shape pulling itself haltingly across the grass. As you look closer, you can see that it is a tyrg—but one that appears to be critically wounded.

The PCs are free to slay the tyrg from a distance or to simply approach it carefully. They tyrg will snap harmlessly at the group a couple times if they come within 10 feet, but the effort will cause it to expire.

The dead creature has horrible raking wounds down its flanks and shoulders. It looks like these are the wounds that actually killed it, although you can see ugly purple lesions on its cruelly parted flesh. It's obviously been dragging itself across the wet ground for miles as its lifeblood seeped out.

This tyrg was desperate enough to tangle with one of the undead

servitors of the *blightstone*. It was badly wounded but survived long enough to try to follow its pack-mates.

The tyrg has left an obvious and bloody trail all the way back to the *blightstone*'s residence near the Escarpment - tracking it back requires a Wilderness Lore check (for those with the Tracking feat) or a Search check (for those without) at DC 10.

Encounter 8: Emerald Maelstrom

You can describe the ride to the site of the *Blightstone* as you wish, being sure to note the dying grasses, the dry and cracked ground, and general feel of malaise in the air. As they grow near, searching characters might (DC 15) find some small dead herbivores, rabbits or the like, skin covered in purple lesions, throats swelled shut, and lungs clogged with pus. An hour before they PCs reach the excavation, a vicious storm begins.

If checked for, both the magic and the evil in the air is much stronger here and will continue to build until the PCs reach the Cantlegrey dig site.

There is a very dangerous fight when the PCs reach the *Blightstone*; one the PCs may not be able to win on their own. There are several options to help them live through the battle, though you should not help them if they are not willing to try an intelligent approach to the situation. If the players insist on standing and fighting, let the dice fall where they may.

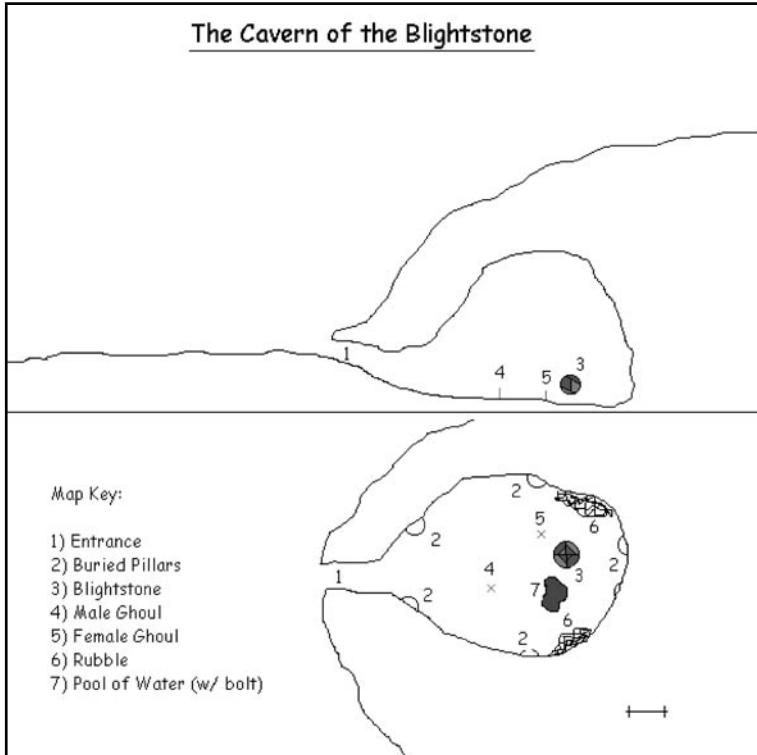
Make a Listen and Spot check for the undead to detect the party coming. If they sense the PCs they will use their Hide and Move Silently skills to conceal themselves behind the pillars at location 2 on the map and get the jump on the PCs once they've fully entered the chamber.

Possible ways to defeat the *blightstone*:

- Destroying the artifact's two undead slaves is enough to end its immediate combat threat. Only while it has an existing slave can the *blightstone* fire its magical attack. Of course, the vile thing is still capable of generating its ‘leaf rot’ unless the hole in its shell is covered.
- If the PCs are having a hard time with the undead, you can opt to have the undead creatures get destroyed immediately when the ‘eye’ of the *blightstone* is covered.
- As seen in the text of Scene One, the area around the *blightstone* is in a rainstorm. While the stone itself is still under the canopy of its ancient vault, there a great deal of mud on hand for anyone to who thinks to throw it at the artifact. Hitting the ‘eye’ is the same as firing at a small, undefended object (AC 15) and for these purposes, a handful of mud is considered a simple weapon.

Any feasible plan to cover the ‘eye’ should be given a chance of working. If in doubt about a plan, err on the side of the players and let them try it. Anything that adds to the drama and tension of this scene is a good thing.

The Cavern of the Blightstone



There is a pair of pillars on either side of the opening to the *blightstone's* lair. If destroyed by someone with the proper lore (a dwarf, perhaps), it would nearly collapse the rift and neutralize the artifact. This would of course forfeit any treasure in the cave, but the threat would be dealt with.

In the distance, you see a disturbance in the roll of the land. Several coils of rope, swaying as the storm drives down on you in sheets of rain, seem to mark off a section of ground.

Drawing closer, you can see an excavation. A shovel juts from a mound of muddy earth at the edge of a large hole. A dozen feet wide and twice that deep, the opening seems to enter the ground at an angle.

On either side of the hole, large pieces of rock shore up the simple mine. But these stone spars have not been added after the fact. Rather, they have been unearthed by the digging here. The remains of ancient columns, they line the path into the earth.

Beyond, in the hole, you see a greenish glow. As you close, it becomes clear that there is a stiff wind blowing out from the mouth of the hole, rushing out and up into the air and blasting the falling rain aside. You can smell its foulness. What remains of the ground vegetation here is only clumps of purple goo, almost indistinguishable from the surrounding mud.

Once the party goes in, continue the description.

Once inside the mouth of the pit, you can see the rest of the hole. It goes for forty or fifty feet, rounding out into a circular chamber

lined in soil and rock. Barely exposed pillars line the walls, similar to those above.

The opening to the 'vault' is also lined on either side by stone, worked in the shape of pillars. These massive stone menhirs have the pits and furrows of great age across their ancient faces.

In the center of the open chamber sits a stone plinth set with an iron sconce four feet wide. Hovering over the sconce is a similarly sized sphere completely covered in a thick mortar.

Incompletely covered would be more accurate, as a single crack several inches long has been chipped in the shell, revealing a massive, gleaming emerald beneath. The green glow is coming from it... You can feel the pressure of the wind emitting from the stone. A fine trail of dust comes from the edges of the cracked casing and quickly disperses in the rush.

If the undead Hide successfully, they will attack as near the back of the party as possible, cutting off retreat. They will combine their attacks on single opponents, attempting to disable them as quickly as possible. Any PC approaching the *Blightstone* or otherwise attacking it or tampering with it will be targeted by these creatures. Read the following when the party becomes aware of the undead:

As you take this sight in, the shadows dance once more. This time, you can see what is casting them. Two figures come into view in the chamber. Both are human, or at least were, but their desiccated and purple-splotched features are clearly no longer living. Their eyes flash a pustulent green and they rush to attack.

Kalo Cantlegrey and his wife Mithree are both utterly under the power of the *blightstone*. As undead, they are powerful creatures devoted to the its protection. They will not retreat, nor will they pursue opponents out of the tunnel. If the PCs pull back out of the dig site, the undead will let them go.

Note that the *blightstone* completely prevents the undead from being turned while in the cavern, and the undead regenerate 1 hit point per round as long as the light from the *blightstone* falls upon them. They will regenerate in this manner whether they are 'dead' or not, and thus will keep coming back to unlife unless the *blightstone* is covered, or their bodies are covered or burned or removed from the cavern.

Try to make it clear that this effect appears to be coming from the *blightstone*—describe the undeads' wounds coming together as the green light plays across them.

Tier 1 (EL 3)

Ghoul (2): CR 1; Medium-sized Undead; HD 2d12; hp 16 (each); Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atks Bite, +3 melee, 1d6+1 and paralysis; 2 claws, +0 melee, 1d3 and paralysis; SA paralysis, create spawn; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5.

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

Skills: Climb +6, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Intuit Direction

+3, Jump +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +7; *Feats*: Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA: *paralysis* (Ex)—Those hit by a ghoulish bite or claw attack must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 14) or be paralyzed for 1d6+2 minutes. Elves are immune to this paralysis.

Tier 2 (EL 5)

Ghast (2): CR 3; Medium-sized Undead; HD 4d12; hp 31 (each); Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural); Atks Bite, +4 melee, 1d8+1 and paralysis; 2 claws, +1 melee, 1d4 and paralysis; SA stench, paralysis, create spawn; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +6.

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

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

SA: *Paralysis* (Ex)—those hit by a ghost's bite or claw attack must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15) or be paralyzed for 1d6+4 minutes. *Stench* (Ex)—Those within 10 feet of a ghost must pass a Fortitude check (DC 15) or be wracked with nausea, suffering a –2 circumstance penalty to all attacks, saves, and skill checks for 1d6+4 minutes.

Tier 3 (EL 7)

Wights (2): CR 5; Medium Undead; HD 6d12, hp 50 (each); Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); Atks +4 melee (1d4+1 plus energy drain, slam); SA Energy drain, create spawn; SQ Undead; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +6.

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

Skills: Climb +5, Hide +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +16, Search +7, Spot +8; *Feats*: Blind-Fight.

SA: *Energy Drain* (Su)—Living creatures hit by a wight's slam attack receive one negative level. The Fortitude save to remove the negative level has a DC of 14. *Create Spawn* (Su)—Any humanoid slain by a wight becomes a wight in 1d4 rounds. Spawn are under the command of the *blightstone* and remain enslaved until it is covered. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

During combat, the *blightstone* lets the undead fight unaided. It only uses its *flame arrow* power on people who get within 10 feet of it, and then only every other round. (In Tier 2, this power affects anyone coming within 15 feet. In Tier 3, the *blightstone* can fire a Flame Arrow each round at anyone within 20 feet.)

Remember that the *blightstone* loses all powers (including its ability to project Flame Arrows) if it ceases making contact with the air.

If the PCs defeat the *blightstone*, continue with the scene below. It is perfectly permissible for the party to retreat, heal, and reenter the dig as often as need be. The artifact isn't going anywhere and its guardians won't pursue those who flee.

With a dying flash of power, the blightstone shudders and goes dormant. With the green light gone, the last of the stagnant air blasts past you and up out of the hole.

The wind subsides, and the foul feel to the air gives way to the humidity of the storm outside.

All that remains now is to clean up, heal, and decide what is to become of this ancient abomination.

On the plus side, there is a fair amount of treasure to be found in the vault of the blightstone. The Cantlegreys were not poor and there were a few things in the vault when they discovered it.

Lying here, discarded by the undead Cantlegreys, are two pouches (one with 50 gold, 20 silver, and 4 copper; the other with 73 gold, 9 silver, and 12 copper), two masterwork daggers (a matched set, bought by the Cantlegreys as wedding presents to each other), and an old bracelet inset with a fine 100 gp emerald (found here on site and left alone). Also found is a ruined ring with the symbol of the Dustdigger's College.

In addition, Kalo's pack is here. Waterlogged but otherwise undisturbed, it has a few useful items left in it. A bullseye lantern, one pint of oil, a folding shovel, and a thirty-foot waxed cord in a waterproof box. The cord has inches, feet, and yards marked on it. In a small oilskin pouch is the pair's membership papers identifying them as members of the Dustdigger's College and their permit to be conducting an excavation at this location.

When the party has had time to search and rest, they must decide what to do about the *blightstone*. Whatever solution they choose will have wide reaching consequences, so they need to consider the matter carefully.

If the PCs notify the Dustdiggers, they will send out a team accompanied by a squad of militia to cordon off the area. If they notify the militia or other authorities, they will in turn notify the Dustdiggers who will respond as above. If the PCs do not do anything, but return to the Denwith farm and tell them about their experience, Aldon will certainly notify the authorities, realizing that such a dangerous artifact should not go unreported.

The PCs are free to do anything else they see fit with the *blightstone* site. Let them consider this for as long as they like. Inform the players that their precautions and arrangements (assuming they decide to make any) have been noted and proceed to the Experience Point and Treasure Summaries after thanking the players for participating.

If the Dustdiggers are alerted, they will be very interested in seeing the site (they know where it is, the Cantlegrey's dig was registered with the College) and in speaking with the characters. Characters cooperating with the Dustdiggers will each gain an influence point cert with the Dustdigger's College. After deliberation, they decide to fill in the pit and leave the stone lie. They also take care of the bodies of their fallen comrades, desiring to bury them in blessed ground.

They allow the PCs to keep the Cantlegrey's money and gear, although they request to keep the gold bracelet if they are shown it, as it might be a clue to the origin of this threat. They are

intractable on this point, and legally they are entitled to anything recovered from such a dig site. They also recommend that the paired daggers be buried with the dead couple because of their strong emotional attachment. This is only a request, but if it is denied any PC doing so will not receive the Dustdigger influence point cert for their churlish behavior. At the DM's discretion, allowance might be made for a married PC couple that wishes to keep the items, and such a couple can retain the daggers without losing their cert, but those simply looking on the items as booty will be seen as despicable by the Dustdigger delegation. If they freely allow the dead lovers to retain their keepsakes, the Dustdiggers will be favorably impressed — give each player who went along with this course of action an additional influence point cert.

Do not just automatically hand out these certs—players who were uncooperative with the Dustdiggers in general will not get any, nor will those who are petty about keeping the daggers or bracelet. Generally cooperative players should get one, and only those characters who are really seen by the Dustdiggers as good people, people they would want to work with personally in the future, should get two.

Thank the players for participating and proceed to the Experience Point and Treasure summaries.

Experience Point Summary

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

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

Encounter 1

Stopping Ivel and Gunnar from assaulting Aldon 50 xp

and

Stopping the assault without violence 25 xp

Encounter 2

Defeating the Tyrg 75 xp

and

Per farmer saved from the Tyrg 10 xp

Encounter 6

Gaining Nadia's trust 25 xp

Encounter 8

Defeating the undead 150 xp

Covering the *blightstone* 75 xp

Total experience for objectives 450 xp

Discretionary roleplaying award 0-45 xp

Total possible experience 495 xp

Treasure Summary

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

The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the characters cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.

Animals, followers, monsters, henchmen, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay

for the player characters to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.

Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some player characters. Items which are worth more than 250 gp that are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and all magical items, will be discovered in the possession of the character by one means or another. The character must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. In addition, the PC caught receives campaign-decided penalties for being known as a thief. For other stolen items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment and the circumstances within the game to determine whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

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

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

Encounter 8

- Pouch with 50 gp, 20 sp, and 4 cp.
- Pouch with 73 gp, 9 sp, and 12 cp.
- Masterwork daggers (302 gp each, 1 lb. each, steel, common); This finely crafted dagger is razor sharp and decorated with intricate etchings. The word "Forever" in Suloise is engraved on the blade. The hilt is made of silver and shaped like the right half of a filigree heart. The craftsmanship is quite intricate. It is one of a matched pair. This item was taken from an undead lair near the Escarpment.
- Masterwork daggers (302 gp, 1 lb. each, steel, common); This finely crafted dagger is razor sharp and decorated with intricate etchings. The word "Together" in Suloise is engraved on the blade. The hilt is made of silver and shaped like the right half of a filigree heart. The craftsmanship is quite intricate. It is one of a matched pair. This item was taken from an undead lair near the Escarpment.
- Gold bracelet set with an emerald (150 gp, 1 lb. each, gold set with a 100 gp emerald, common).

Conclusion

- Influence Point with Dustdigger College: This point will be useful in future encounters with Yeoman Dustdiggers, whose college is headquartered in Loftwick. They remember what your character did, and may be willing to help you in the future. This influence also can be useful should you desire membership in the Dustdigger College for yourself at some point.

DM's Handout One: The Blightstone

The Blightstone is an artifact of ancient Flan make, crafted by the dread lich Vecna during the depredations of his horrible ancient empire, and more recently used by the Suel tyrant and archmage Asberdies. A weapon capable of destruction on an unimaginable scale, the blightstone is a large (2 foot diameter) green emerald that glows with a sickly internal light. If gazed into, this light can be seen coming from what appears to be a massive humanoid skull blazing with pale fire. The eyesockets of the skull have the ghostly images of locust swarms within them.

Currently, the blightstone is encased almost completely in a covering of mud and rock. This limits its powers severely. See below for details.

Powers:

The blightstone always hovers three feet off the ground. This distance never varies and is not affected by magic of less than divine power. The blightstone can be transported by vehicle, but only if it is securely lashed and pulled by a combined strength of no less than 30. Otherwise, it is immobile.

Currently, the powers of the blightstone are limited to the hovering property and the two listed below. Its other powers are not available to it, but might be regained if the covering on it were removed and the artifact given time to recover. If left uncontained for one full turn of the seasons, the blightstone would likely achieve full power again. Such an eventuality is not covered in this adventure.

The blightstone generates a field that affects plant life. This 'plague' takes the form of a leaf rot that destroys all unshielded plant life within its area of influence. This destruction weeks, the affected vegetation slowly withering all the while.

The blightstone has the ability to defend itself by generating a blast of energy similar in all respects to the "fiery bolt" manifestation of the Flame Arrow spell. This blast inflicts 4d6 points of fire damage (Reflex save at DC10 for half damage) if it succeeds with a ranged touch attack at a +10 attack bonus. In its weakened state, the blightstone can only fire one such blast every other round at a single target and its range is sharply limited. In addition, if the blightstone kills a living humanoid being of less than huge size with this power, it can automatically transform them into an undead (of equal size) under its control in 1d4 rounds. Anyone killed by these undead also become undead under the artifact's command after his or her body has lain in its baleful verdant radiance for a day. The blightstone can control up to 77 undead this way. The form of undead is usually a zombie, ghoul, ghastr, or wight. If any of these undead are within line of sight of the blightstone, they are immune to turning. Furthermore, as long as the light of the blightstone shines upon its undead servitors, they regenerate 1 hit point per round.

The Blightstone's full powers and means of destruction are unknown. At the present time, knowledge of the Blightstone has been lost and will require exhaustive research to recover.

The Blightstone has an AC of 20, a hardness of 20, and 960 hit points. Its caster level is 20th. It radiates a strong aura of Neutral Evil.