

VER6-01

# The Discontent of our Winter

A One-Round D&D® Living Greyhawk™

Verbobonc Regional Adventure

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A missing food shipment, a noble ambition, and strife in the Viscounty lead to a chilly reception in the town of Ketter's Hearth. A thief is in custody, but is he responsible for the crime? That's what you've been sent to discover. This is a one-round Verbobonc regional adventure for PC levels 1-8 (APL 2-6). Recommended for members of the Mounted Borderers, The Family, and the Verbobonc Town Project (Ketter's Hearth)

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For questions specific to this document and your region, visit the Verbobonc website at [www.verbobonc.net](http://www.verbobonc.net) and e-mail your triad point of contact at [poc@verbobonc.net](mailto:poc@verbobonc.net). For LIVING GREYHAWK campaign questions email [rpgahq@wizards.com](mailto:rpgahq@wizards.com)

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## PLAYERS READ NO FARTHER

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

## PREPARING FOR PLAY

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*.

Throughout this adventure, text in ***bold italics*** provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on running the adventure. Information on nonplayer PCs (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in Appendix 1.

Along with this adventure you'll find a RPGA Table Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play. You'll also find a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure Record (AR).

## LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own PCs to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportionate to the modified average PC level of the PCs participating in the adventure. To determine this modified Average Party Level (APL) follow the steps below:

1. Determine the PC level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts) or the warhorse of a PC with the Mounted Combat feat, use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum of step one. Add each PC's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.
3. Sum the results of step 1 and 2, and divide by the number of PCs playing in the adventure. Round up to the nearest whole number.
4. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure

begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC can gain at the end of the adventure. If a player PC is three PC levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that PC receives only one-half of the experience points and gold for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level PCs to reach the objectives.

Furthermore, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure.

LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1<sup>st</sup>-level PCs may find the challenge of an APL 2 adventure difficult. Suggest the following to these groups to help increase their chances of success:

1. Enlist a sixth player.
2. Advise PCs to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them.

## Time Units and Upkeep

This is a standard one-round Regional adventure, set in Verbobonc. PCs native to Verbobonc pay one Time Unit per round, all others pay two Time Units per round. Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12gp per round. Rich Upkeep costs 50gp per round. Luxury Upkeep costs 100gp per round.

### Verbobonc Town Project

Portions of this adventure take place in the town of **Ketter's Hearth**, which is a part of the Verbobonc Town Project. PCs with citizen certificates for this town receive the benefits listed on that certificate.

For more background and information on Ketter's Hearth, the Dungeon Master (DM) is encouraged to visit the Ketter's Hearth Yahoo discussion group:

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/kettershearth>

This discussion group has additional resources that may prove helpful in detailing the portions of the town not covered by this adventure. Additionally, the DM is encouraged to review the entry for Ketter's Hearth in the *Walker's Guide to Verbobonc*.

### Areas of Influence

This adventure allows the following influence for purposes of the Verbobonc Influence document.

- No regional influence

Remind players at the start of this adventure that they may use regional influence to obtain bonuses to Charisma based skills. This will prove important in certain encounters which rely on those types of skills.

### Environmental Conditions

Substantial portions of this adventure take place under prolonged freezing and snowstorm conditions. The DM is strongly encouraged to review the chapters in the DMG on environmental effects. For ease of reference, selections of this information have been reprinted in **Appendix Four**.

### Before You Begin

Please review the following items before play begins.

- **Free Adventure Lifestyle [Standard]:** PCs that receive **Player Handout #1** receive free Standard lifestyle for the duration of this adventure.
- **Thanks of a Mysterious Stranger** (from **VERIntro6-01: Paper Chase**) – see the Reward Notes section at the end of this adventure for more information.
- **The Family:** PCs that are members of the Family receive 500 wheatsheaves (gold pieces) from the Family immediately prior to the start of this adventure. This money may be used for expenses and other needs. Any unspent gold or any item purchased with the money is returned to the Family at the end of the adventure.
- **Mounted Borderers:** PCs that are members of the Mounted Borderers receive two (2) *potions of cure light wounds* and one (1) *potion of bull's strength* from the Borderer commander. They must be returned at the end of the adventure if they are not used.
- **Metaorganizational Orders:** PCs that are members of the Mounted Borderers and The Family receive special orders (in the form of **Player Handouts #2 and #3**, respectively) which cover instructions to the PC. PCs receiving orders from their metaorg are not to reveal those orders to anyone not a member of the metaorg.

## Adventure Background

The Viscounty of Verbobonc has fallen on hard times. The aftermath of the giant war, a time that was supposed to be one of happiness and joy as the hateful invaders had been put to the sword once and for all, has instead become a time of strife and hunger. A harsh winter, combined with the spoiling of many of the Viscounty's traditional food sources, has resulted in rampant starvation across the land. In Verbobonc City, and elsewhere, voices are raised in anger and accusation. The nobility, supposedly charged with the safeguarding of the citizenry upon their lands, has been slow to respond. House Langmuir is especially egregious in this violation of basic decency as they flaunt their wealth and feed their guards while raising taxes upon their lands to pay for their participation in the march of the giants.

In opposition and defiance, the Church of Trithereon has been an outspoken advocate against the excesses of the nobility, rallying many of the common people to their cause. The food riot of Fireseek 596 was a direct result of their rhetoric.

Into this time of turmoil and upheaval comes Lord Wellborn Estival. A descendant of Keoish ancestry and scion of a cadet branch of the family that built Castle Estival on the lands currently occupied by Rhynehurst, Estival has recently come into an inheritance. Arriving in Verbobonc City near the of the Brewfest celebration of 595, he has sought to reclaim his rights to the Castle that bears his family name. Since that time, he has dismayed at the state to which the economy has fallen, and his heart grows ever sicker over the deaths of so many in the food riots. Seeking to give something back to the starving people of the land, and at the same time garner public support for his cause, Estival inquired of the merchants in the Free City of Dyvers during Fireseek 596 and arranged, out of his own personal funds, for the delivery of several food shipments. These shipments would be sent to each major town in Verbobonc – beginning with Verbobonc City. The first such shipment was to be sent along the Volverdyva River to Verbobonc City. However, due to the extreme cold of the winter, the river has frozen over and is not navigable by ship. All requests for assistance to the druids of the Gnarley have met with silence with some even speculating that they were the cause of the freezing of the river. Thus, the first shipments must come overland, making for Verbobonc City the long way.

A group of young recruits to the faith of Trithereon have resolved to take matters into their own hands. Led by a man named Vershan, they have learned of the food shipment and gained knowledge of the caravan's route through the Gnarley. In a fit of youthful rebellion, they have decided to 'liberate' the food and deliver it themselves, believing that it would not otherwise find its way to those in need. The recruits, however, are unaware that "Vershan" is a cover alias for a master spy and assassin named Alber Guildenstern. A man of the shadows, Alber came to Verbobonc eleven years ago and has largely remained out of sight of authorities and criminal organizations alike. Alber has been retained to infiltrate the Church of Trithereon and use it to further the goals of his employer. One of those goals, Alber recently learned, is preventing the food shipment from reaching Verbobonc City.

Meanwhile, Stegewood Boile is a down-and-out thief trying to make a new life for himself. Most of his adult life has been spent in jail cells, the most recent of which was in Caltaran over a petty burglary incident. The sheriff of that town, a known follower of Hextor, takes a particularly dim view of unauthorized crime and locked Boile up for six months, and was only released last month because the Sheriff needed the space for more important criminals. Endeavored to turn his life around and find gainful employment, Boile reached out to an old friend, Bernard, who now works for House Langmuir, and gained the offer of employment as a stable hand. Not being particularly picky over who pays the gold, Boile took the offer and joined up with a caravan bound for Verbobonc City, where he would meet Bernard, who was none other than Alber, in another of his aliases.

Thus was Alber's plan to ambush the caravan with the Trithereonite impersonating as a guard of House Langmuir. Using Boile's information, he determined that the caravan would pass near the town of Ketter's Hearth. Formerly a town of some prominence, Ketter's Hearth had fallen on hard times through the harsh winter and savage assaults of the wild creatures of the Gnarley Forest. The combined effect left the town a shell of its former size and, for Alber's purposes, without the resources to thoroughly investigate the disappearance of any caravan. As an added bonus, the sheriff of Ketter's Hearth had a personal grudge against Boile – giving Alber the perfect scapegoat.

Traveling to Caltaran, Alber met up with Boile and traveled with him along the caravan route. In the course of this, Alber made sure others heard how they were employed by House Langmuir and traveling on their behalf. When the caravan was nearing Ketter's

Hearth, Alber sprang the ambush by means of a signal. The guards were slain and Boile knocked out – left with the caravan. Alber made sure a tattered piece of tabard bearing House Langmuir's crest was found at the scene, along with a forged note from House Langmuir implicating Boile in the ambush.

Hearing word of the ambush, the sheriff of Ketter's Hearth rode out with a few volunteer militiamen and came upon the scene. They discovered Boile and the note and, pronouncing themselves satisfied that he led the caravan into the ambush, took him back to town and jail. Boile has kept his mouth shut the entire time, fearful of losing his one chance at a job and knowing that no one would believe him in any case. Not one to bite the only hand that has tried to feed him, he's trusting that his friend or people from Langmuir will come and clear his name.

## Adventure Summary

The adventure has several ways by which PCs can become involved in the story. According to their organizational affiliation or influence, they may be contacted by Lord Estival, the Mounted Borderers, or the Battirovka Family.

### Introduction and Encounter One: The Noble's Request

Lord Estival has received word that the first shipment of food has been waylaid and possibly lost. Seeking to find out what has happened, he hires the PCs to investigate the disappearance and find out what happened.

The Mounted Borderers have also received a request from the sheriff of Ketter's Hearth, who has apprehended someone he believes is involved in the disappearance of the food shipment. Ketter's Hearth lies within the jurisdiction of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Company, which was decimated in an ambush at the onset of the war last year. Because of this, their numbers are very thin and they require the assistance of honorable parties willing to help.

Finally, the Family has learned of the arrest of Boile and word from the higher-ups is that they want the investigation closed before anyone looks too closely. The food isn't so much a concern as the attention an investigation might bring. Boile did some work for the Family years ago and his 'capture' might cause some embarrassments to come to light that would otherwise

be left undisturbed. The PCs are requested to expedite the investigation and facilitate Boile's 'disappearance'.

### Encounter Two: A Thorn in the Side

While traveling to the town of Ketter's Hearth, the PCs encounter an advance war party of orcs from an outpost of Blackthorn. In the aftermath of the encounter, the PCs discover (false) evidence that the orcs may have been involved in the disappearance of the caravan.

### Encounter Three: Winter's Chill

The party spends the night in the Gnarley Forest. During this time, they are watched by a druid wildshaped as an owl. The druid does not make himself directly known to the party, however during the night; the winter's chill gets steadily worse.

### Encounter Four: The Frozen Hearth

The party arrives at Ketter's Hearth, now little more than a ghost town due to the depredations of winter and the incursions of the forest's creatures. This is a role-playing encounter where PCs can learn of the general tenor of the Viscounty, the hardships its citizens have had to endure, and their utter hatred for anyone that would steal food from them. Through various means, the PCs learn where the sheriff's office and the jail are located.

### Encounter Five: The Silence of the (Scape) Goat

Arriving at the Sheriff's office, the party meets the sheriff who gives them the story of the ambush. They are allowed to examine Boile's belongings and, if they want, to try to speak with him. If asked, the sheriff relates some stories of his past experiences with Boile, during which it should become somewhat apparent that Boile doesn't have the acumen to pull off a stunt like this. The sheriff disputes this, but he also has an axe to grind against Boile and so doesn't mind a solution that fits his bill of particulars.

### Encounter Six: The Crime Scene

This is the site of the crime, where the caravan was ambushed. A search of the crime scene turns up the passenger manifest, which identifies a second man traveling with Boile that was a part of House Langmuir. If the PCs investigate the forest area, they find evidence of the direction from which the ambush came as well as one of the tabard remnants. A good examination of the tabard, however, can identify it as a forgery and a shrewd PC could infer that the tabard was meant to be found. If a tracker is with the party,

they could likewise discover tracks of the ambushers leading away with one of the wagons (the one with the food).

### Encounter Seven: Winter's Bite

If the party discovers and follows the tracks, they lead deep into the Gnarley Forest. As they are following the tracks, they encounter the druid that was watching them in Encounter Two. Angry at what he deems to be a violation of the sanctity of nature and the deforestation of the Gnarley Forest, he demands that they carry a message from him back to the town. This message likewise demands that the townsfolk leave the area and return to the lands of Verbobonc or suffer nature's wrath. If they agree to deliver this message and to leave the forest, he leaves them in peace. However, if they argue with him, lie to him, or deliver the message and then return to the forest – he unleashes a pack of wolves upon them.

### Encounter Eight: Red Handed

Following the tracks, the PCs find their way to a small abandoned shack in the woods of the Gnarley. This is where the Trithereonites are holing up until they can get the wagon out without being caught. If attacked, they fight back, but surrender when one of them gets killed. A search of the shack turns up several more of the false tabards along with a letter detailing the plan to frame House Langmuir for the theft of the food. The letter can be used to discover that the other Langmuir letters are forgeries as they were penned by the same hand.

One of the Trithereonites happens to be the cousin of Captain Yronl, regent for House Avgustin. If the Trithereonites are searched, a letter from Captain Yronl to his cousin is found.

The Trithereonites are anxious to avoid being turned over to the authorities, so they try to persuade any PCs that express dissatisfaction or distain for House Langmuir to assist them in the frame up. They will return the food if the PCs agree to say that they found evidence that House Langmuir was behind the theft.

If the PCs go along with the frame up, then the Trithereonites keep their end of the bargain and provide corroborating evidence of House Langmuir's 'involvement.' If the PCs arrest them, they revile the PCs as pawns of the establishment and agents of oppression.

### Encounter Nine: Return Home

The PCs have a chance to sleep on their return home. During this time, it's possible for members of the

Family to complete their assignment to 'remove' Boile if they have not already done so.

### Conclusion

There are several possible conclusions that can result from this adventure.

## Introduction

The adventure begins in the town of Eglath, during the early days of Readying, 596.

PCs that are not members of a meta-organization receive **Player Handout #1** and receive free Adventure Lifestyle [Standard]. EXCEPTION: PCs that have the **Thanks of a Mysterious Stranger** from VERIntro6-01: *Paper Chase* automatically receive **Player Handout #1**.

PCs that are members of the Mounted Borderers receive **Player Handout #2**

PCs that are members of the Family or the Alliance receive **Player Handout #3**

**Note:** A PC that is a member of both the Mounted Borderers and the Family may receive both **Player Handout #2** and **Player Handout #3**. See the **Troubleshooting** paragraph in this section for how to handle these PCs.

PCs do not arrive all together, but instead arrive in groups based on the Player Handout they received. All Mounted Borderers arrive together; all Family members arrive together, and all those summoned by Estival arrive together.

PCs do not officially meet until **Encounter One**.

*A heavy snowstorm accompanies your arrival in the in the port town of Eglath in the northeastern part of the Viscounty of Verbobonc. A small community situated along the Velderdyva River, Eglath is a stopping point for merchant vessels and cargo ships traveling along the river between Verbobonc City and the Free City of Dyvers. It is also the home of Baronet Drenton Vaswell, lord and governor in the Viscount's name.*

*As you ride into the town, you cannot help but spy the great chunks of ice floating in the Velderdyva River. The winter, far more harsh than anyone could have anticipated, was so cold that portions of the great river froze over – halting river traffic for weeks. It is only now that some passage has been*

*possible for the smaller ships, but the larger merchant vessels are still locked in port at Verbobonc City, Rhynehurst, and here as well it seems.*

*Ahead of you, the road continues through the small town. Several small cottages lie on the outskirts of the town, their habitation testified to by the plumes of smoke rising from their chimneys. Near the center of town, an inn can be seen. The ice-covered sign hanging above the door proclaims the establishment as the Wandering Minnow. On the far opposite side of the town, within site of the small town port, the pennants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Company of the Mounted Borderers flutter lightly in the wintry air.*

**Troubleshooting:** A PC that is a member of both the Mounted Borderers and the Family is a special circumstance for this adventure. Such PCs still receive their orders from both organizations, although the Family does not require the Mounted Borderer to pose as a representative of the shipping company when the pre-existing cover works far better.

Both organizations expect this PC to complete their assignments. Since such a PC has two masters, it should be interesting to see how they can accomplish this.

Once the party is ready, proceed to **Encounter One**.

## Encounter One: The Noble's Request

*Per your instructions, you arrive at the Wandering Minnow – a cozy inn with a fire blazing in the hearth. Most of the tables are empty, however – evidence of the lack of food pervading the Viscounty.*

*A halfling woman in an apron bustles up to you, gesturing toward a private backroom, where you are ushered with little fanfare. Several chairs adorn this room and a small fireplace provides warmth against the chill of the cold.*

*An older man stands as you enter the room, extending his hand to each of you in turn. A light flecking of grey hair plays at his temples, though the firm handshake is that of a younger man – or at least that of a man kept fit by years of work.*

*“My thanks to you for coming so quickly. Before I speak of my need, may I offer you some refreshment from your travels?”*

Those that accept are provided a cup of hot mulled drink. A DC 15 Craft [Vintner] check identifies the liquid as Keoish brandy. Making the check by 5 (DC 20), lets them further identify that the brandy is of a rare and valuable varietal.

Proceed from here.

*“I shall come to the point. My name is Wellborn Estival, formerly of the Kingdom of Keoland. I've been in Verbobonc for several months on personal business, and commissioned several shipments of food from the city of Dyvers to be delivered to Verbobonc City and other towns.*

*“I received word the other day, however, that the first such shipment has gone missing near the town of Ketter's Hearth. I have inquired after you and found you to be people of reasonable character. I would ask you to go to Ketter's Hearth and investigate the reason for the disappearance of my caravan. You will be paid for your efforts.”*

Allow the PCs to respond, although those that decline are effectively out of the adventure unless brought back in by PCs that did accept the offer. It's likely that PCs will want to ask some questions of Estival. Some examples and their answers are listed below.

**Why are you in Verbobonc?**

*“I have recently come into a family inheritance, including papers of ownership for a castle on the western lands of Verbobonc. I don't think any of the family knew what they were. I found them in an old locked box among my father's belongings.*

*“It's my hope to reclaim the castle for the family and resettle here, although my understanding from your Viscount is that only a noble may possess a fortress of this kind. I have been working with him to establish my legitimacy.*

**Why did you commission the shipments?**

*“I was in Verbobonc City last month during the food riot, and saw first hand how the people were suffering from the harsh winter. If I am to live in this land, and call it my home, then I should help in resolving the problems that plague the land.*

*I must be honest, however, and tell you that I hope it will show to your Viscount how much I would like to live in Verbobonc and the kind of noble vassal I would be.”*



Why is the caravan traveling by land?

*“The winter has left much of the Volverdyva River frozen over. This has prevented almost all shipments by river except for those wealthy enough to hire arcane support. I’d rather spend my money on feeding those that need food than in lining some wizard’s pocket.”*

How much are you paying?

*“I am prepared to cover all reasonable lodging expenses and will pay you <50 x APL> wheatsheaves now, and another <50 x APL> once you’ve completed your investigation. At the moment, I am stretched somewhat thin due to my commitments, but if you are successful in apprehending a culprit, I may be able to pay you a little more. Regardless, you will have my gratitude for your efforts.”*

How did you hear of us?

*“I have some eyes and ears in Verbobonc City. Betham the Sage in particular is a friend of mind. I asked him to find me some trustworthy people that could assist me and he provided me with your names.”*

Do you have any suspects?

*“I have no idea if this was done by anyone, although some of the nobles have not looked too kindly on my arrival in Verbobonc. Both Lord Rhynehurst and Lady Langmuir were present when I presented my petition to the Viscount, and each seemed unhappy with my request. But I have no proof, and I would rather focus my efforts on helping the people of this land than engaging in political fights.”*

This is good brandy.

*“Thank you. My family has something of a history for brewing and fermenting fine drink. I have heard that Cienega Valley produces some exceptional wines. It would be nice to perhaps return to the family traditions once I am settled here.”*

Use the information provided in the Adventure Background to address any other questions the PCs might have. Once they are finished with their questions, proceed from here:

If any PCs received **Player Handout #2**, read the following:

*Estival gestures to the Mounted Borderers among you.*

*“The Mounted Borderers have graciously provided some of their members to escort you to and from Ketter’s Hearth. Of course, they have jurisdiction over the accused individual.”*

If any PCs received **Player Handout #3**, read the following:

*Estival then gestures to the caravan representatives, “These people are representatives of Humming’s End Shipping – the shipping company that handled the caravan arrangements. They have asked to be allowed to accompany you as well for their own investigative purposes.”*

Proceed from here:

*A warm smile creases Estival’s face and he hands each of you a sealed scroll.*

*“Take these writs with you. They will identify to any interested parties that you act on my behalf. I will arrange for horses and equipment if you need it.”*

*“If you will excuse me, I must take care of some correspondence with my retainers. Thank you again for your help.”*

Permit the PCs a chance to (re)acquaint themselves with one another. They can also take the opportunity to learn a little more about the town and area by doing some Legwork (see **Appendix Three: Legwork**). When the PCs are ready to continue, proceed to **Encounter Two**.

## Encounter Two: A Thorn in the Side

Get a marching order from the PCs before reading the following. Outside of Eglath, severe cold conditions are present. **Appendix Four: Environmental Conditions** has rules for this.

*Meeting up with the other members of your party, you take the opportunity to provision yourself before setting forth from Eglath.*

*The snow continues to fall as you traverse the Volverdyva road. Before long, your path branches away into the depths of the Gnarley Forest. For two days, you have trudged your way through the wilderness toward Ketter’s Hearth.*



Have PCs make a DC 20 Listen check. If they are successful, read the following:

***As the wind blows into the evening, you notice that it now carries with it harsh guttural sounds.***

The sounds are orcish. Anyone that speaks orc recognizes the language and knows that the orcs are arguing.

Have the PCs that made the Listen check make a DC 15 Spot check. Read the following if they are successful.

***Off in the distance, partially obscured by the blowing snow, you can make out the forms of four orcs. From their posture and the sound of their voices, they appear to be arguing.***

If the PCs were not successful in the Listen check, read the following:

***The wind continues to blow into the evening, carrying with it the snowfall that continues to obscure your vision.***

***As you trudge ahead through the forest, a guttural sound reaches your ears. Looking up, you find yourselves face to face with a band of orcs. The look on their faces indicates their surprise at finding you in their midst.***

***The face of one abruptly changes from surprise to rage as he rips out a great axe and moves to attack.***

#### **APL 2 (EL 5)**

➤ **Blackthorn Orcs (4):** Male Orc Bbn1; hp 17; see Appendix One.

#### **APL 4 (EL 7)**

➤ **Blackthorn Orcs (4):** Male Orc Bbn3; hp 41; see Appendix One.

#### **APL 6 (EL 9)**

➤ **Blackthorn Orcs (4):** Male Orc Bbn5; hp 55; see Appendix One.

The PCs start 60 feet away from the orcs if they made their Listen checks. If the checks were failed, then the encounter begins at 30 feet. The PCs are downwind of the orcs.

**Snow Conditions:** Due to the amount of recent snowfall, it costs 2 squares of movement to enter a snow-covered square.

**Surprise Conditions:** If the PCs were successful in their Listen and Spot checks, they can learn that the orcs are angry about being this far north in the Gnarley

Forest. Apparently the harsh winter doesn't extend into the far southern portions of the forest. The orcs are so involved in their argument that if the PCs choose, they can bypass them without attracting attention. A DC 20 Sense Motive check will confirm this information. Rangers with favored enemy (orc) automatically recognize that the orcs are distracted. If the PCs attack while the orcs are arguing, they gain surprise unless they make a mistake or bungle it.

If the party chooses to bypass the encounter, they receive full experience for the encounter.

**Tactics:** The orcs are members of a scouting band from Blackthorn into the northern Gnarley Forest. Their job is to assess the weaknesses of the forest towns and report back. They have been caught unprepared, however, for the harsh winter conditions permeating the great forest and are anxious to return to warmer climes.

**Development:** A Search of the orc encampment (Search DC 10) finds some notes on their defensive assessments of the Gnarley towns, including estimated sizes of town garrisons, presence or absence of Mounted Borderer command posts, and defensive fortifications. The Mounted Borderers would be interested in this information. Making the check by 5 (DC 15) reveals a few unmarked food containers.

If the orcs are interrogated and asked about the food, PCs learn that they took it from a group of men about a week ago. If pressed, the orcs describe the device on the tabard. A DC 15 Knowledge [Nobility and Royalty] check lets a PC identify the device as the symbol for House Langmuir.

Once the orcs are either defeated or bypassed, continue to **Encounter Three**.

## **Encounter Three: Winter's Chill**

***It's been three days since you left Eglath, and winter's chill has saturated every aspect of your travels. Darkness comes early in these early months of 596, making continuing through the forest difficult at best. Ahead, the cove between two small rises looks to offer shelter from the cold of the night – a respite from the harshness of the weather.***

The cove provides reasonable shelter from the elements, although it is not warm or comfortable by any stretch of the imagination. It's subsistence protection at best, but is an adequate place for them to rest for the evening.

Throughout the night, the PCs are observed by the druid, Ra'fal Frostcrow. The druid watches them from a hundred feet away, in the *wildshape* of a snowy owl. During the second shift, the druid appears to them. Read or paraphrase the following:

*The harsh bite in the air makes for a long night indeed as the wind shows no signs of letting up. As you listen, the whistle of the air takes on a different note – the sound of growling. The curtain of snow abruptly clears to reveal a figure wrapped in a brown cloak. His waist-length beard, gray like a storm cloud, flutters in the wind, and a gnarled hand grasps an equally knotted staff. He is surrounded by a pack of wolves with their teeth bared and fur bristled in anger.*

*“We have chosen thee to bear our message to the people of Ketter’s Hearth. Hear it well and falter not in its delivery.*

*For generation upon generations, the forest and the land have existed, granting its sustenance and vitality to the people in exchange for their reverence and respect. Thus was the balance of nature preserved and the Oak Father and Mother Oerth were pleased.*

*But woe unto the desecraters from Verbobonc for they have despoiled the bounty that Oak Father and Mother Oerth have provided! They have ravaged the gifts given them for their own petty greed and have not returned to nature the gratitude it is due.*

*Say unto the people of Ketter’s Hearth that their doom shall serve as the example of many yet to come. Within five score and ten days, the forest shall rise against them in protest of their abominations and drive them from its midst. In this doom there can be no mercy. For their crime there can be no clemency. For as mercy has not been visited upon the savaged ipp wood trees, so shall mercy be withheld from its despoilers.”*

*“To thee and thine upon whom I have laid this charge, freedom is yours to return from whence you came after this tiding is delivered. Do not return to the forest, for if you do, its vengeance shall be visited upon thee as but a taste of retribution.”*

*With that last word, the curtain of frost regains its former intensity, obscuring the figure from your sight. When it next clears, he and the pack of wolves are gone.*

Once morning arrives, proceed to **Encounter Four**.

## Encounter Four: The Frozen Hearth

*The frozen track and rough terrain of the Gnarley give way to cobblestones as you emerge from the forest into a wooded vale. Several small cottages stand next to a meadow. Overlooking the meadow, a large bluff juts out from a promontory, upon which a white tower can be seen.*

*Near the meadow, a sheet of ice, once a waterfall it seems, runs down the height of the bluff into a small frozen pond. Several other small structures are evidence, including a general store and a couple of taverns. Some of the architecture has an elven look to it.*

*The whole of the town, however, has an air of disrepair and abandonment. Many cottages have seen better days, with some having collapsed under the weight of snow, debris, and the elements.*

*A stone building – one of the few – stands at the base of the bluff and the markings on the outside identify it as the constable’s office.*

Refer to **Appendix Five: Ketter’s Hearth Glossary** for a listing and brief description of the various buildings and NPCs of note in the town. Allow the PCs to visit any/all possible locations time permitting. Ketter’s hearth has many abandoned buildings and should be roleplayed as a desperate, melancholy place.

All residents of the town treat most PCs indifferently, the exception being members of the Mounted Borderers and Noble house guards, whom they believe represent a Viscounty that has failed to assist them during this winter season.

For PCs that initiate diplomatic overtures with the residents, award a +4 circumstance to any PC offering aid in the form of food, blankets, tangible goods, or other appropriate items. Coin, however, is of little value as it can’t be eaten when one is starving.

Refer to **Appendix Three: Legwork** for the results of any information gathering performed by the PCs.

**Delivering the druid's message:** Unless a PC happens to be the Mayor of Ketter's Hearth (as defined by the Verbobonc Town Project), the mayor is not in town, having left to secure food and other items of need for the residents. In the mayor's place, the people have treated Shemalla, wife of the owner of the local general store, as the leader until the mayor's return. PCs may deliver the druid's message to her. Information on Shemalla, as well as other places and notable residents of Ketter's Hearth, can be found in **Appendix Five: Ketter's Hearth Glossary**.

Shemalla is, of course, shocked at the words of the druid. If pressed, she has heard rumors that the druids of the Gnarley are upset for the deforestation of the great forest by those people that have founded towns; however she was unaware that Ketter's Hearth was included in this hostility.

Once the PCs arrive at the sheriff's office, proceed to **Encounter Five**.

## Encounter Five: Silence of the Scapegoat

The PCs meet with the sheriff, who is convinced of Boile's guilt. If they meet with Boile, he refuses to talk, not wanting to implicate his potential new employers in anything.

The sheriff provides the PCs with any information he has on Boile and it should become evidence to the PCs that it is unlikely this person committed the crime – he's not smart enough. Nevertheless, the sheriff reminds any Borderers that their job is to take custody of him, take the evidence, and return to Eglath.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*The building that serves as the local jail is little more than a stone box situated near the General store. There is a reinforced wooden door and no windows.*

*As you knock a gruff voice bids you to enter. Stepping through the doorway, you spot a human man of Flan decent seated behind a plain desk. In the far corner is a simple cell containing man who is picking his nose.*

*"Evenin' folks. I'm Roscoe, sheriff o' Ketter's Hearth. What can I do ya for?"*

Allow the PCs to respond before continuing

*"Ya'll here to transport da prisoner?"*

The PCs may have some questions for the sheriff. He answers to the best of his ability but no amount of talk can convince him that Boile is innocent.

**Are you sure he's guilty?**

*"Yup! Guilty as sin. Found him laid out right there."*

**He didn't try to get away?**

*"Nope. he knows he was caught."*

**Can you show where the caravan was ambushed?**

*"I can give ya directions. I can't go and be leavin' me prisoner unguarded like."*

**Do you know why he did it?**

*"Yep. I'm bettin he stole it to sell on the black market. He don't care 'bout decent people that are starving! He'd sell his own mama for a copper and not blink twice."*

*He stole the food and he'll be payin' the price for it. That's all that matters."*

**But it doesn't make any sense?**

*"That be the nature o' crime. It dun' never make any sense."*

**But how can you be sure he's behind it?**

*"Ifin' he ain't involved why won't he speak of it? Axe um yeself!"*

During the exchange he relates the following story. Read or paraphrase the following:

*"I know ole Boile dun it. Ya see we go way back. Ain't that right Boile? The sheriff eyes the man in the cell hard. "Bout two-tree years back I was workin' as a guard for Lord Haxx at the Gentlewind Tradin' Company. Ever hear o' it? Anywho, I was a walkin' me patrol when I spotted ole Boile here stealin' some smelly o' spices from the warehouse." A smile quickly crosses the man's face. 'I walked right up to him and yelled "What in the darnations ye think ye doin'?" Well Boile here jump 'bout yee high an torn open one o' the bag he was puttin' down his leggin's ana spilt all o' Lord Haxx's 'pensive spice on the floor."*

During this exchange, any PC making a DC 5 Sense Motive notices that the Sheriff tone gets a bit harder for the rest of the story. Making the check by 10 (DC 15) lets the PC realize he's holding something back.

*"I ain't for know who was owin' him a favor but the Watch let him go after but a few hours of*

*questionin’.” The sheriff turns and eyes Boile directly. “Ye ain’t getting’ off this time!”*

If questioned the Sheriff refuses to discuss the matter stating “**Caught um red-handed.**” If a PC succeeds at a DC 30 Diplomacy check, a DC 25 Intimidate check, or if they pull rank (if they are a member of the Mounted Borderers), he grudgingly admits that he was fired because of Boile’s release.

**Questioning Boile:** Boile does not want to speak to anyone, for fear that anything he says will ruin his chances of keeping the job with House Langmuir. He actively attempts to resist spells. Any spell used to read his thoughts only returns “I’m not talkin’, I’m not talkin’” over and over again as he repeats in his mind. The sheriff also reminds PCs that only a cleric of Saint Cuthbert under the orders of someone with low justice can perform such an investigation. Note that no PC received such authority during the Introduction.

**Casting spells:** The sheriff only warns PCs one time that they are breaking the laws. The second time a PC attempts to cast spells, he is arrested by the sheriff, charged with **Negligent Use of Magic**, have their spellbooks or holy symbol confiscated, and are fined 500 gp and 4 TU. Any such PC arrested is out-of-play for the duration of the adventure.

**House Guard (Langmuir):** If there are members of the Langmuir House guard present. Boile will attempt to get their attention and speak to them privately. If allowed to do so read or paraphrase the following:

*“Don’t worry I ain’t said nothin’! You can trust old Boile. I ain’t no rat.”*

If questioned he will state he is in the service of the House and Bernard, a member of the House Guard, where traveling with the caravan when the “team” attack. Something must have happened because he’s sure Bernard would not have knowingly left him behind.

PCs that are members of House Langmuir can make an Intelligence check (DC 13) to know that no person by the name of Bernard works for their house.

**Mounted Borderers:** Boile absolutely will not speak in the presence of any Mounted Borderer unless that PC also happens to be a member of the Family.

**The Family:** Family members can make a DC 10 Sense Motive check to realize that Boile would like the sheriff out of the room. Making the check by 5 (DC 15) lets them realize why (so he can give them a message).

Even when the sheriff is gone, he is very reluctant to speak openly. He attempts to deliver a secret message

using the Bluff skill (DC 15, Bluff +7) and relay the following information:

- He did not steal the food.
- He doesn’t know who did.
- He does not want to return to Eglath.

If a Family successfully communicates to him (by using a secret message), Boile also informs him that because of all of this, he’s willing to leave the Viscounty.

## Encounter Six: The Crime Scene

Read or paraphrase the following:

*The directions provided by the sheriff take you several hours east of Ketter’s Hearth, where you eventually arrive at a worn road. Turning south, you follow the road for a few miles before you come upon the site. Several wagons lie broken along the side of the road, along with the remains of a few horses. Debris lies scattered about, and at least one corpse can be seen.*

*A blanket of snow coats much of the area, obscuring many of the details from your eye. Whoever did this planned it well.*

The PCs investigate the scene where the caravan was ambushed. It’s been partially covered with snow since the initial assault, but there enough intact for PCs to do some investigating.

**Searching the caravan wreckage:** PCs searching the wreckage of the caravan can find the following with a **Search** check:

- **DC 10:** Letter to Boile from an unsigned individual. The letter tells Boile to lead the caravan along a certain road and to leave the rest to ‘them’. The road mentioned is the path that the caravan was traveling when it was ambushed. Give the players **Player Handout #4**.
- **DC 15:** Letter to Boile from Bernard of House Langmuir. The letter says that House Langmuir will be happy to employ Boile and instructs him to travel by caravan to Verbobonc City where he will be met by

Bernard. (see “Examining the Letters” below)  
Give the players **Player Handout #5**.

- **DC 17:** A piece of torn tabard with some of the house crest still visible. (see “Examining the Tabard” below)
- **DC 20:** A passenger manifest. The list consists of two priests of Zilchus traveling from Dyvers to Verbobonc for trade negotiations, and Boile (who is listed as traveling to Verbobonc City for employment).

**Examining the bodies:** PCs searching the area find three bodies partially hidden in the snowfall.

One body wears the livery of the caravan guard. A DC 15 Heal check reveals he died of slashing wounds.

The second set of bodies can be found underneath one of the horse corpses. Both bodies wear robes and a holy symbol (DC 15 Knowledge [Religion] to identify the symbol as Zilchus). From their position, it appears they were crushed by the horse as it was killed.

**Examining the Letters:** PCs specifically examining **Player Handout #4** and **Player Handout #5** can make a Forgery check (DC 20+APL), with success indicating the PC learns both letters are likely written by the same person.

**Examining the Tabard:** Knowledge [Nobility and Royalty] can be used to learn information from the tabard.

- **DC 10:** The seal on the tabard belongs to House Langmuir.
- **DC 25:** The heraldry on the torn piece isn't accurate. There are subtle mistakes in the design and it's likely the tabard is a forgery.

**Footprints:** PCs examining the outer edges of the crime scene may make **Search** or **Survival** checks to learn the following:

- **DC 10:** A large group of prints is found in the road along the path taken by the caravan.
- **DC 12:** Ten sets of two horses, each set with a wagon, for a total of five wagons.
- **DC 15:** A second set of horse prints coming from an opposite direction. (If a PC examines the area from which the second set of horses came, he find a second torn piece of tabard and a holy symbol (Knowledge [Religion] identifies the holy symbol as a rule of pursuit, the symbol of Trithereon).

- **DC 25:** The second set of prints intersects with the first set. After what appears to be a skirmish, the second set (along with two wagons), head back into the forest the way they came.

These are the tracks left by the Trithereonites. If the PCs follow them, continue with **Encounter Six: Winter's Bite**.

**Using spells to learn information:** Use the information provided in the Adventure Background and this encounter to improvise any spell results.

**Troubleshooting:** It is possible that the PCs do not discover the trail left by the Trithereonites. This is acceptable. Their mission is to take custody of the prisoner, gather any evidence of his guilt, and return to Eglath.

## Encounter Seven: Winter's Bite

This encounter occurs several hours after the PCs enter forest to follow the tracks. Read or paraphrase the following.

*The investigation has revealed more than previously thought, and has led you back into the woods. The trail, obscured previously by the snow, has become somewhat more apparent as it continues deeper into the Gnarley Forest, where the boughs of the great oak and bronzedwood trees have partially sheltered the forest floor from some of the snowfall.*

Allow any PC with the Tracking feat a DC 15 Survival check. Success reveals the following:

*The tracks you are following consist of three horses which appear to be pulling two wagons. Alongside each wagon are several human-sized foot prints.*

Continue from here

*As you follow the trail of the attackers, a second set of prints is found. This set intersects with the first and it's clear that some form of skirmish occurred due to the pattern of the prints.*

PCs making the Survival check by 5 (DC 20) identify the second set of prints as orc prints. Alternatively, a ranger with favored enemy [orc] automatically knows this.

If the PCs take time to examine the area, allow them a **Search** check.

- **DC 10:** A shattered symbol (another holy symbol of Trithereon).
- **DC 15:** Several blood spatters. (A DC 15 Heal check identifies that while the majority is orc blood, a sizeable minority is also human blood.

**What's going on:** As the Trithereonites were bringing back their wagons of food, they encountered a band of orcs from Blackthorn. While they managed to kill them, the Trithereonites incurred substantial injury while doing so. Badly hurt, they limped back to their cabin to heal.

**Ambush:** At this point, give PCs a DC 15 Listen check and a DC 15 Spot check (those examining the ground receive a -2 circumstance penalty because they are distracted).

Failure on both indicates the PC is surprised.

*A harsh bark serves as you're only warning as a pack of wolves leap out of the trees toward you. Echoing above the baying din, a voice cries out "You were warned not to return. Now suffer the penalty!"*

#### APL 2 (EL 5)

🐾 **Wolves (4):** hp 13; see *Monster Manual*, page 283.

#### APL 4 (EL 7)

🐾 **Dire Wolves (4):** hp 45; see *Monster Manual*, page 65.

#### APL 6 (EL 9)

🐾 **Dire Wolves, Advanced (5):** hp 76; see Appendix One.

The druid, again *wildshaped* in the form of a snowy owl, watches events from a distance. Other than crying out as the wolves attack, he does nothing. He does, however, note how the PCs carry themselves during this combat. Once combat is over, he leaves the area, not alerting the PCs to his presence.

**Tactics:** The wolves target the easiest PC to reach and swarm him.

**Wild Empathy:** A druid PC may attempt Wild Empathy on the wolves to change their attitude to Indifferent (at which point, they wander off). This requires a DC 25 Wild Empathy check. The PC also suffers a -10 penalty if attempting Wild Empathy as a full round action to avert combat.

If the PCs defend themselves in a manner disrespectful of nature (by using area of effect spells that cause harm to plants, by not dealing nonlethal damage to the wolves, or any other action that would place them in an unfavorable light with druids), they receive the **Disfavor of the Gnarley** entry on their AR.

**Development:** Once this encounter is over, proceed to **Encounter Eight: Red Handed**.

## Encounter Eight: Red Handed

Read or paraphrase the following:

*Ahead of you, the trees begin to thin a little as you enter a small clearing. On the opposite side, a ramshackle cabin can be seen. Light flickers through the broken windows and shadows can be seen moving about.*

*On one side of the cabin, two wagons stand tied to a tree. The wagons bear the imprint of the shipping company.*

Refer to the Map of this encounter for starting distances.

Two rounds after the PCs arrive; a Trithereonite comes around the cabin from the rear to check on the wagons. Once he has done so, he continues around and enters the front of the house. The Trithereonites are nervous, having been beaten severely by the orcs they encountered earlier and having stolen a substantial shipment of food. Thus, they will periodically check outside to make sure no one has found them.

If the Trithereonite notices any PCs, he acts as if he has failed to notice them. He then continues into the cabin, alerts the others, and prepares for combat.

This encounter is very free form. The Trithereonites do not want a fight, but are not initially willing to surrender.

If the PCs make noise, the Trithereonites learn of their presence. The few remaining able-bodied among them attempt to arm themselves.

#### APL 2 (EL 2)

🐾 **Trithereonite Zealots (2):** Human Male Ftr2; hp 20; see Appendix One.

🐾 **Trithereonite Cleric:** Human Male Clr2; hp 17; see Appendix One.

#### APL 4 (EL 4)

☛ **Trithereonite Zealots (2):** Human Male Ftr3; hp 20; see Appendix One.

☛ **Trithereonite Cleric:** Human Male Clr3; hp 17; see Appendix One.

#### APL 6 (EL 6)

☛ **Trithereonite Zealots (2):** Human Male Ftr3/Rog2; hp 45; see Appendix One.

☛ **Trithereonite Cleric:** Human Male Clr5; hp 38; see Appendix One.

**Averting Combat:** The party making a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (demoralize opponent option) prior to combat can convince the Trithereonites to surrender. However, Intimidate checks suffer a -5 circumstance penalty due to the Trithereonites resolve to 'stand firm'.

**APL 2:** DC 20 Diplomacy/Intimidate check

**APL 4:** DC 24 Diplomacy/Intimidate check

**APL 6:** DC 27 Diplomacy/Intimidate check

The check is subject to the following modifiers:

- -8 if the PC is a member of House Guard (Langmuir)
- -4 if the PC is a member of the Church of Saint Cuthbert
- -2 if the PC is a member of the Mounted Borderers
- +4 if the PC is a member of House Guard (Avgustin)
- +8 if the PC is a member of the Church of Trithereon
- -2 to +2 for miscellaneous circumstances, subject to DM discretion.

**Combat Note:** The Trithereonites attack for nonlethal damage throughout combat. Additionally, they are fatigued (see *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 301).

The Trithereonites put up a fight, but surrender if any one of them is killed. If their surrender is ignored and the PCs continue to attack for lethal damage, they switch to lethal attacks while shouting warning for the more wounded members in the house to flee.

**Searching the cabin:** PCs searching the cabin can find the following with a Search check:

- **DC 15:** Several sets of tabards bearing the same crest as that found on the tabard from the caravan ambush site. One tabard is torn. By comparing the torn tabard with the piece previously found, the PCs identify that the two pieces go together.
- **DC 20:** A set of documents signed by "Adan Langmuir" giving instructions on the wagon raid. These documents provide conclusive 'evidence' that Langmuir was behind the raid. Give the players **Player Handout #6**.
- **DC 22:** Another set of papers signed by "Vershan" to one of the other Trithereonites giving the same instructions as those in the Langmuir papers. However, these documents also explain for the Trithereonites to leave 'evidence' that plants suspicion on House Langmuir for the theft. These documents provide evidence that the Church of Trithereon was attempting to frame House Langmuir for the theft. Give the PCs **Player Handout #7**.
- **DC 25:** A personal letter from Captain Yronl (regent for House Avgustin) to Benan (Yronl's cousin and a member of the Trithereonites. While it doesn't state anything outright, the letter creates a link between House Avgustin and the Trithereonites. Give the players **Player Handout #8**.

**Examining the letters:** If the PCs compare the various letters they have found, a DC 20+APL Forgery check can reveal the following information:

- The Langmuir papers were written by the same person as those signed by Vershan.
- The Bernard papers and the unsigned letter to Boile (both from the wagon ambush) were also written by the same person who wrote the Langmuir papers and the letters signed by Vershan.
- The Yronl letter (**Player Handout #8**) does not appear to have been written by same person that wrote the other letters.

Below are some likely questions the PCs may ask, along with the answers.

**Why did you steal the food?**

*"That food will never make its way to the people that need it. It will just be swallowed up by the greedy nobility. We were liberating it for the*



*common folk – the ones who do all the work and the one truly suffering in this time of want.*

Why House Langmuir?

*“They are the worst offenders of them all! They let their people starve while they throw lavish parties throughout the winter. When we so much as beg for a scrap of bread, they kick us and throw us in jail. They have all this money to buy enchanted arms for a war, but they can’t spare the scraps off their table for the people that work their lands.”*

(Note – the war he refers to is the Giant war of 595, when House Langmuir supplied magical arms for the Mounted Borderers and other troops.)

Why frame an innocent man?

*“It was Vershan’s idea.”*

Who is Vershan?

*“Our leader. It was his idea to get the food and frame Langmuir for the theft. He said the ‘innocent’ man was going to work for Langmuir and anyone that worked for that house got what they deserved.”*

Where is Vershan?

*“He left several days ago to make contact with some of his people. He has people everywhere, keeping watch on the so-called nobility. He knows their dirty little secrets, and he’s not afraid to make them look like what they really are: self-centered, pampered little brats whose only concern is gold and status.”*

Why do you hate the nobility so much?

*“They have proven themselves unworthy of leadership. Look at their petty squabbling and posturing. They can’t be trusted – period. One of them was even a spy for the Wicked One. The Viscount even made him Provost Marshal before the so-called ‘imposter’ was discovered. If one of them is a spy – why not others? If they care about the people, why don’t they act like it?”*

*Look at Vaswell, the ‘ruler’ of Eglath? Two years ago, he raised taxes on his peasants to the point of penury all because he thought one of them stole some of his fripperies. He could have easily discovered the truth for himself – that a kobold had broken into his home and stolen the items. But he didn’t care to. It was easier to treat his peasants like criminals and filth than to do the right thing. Vaswell and Langmuir are just the ones that are obviously corruptions. It goes far deeper than that. You can’t fix the system from the inside. You have*

*to fix it from the outside – with people willing to take a stand and show everyone what the ‘nobility’ really is.”*

Is House Avgustin a part of this?

*“Our ideas have found resonance there.”*

### Enlisting a conspiracy

If, at any point during the conversation, the Trithereonites get the impression that the PCs sympathize with them on House Langmuir, one of the Trithereonites makes this offer:

*“Look, it’s hard to do the right thing, isn’t it? After all – the nobility are supposed to be there to take care of us. And they’re not. It’s obvious you don’t like them any more than we do. The only way things are going to change is if someone shows them in their true colors. You could do that.”*

If the PCs haven’t already found the documents implicating House Langmuir, one of the others gets them and hands them to the PCs.

*“Take those papers back to Eglath and your superiors. They’ll provide ‘evidence’ that Langmuir was behind this. You can take the food back with you. After all – that’s what they want: their food and proof on who did this.”*

*“You do that and let us go, and I promise that you’ll be rewarded. Trithereon looks after those who seek to bring about the downfall of tyrants.”*

Once the PCs have decided their course of action, proceed to **Encounter Nine**. It’s possible they’ll need to return to Ketter’s Hearth to pick up Boile.

## Encounter Nine: Return Home

**Encounter Nine** is a free-form rest encounter. It provides an opportunity for a member of the Family to take care of Stegewood Boile. Allow any Family members and members of the Mounted Borderer to resolve the situation “in character.”

*The way back through the Gnarley Forest is as uncomfortable as your initial journey days ago. True to what the sheriff has told you, Boile has remained silent, refusing to speak with anyone beyond a few muttered words.*

*As night falls one evening, you manage to locate a serviceable shelter which provides some respite from the cold.*

Allow the PCs to take whatever precautions they want to secure Boile. During the night, Boile doesn't try to escape, still hoping that perhaps his employer will save him before reaching Eglath.

If no PCs from the Family attempts to free him during this encounter, proceed to the **Conclusion**.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this adventure is very complicated and, as a result, very modular. Read aloud each section that follows a TRUE **bold and underlined** statement.

### **Evidence of Boile's guilt is provided.**

*Your return to Eglath goes well, with evidence of Boile's guilt given to Sergeant Veselyn of the Mounted Borderers.*

### **Evidence of Boile's innocence is provided.**

*Your return to Eglath goes well, with evidence that the accused man, Stegewood Boile, was not guilty of the theft given to Sergeant Veselyn of the Mounted Borderers.*

### **Boile disappears on the way back from Ketter's Hearth**

*Boile's disappearance [or death, if he was killed] is a mystery, but his past association with criminals did not make it a surprise. Sergeant Veselyn was quite frustrated with this, however, and berated his men for their laxness.*

### **Boile is brought back from Ketter's Hearth**

*Upon arriving in Eglath with Boile, Sergeant Veselyn takes him into custody. Regardless of any role in the theft he may or may not have played, there are other activities for which the Borderers are very interested. After a few days, however, you hear that he was found dead unexpectedly in his cell. All attempts to contact his spirit or to revive him from death have failed.*

### **House Langmuir is implicated in the theft**

*Word of House Langmuir's involvement in the theft seems to spread like wildfire, despite the best efforts of the authorities to keep it under wraps. Within weeks, House Langmuir issues a statement*

*proclaiming their innocence, but it is largely ignored. Two days after the statement, while Lady Langmuir and her son were in attendance at a performance of the Riverwalk Society, their residence in Verbobonc City caught fire and burned to the ground.*

### **House Langmuir is found to have been unsuccessfully implicated in the theft**

*Word spreads like wildfire that someone tried to frame a noble house for the theft of the food. Within weeks, House Langmuir issues a proclamation denouncing those that tried to frame them as cowards and unworthy peasants of the lowest form of life.*

### **The Church of Trithereon is connected with the theft**

*The connection of members of the Church of Trithereon to the food theft sparks debates and arguments all over the Viscounty. Bishop Haufren, head of the Church of Saint Cuthbert, is said to be convening an emergency session of the Council of Abbots to deal with this issue.*

### **House Avgustin is implicated in Trithereon's involvement with the theft.**

*The evidence that House Avgustin could have been in collusion with the Church of Trithereon stuns many in Verbobonc. Always a bastion of honor, House Avgustin represented the best and noblest in the Viscounty. Their connection to this crime rekindles the rumors that the new regents have sympathies with the Trithereonites. In the town of Swan, a statue of Willow Swan erected last year is torn down and vandalized. Those responsible were not caught.*

### **The PCs conspire with The Church of Trithereon to frame House Langmuir**

*True to their word, soon after your return to Eglath, you were met by a Trithereonite and assured of their support if ever you found yourself in need. Thankful to have found a sympathetic ear among the adventuring populous, they promise you that they will be in touch in the future.*

### **The food is recovered**

*Regardless of the outcome, there has been some good to come out of this as the first food shipment arrives in Verbobonc City.*

### **The food is not recovered**

*Out of all of this, the loss of the food is perhaps the most painful for Estival, as he sees the hunger of those in need prolonged. Undaunted, he pays for a second shipment of food out of his own resources and within days the shipment arrives in Verbobonc City.*

Proceed from here

*Estival himself is among those distributing the food, telling all of your efforts to recover the first shipment. It is clear he is grateful for your efforts. Within days, the unrest of the city subsides as the people again find hope.*

*Questions, however, continue to nag at the corners of your mind. More is at play here than meets the eye, and the Viscounty – so stable in previous years – seems to stand upon the razors edge. And what of the message from the druids in the Gnarley? The discontent of the winter has spread like a stain across the land, bringing the fouler aspects of human nature to light. Where this will lead, no one knows. But in the silence of the night, the only sound is the howl of the wind – life a wolf baying at the door.*

**The End**

#### Treasure

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 1,300 gp; M: 0 gp.

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 1,800 gp; M: 0 gp.

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 2,600gp; M: 0 gp.

## Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus role-playing) to each PC.

#### Encounter Two

Defeat or bypass the orcs.

APL 2	150 XP
APL 4	210 XP
APL 6	270 XP

#### Encounter Four

Interact with the residents of Ketter's Hearth and provide them with aid (food, blankets, etc). Deliver the druid's message,

APL 2	64 XP
APL 4	96 XP
APL 6	129 XP

#### Encounter Five

Attempt to interact with Stegewood Boile

APL 2	64 XP
APL 4	96 XP
APL 6	129 XP

#### Encounter Six

Search the crime scene and discover the evidence.

APL 2	64 XP
APL 4	96 XP
APL 6	129 XP

#### Encounter Seven

Defeat or avoid the wolves.

APL 2	150 XP
APL 4	210 XP
APL 6	270 XP

#### Encounter Eight

Capture the Trithereonites without killing all of them.

APL 2	60 XP
APL 4	90 XP
APL 6	120 XP

#### Encounter Nine

Free Stegewood Boile without getting caught.

APL 2	64 XP
APL 4	96 XP
APL 6	129 XP

#### Award for Good Roleplaying

APL 2	90 XP
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APL 4 135 XP

APL 6 180 XP

### Total Possible Experience:

APL 2 450 XP

APL 4 675 XP

APL 6 900 XP

## Treasure Summary

During an adventure, PCs encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a “treasure” section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter’s treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each PC gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the PCs cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that PCs can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), PCs may return to retrieve loot. If the PCs do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each PC gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because PCs may want to use them during the adventure. Many times PCs must cast identify, analyze dweomer or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a PCs total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate. Because this is a Regional scenario, PCs may spend additional Time Units to practice professions or create items immediately

after the adventure so this total may be modified by other circumstances.

L = Looted gear from enemy; C = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; M = Magic Items.

**Note:** In this adventure, all treasure comes in the form of rewards from the metaorganizations involved with this adventure. Their gratitude is the recompense for the adventures.

### Total Possible Treasure:

APL 2 450 gp

APL 4: 650 gp

APL 6: 900 gp

### Reward Notes:

**Estival’s Favor:** This reward is given to those PCs that received **Player Handout #1** at the beginning of the adventure. It is also given to any PC that has the **Thanks of a Mysterious Stranger** entry (from **VERIntro6-01: Paper Chase**)

**Estival’s Gratitude:** All PCs receive this reward.

**Favor of the Mounted Borderers:** This reward is given to all PCs that are members of the Mounted Borderers at the time of this adventure.

**Favor of The Family:** This reward is given to all PCs that are members of The Family at the time of this adventure.

# Appendix One: NPCs

## All APLS

### Encounter Four

**Sheriff Roscoe:** Male Human Exp3/War2; CR 2; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 3d6+2d8+10; hp34; Init +2; Spd 30 ft/x4; AC 15 (+3 armor, +2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +4; Grp +6; Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+2; masterwork longsword); AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12;

*Skills and Feats:* Forgery +3, Gather Information +10, Heal +3, Intimidate +10, Knowledge [Local - VTF] +5, Profession [law enforcement] +5, Ride+4, Search+5, Sense Motive +3, Survival +5, Swim+2, Use Rope+6; Persuasive, Skill Focus [Gather Information], Weapon Focus [Longsword].

*Possessions:* masterwork longsword, studded leather

**Stegwood Boile:** Male human Rog2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d6+2; hp 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 12, flat footed 12); Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk +3 melee (1d3+2, unarmed); Full Atk +3 (1d3+2, unarmed); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, trap finding; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +7, Disable Device +7, Hide +7, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Slight of Hand +7, Use Rope +7; Dodge, Power Attack.

*Possessions:* Leather armor.

## APL 2

### Encounter Two

**Orc War Party (4):** Male orc Bbn1; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d12+5; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 14 (touch 11, flat footed 13); Base Atk +1; Grp +5; Atk +6 melee (2d4+6, masterwork falchion); Full Atk +6 melee (2d4+6, masterwork falchion); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, rage 1/day; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6.

*Skills and Feats:* Listen +4, Spot +2, Survival +4; Toughness

*Possessions:* Masterwork falchion, studded leather armor.

### Encounter Eight

**Trithereon Zealots (2):** Male human (Oeridian) Ftr2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d10+4; hp 20; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk +5 melee (1d8+2, longsword) or +4 melee (1d6+2, sap); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+2, longsword) or +4 melee (1d6+2, sap); AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

*Skills and Feats:* Listen +2, Spot +2; Dodge, Power Attack, Weapon Focus [longsword].

*Possessions:* Heavy wooden shield, longsword, sap, scale mail, tangle foot bag.

**Trithereon Cleric:** Male human (Oeridian) Clr2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8+4; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 11, flat-footed 11); Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, light mace); Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+2, light mace); SA turn undead 3/day; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +7, Heal +8; Dodge, Mobility.

*Spells Prepared* (4/4; save DC = 12 + spell level) 0 – *create water* (2), *detect magic*, *light*, 1<sup>st</sup> – *detect evil*, *protection from evil*, *sanctuary*, *sanctuary*<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>f</sup> = Domain spell. Domains: Chaos, Protection.

*Possessions:* Healer's kit, holy symbol of Trithereon, light mace, light wooden shield.

## APL 4

### Encounter Two

**Orc War Party (4):** Male orc Bbn3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d12+15; hp 41; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 14 (touch 11, flat footed 13); Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk +8 melee (2d4+7, +1 *falchion*); Full Atk +8 melee (2d4+7, +1 *falchion*); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, rage 1/day, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6.

*Skills and Feats:* Listen +6, Spot +3, Survival +6; Power Attack, Toughness.

*Possessions:* +1 *Falchion*, studded leather armor.

**Light Sensitivity (Ex):** Orcs are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a daylight spell.

### Encounter Eight

**Trithereon Zealots (2):** Male human (Oeridian) Ftr3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d10+9; hp 31; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk +7 melee (1d8+2, masterwork longsword) or +6 melee (1d6+2, masterwork sap); full Atk +7 melee (1d8+2, masterwork longsword) or +6 melee (1d6+2, masterwork sap); AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

*Skills and Feats:* Listen +3, Spot +3; Dodge, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus [longsword], Weapon Focus [sap].

*Possessions:* Heavy wooden shield, masterwork longsword, masterwork sap, scale mail, tangle foot bag, thunderstone.

**Trithereon Cleric:** Male human (Oeridian) Clr3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8+6; hp 24; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (touch 11, flat-footed 12); Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk +4 melee (1d6+1, masterwork light mace); full Atk +4 melee (1d6+2, masterwork light mace); SA turn undead 3/day; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +8, Heal +9; Combat Casting, Dodge, Mobility.

*Spells Prepared* (4/4/3; save = DC 12 + spell level)  
0 – *create water* (2), *detect magic*, *light*, 1<sup>st</sup> – *detect evil*, ~~*protection from evil*~~, *sanctuary*, *sanctuary*<sup>†</sup>; 2<sup>nd</sup> – *hold person*, *shield other*<sup>†</sup>; ~~*status*~~.

<sup>†</sup> = Domain spell. *Domains:* Chaos, Protection.

*Possessions:* Healer's kit, holy symbol of Trithereon, masterwork light mace, +1 *light wooden shield*.



## APL 6

### Encounter Two

**Orc War Party (4):** Male orc Bbn5; CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d12+15; hp 55; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (touch 11, flat footed 15); Base Atk +5; Grp +10; Atk +11 melee (2d4+8, +1 keen falchion/15-20); Full Atk +11 melee (2d4+8, +1 keen falchion/15-20); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., improved uncanny dodge, light sensitivity, rage 2/day, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 20, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6.

*Skills and Feats:* Listen +8, Spot +4, Survival +8; Improved Toughness\*, Power Attack.

*Possessions:* amulet of natural armor +1, +1 keen falchion, +1 studded leather armor.

\* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

### Encounter Six

**Advanced Dire Wolves (5):** CR 4; Large animal; HD 9d8+36; hp 76; Init +2; Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (touch 11, flat-footed 12); Base Atk +6; Grp +18; Atk +14 melee (2d6+11, bite); Full Atk +14 melee (2d6+11, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA trip; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 26, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Hide+0, Listen +9, Move Silently +4, Spot +10, Survival +2; Alertness, Improved Natural Attack, Run, Track, Weapon Focus [bite].

**Trip (Ex):** A dire wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip its opponent (+12 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the dire wolf.

### Encounter Eight

**Trithereon Zealots (2):** Male human (Oeridian) Ftr3/Rog2; CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 3d10+2d6+15; hp 45; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (touch 1, flat-footed 17); Base Atk +4; Grp +6; Atk +8 melee (1d8+2, masterwork longsword) or +8 melee (1d6+2, masterwork sap); Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+2, masterwork longsword) or +8 melee (1d6+2, masterwork sap); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, trap finding; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

*Skills and Feats:* Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Spot +8; Dodge, Improved Toughness\*, Power Attack, Weapon Focus [longsword], Weapon Focus [sap].

*Possessions:* +1 heavy wooden shield, masterwork longsword, masterwork sap, +1 chain shirt, tangle foot bag (2), thunderstone.

\* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

**Trithereon Cleric:** Male human (Oeridian) Clr5; CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d8+10; hp 38; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (touch 11, flat-footed 12); Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d6+2, +1 merciful light mace); full Atk +4 melee (1d6+2, +1 merciful light mace); SA turn undead 3/day; AL CG; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +10, Heal +12; Combat Casting, Dodge, Mobility.

*Spells Prepared* (5/5/4/3; save DC = 13 + spell level) 0 – create water (2), detect magic (2), light, 1<sup>st</sup> – cause fear, detect evil, ~~protection from evil~~, sanctuary, sanctuary†, 2<sup>nd</sup> – hold person (2), shield other\*, status, 3<sup>rd</sup> – ~~daylight~~, dispel magic, magic circle against law†.

† = Domain spell. *Domains:* Chaos, Protection.

*Possessions:* Healer's kit, holy symbol of Trithereon, +1 merciful light mace, +1 light wooden shield.

## Appendix Two: New Rules

### Improved Toughness [New Feat] (from *Complete Warrior*)

**Prerequisite:** Base Fortitude save bonus +2.

**Benefit:** You gain a number of hit points equal to your current Hit Dice. Each time you gain a Hit Die, such as by gaining a level, you gain 1 additional hit point. If you lose a Hit Die (such as by losing a level, you lose 1 hit point permanently.

## Appendix Three: Legwork

At various points throughout this adventure, the PCs will want to find out more information about certain topics. Have them make the appropriate skill checks, with higher checks resulting in more information. Other knowledge skills may be used, in addition to the ones listed, at the DM's discretion. The DM is reminded that each Gather Information check takes 1d4+1 hours. All DCs are increased by +5 for Bardic Knowledge checks.

**Ketter's Hearth** (Bardic Knowledge, Gather Information, Knowledge [Local: VTF]). Residents of Ketter's Hearth and members of the Protectors of the Gnarley metaorganization receive a +5 circumstance bonus on this check. **(NOTE: While within Ketter's Hearth, members of the Mounted Borderers, the Knights of the Faithful Defender, and noble house guards receive a -10 circumstance penalty due to the current events in the Viscounty.)**

**DC 10:** Ketter's Hearth is a struggling backwater town. Once populous, the population has dwindled as the town fell on hard times. Many businesses have shut their doors and moved on to greener pastures.

**DC 12:** The town was originally founded close to four-hundred years ago by Galthorn Ketter. An oeridian merchant, Ketter was pursuing rumors of a white tree that supposedly bore mithral leaves. He died while searching for the tree and local legend has it that his ghost haunts the more remote areas surrounding the town.

**DC 15:**

- The Mounted Borderers once had a command post in Ketter's Hearth, however recent events have substantially reduced the number of active Borderer's, forcing them to close the command post. The nearest one is in the town of Eglath, about a three day journey to the south west of the Hearth.
- The Veridicum, a white tower which served as a minster to Saint Cuthbert, has been closed for some time, after the acolytes of the cudgeller were recalled to Verbobonc City by Bishop Haufren.

**DC 17:**

- The town has had a rough winter – like much of the Viscounty. Requests to the Gnarley Druids for assistance in abating the harshness of winter's effects have gone unreturned, leaving those few residents with spellcasting abilities to deal with cold on their own.
- The mages of the Arcanum Referum, an organizational meeting place for members of the Wrinkle Academy, have closed the doors to the great institution of learning. A warning was posted for all to stay away.

**DC 20:**

- Wolves have been seen prowling the outermost areas of Ketter's Hearth in the evenings, looking for whatever food may be available. Though they have not killed anyone yet, the common folks of the town are fearful that it is only a matter of time before it happens.
- The folk have historically had amicable relations with the druids of the Gnarley Forest. However, all recent requests for aid have gone unanswered.

**Verbobonc – General Information and Current Events:** (Bardic Knowledge, Gather Information, Knowledge [Local: VTF]).

**DC 0:** Verbobonc is suffering from the effects of an unusually harsh winter, which begin in early Patchwall. The early winter destroyed much of the Viscounty's food crop, before the farmers could complete their harvest.

**DC 5:** Lord Saflynd has announced that his eldest son, Daffyd, is to marry. They are searching for the right lady for him.

**DC 7:** The town of Tristane, located in the southwestern part of the Viscounty, was recent found completely abandoned. There is no word on what happened to the citizens, but some rumors say that one of the citizens awoke an ancient spirit. Other rumors say they were captured by slavers in league with the orcs of the Black Spike, which have been in evidence in the Gnarley Forest and other places.

**DC 10:** Early this year, a food riot erupted in Verbobonc City as commoners, tired of the nobilities apparent lack of concern, stormed the capitol of Verbobonc. The Gentlemen of the Watch, the Mounted Borderers, and even the noble house guards were called in force to suppress the uprising.

**DC 12:** A large group of travelers were discovered murdered recently on Lord Avgustin's lands. The crime is commonly referred to as the Brewfest Massacre of Humming's End. Rumor has it a former paladin in the service of Lord Shannus is responsible.

**DC 15:** During the war last year, a group of brave adventurers journeyed to a plane of evil and recovered the missing Revnash Splinter, a holy artifact of Saint Cuthbert.

**DC 17:** Emissaries have been sent looking for the druids of the Old Faith to aid in abating the harshness of winter's effects. So far, all requests for assistance has fallen on deaf ears. Likewise with the elven clans of the Gnarley, who have begun taking a more militant stance against the perceived incursions by the towns that have sprung up in the great forest.

**DC 20:** Rumor has it the Elven Clans of the Gnarley have received ambassadors from the isolationist Kingdom of Celene, which lies south of the Viscounty.

**DC 22:** Someone has been buying up all the silver in Verbobonc. Accusations by Shannus have been made against the lycanthropes of the Ironwood, who – it is said – are buying it so that it will not be used against them when they launch their attack.

**DC 25:** Someone is making a power play for leadership of the Verbobonc underworld.

## Appendix Four: Environmental Conditions

### Exposure to Cold

Cold and exposure deal nonlethal damage to the victim. This nonlethal damage cannot be recovered until the PC gets out of the cold and warms up again. Once a PC is rendered unconscious through the accumulation of nonlethal damage, the cold and exposure begins to deal lethal damage at the same rate.

An unprotected PC in cold weather (below 40° F) must make a Fortitude save each hour (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. A PC who has the Survival skill may receive a bonus on this saving throw and may be able to apply this bonus to other PCs as well.

In conditions of severe cold or exposure (below 0° F), an unprotected PC must make a Fortitude save once every 10 minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check), taking 1d6 points of nonlethal damage on each failed save. A PC who has the Survival skill may receive a bonus on this saving throw and may be able to apply this bonus to other PCs as well. PCs wearing winter clothing only need check once per hour for cold and exposure damage.

A PC who takes any nonlethal damage from cold or exposure is beset by frostbite or hypothermia (treat her as fatigued). These penalties end when the PC recovers the nonlethal damage she took from the cold and exposure.

Extreme cold (below -20° F) deals 1d6 points of lethal damage per minute (no save). In addition, a PC must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Those wearing metal armor or coming into contact with very cold metal are affected as if by a *chill metal* spell.

## Appendix Five: Ketter's Hearth Glossary

This appendix serves as a brief and superficial summary of the places and people that reside in Ketter's Hearth.

**Arcanum Referum:** The abandoned Wrinkle Library. This refurbished elven tower was once the center of learning for many arcanists. The tower has been locked and most thinking people are smart enough to leave the building alone. An inscription on the door reads *"Come all ye with questions for answers can be found here. Come all ye who seek pain for we, the wielders of the arcane arts, will surely bring it to you."* It is unknown why the Wrinkle shut the library done and nothing the PCs can do will gain them entrance.

**Bearded Maiden:** An abandoned dwarven tavern. The establishment appears to be nothing more than a shack with a placard affixed to the door under which hangs a for sale sign. A wide staircase leads down to a grim sight. More than a dozen people now call The Bearded maiden home. It appears that the once rowdy tavern has been turned into a refuge for people driving from their homes in the surrounding area by the cold, starvation and animal attacks.

If questioned the refugees explain that the hard winter and increased animal attacks have driven them here. The PCs can easily see that all of the people are suffering from malnourishment. They implore the PCs for help. Cure spells will NOT help as the "damage" these people have is from starvation and exposure.

The refugees are cared for by Sheamalla (Grimlock's half-elven wife) and Leeya (half-elven woman, who works for Sheamalla and Grimlock). The tavern of the Two-Foot Traveler, run by a halfling man named Tracey, has been providing what assistance. Sheamalla comments on Tracey's uncanny ability to find enough food to feed everyone even with his food cellar almost completely empty.

**Bent Oak General Store:** The closest thing to a store in Ketter's Hearth, Bent Oak is run by a half-orc, Grimlock. Grimlock also ran the smithy, named appropriately enough "Grimlock's" but due to the economic circumstance it is now closed. The Bent Oak's selves are bare. If asked Grimlock explains that the Borderers appropriated most of his goods during the war and that trade is almost nonexistent in the winter. Grimlock shut down the smithy as he could no longer afford the taxes.

**Farthest Stone:** An empty Mounted Borderer outpost. This single stone tower surrounded by barracks, stables and a few hundred acres of farmland is about a days walk south of Ketter's hearth. Many of the farmers that worked this land can be found in Bearded Maiden. In the recent war all troops were reassigned to the front line. The complex remains unmanned due to the lack of personnel at this time.

**Grimlock:** The owner of the Bent Oak General Store and Grimlock's Smithy, Grimlock is a male half-orc and out of town at the moment – having left Ketter's Hearth in hope of finding supplies for the town. He has been gone of a little over two weeks.

**Grimlock's Smithy:** The local smithy is no longer is operation. The owner, Grimlock, can be found in the Bent Oak General Store.

**Hearth, The:** A stone hearth some 60ft wide is all that remains of some ancient structure for which the town is named. The massive hearth served as the informal gathering place for citizens of Ketter's Hearth as well as the center of the once thriving market place. Now it is a consent reminder of better days gone by and avoid by most of the town folk.

**Leeya:** Female half-elf. Leeya works for Grimlock and Shaemalla in the Bent oak general store. Since business has been so slow she has been acting as a care-giver to the refugees under the direction of Shaemalla.

**Nightbreeze:** Female elven druid. Nightbreeze is an adventurer all the town folk are certain that she unaware of their current plight. She is out of town at the moment.

**Shaemalla:** Female half-elven warrior. Shaemalla is the wife of Grimlock who owns The Bent Oak General Store and Grimlock's Smithy. She, along with Leeya and Tracey have doing what they can to hold the town together.

**Sheriff:** male human Expert/Warrior. The sheriff is gruff no nonsense law man. His main focus, especially in these difficult times, is making the few remaining citizens of Ketter's Hearth feel secure. The sheriff is a plain spoken, plain thinking man. He is not concerned with why some one committed a crime so long as they are punished for doing so.

**Tavern of the Two-Foot Traveler:** Owned by a halfling of some renowned Trice the Traveler, the Tavern of the Two-Foot Traveler is run by Tracey Fleetfoot, a cleric of Brandobaris. The tavern has a small alter, really no more than a stage by the fireplace, where the halfling pantheon is revered. Above the mantle the symbols of the halfling Pantheon are engraved in the stones that make up the hearth and a quote, written in halfling, flows throughout. It reads: "Adventure and risk are the spice of life, and stealth and subtlety are the tools of the trade. Seek excitement and danger wherever your feet take you, for risk-taking leads to life's greatest rewards. At the end of the day, the wildest tale is the greatest reward. Learn to tell a good yarn and sometimes your tongue will get you out of trouble." A DC 15 Knowledge [Religion] check (+5 bonus to halflings) reveals this to be a tenant of Brandobaris, the halfling god of adventure.

**Tracey Fleetfoot:** male Halfling. Tracey was brought to Verbobonc by Trice the Traveler after an excursion in Furyondy. He is secretly a cleric of Brandobaris but due to a sketchy past keeps that information to himself. He has opened the food stores of the 2 Foot to those in need but is quickly running out of resources. As such, he has been subsidizing the food shortage with a wand of create food. Unfortunately the wand is all but expended and he is fearful help will not come.

**Veridicum:** A tall white tower at the top of the bluff in Ketter's Hearth. The Veridicum has an elven design to it, but is a church to Saint Cuthbert, the patron deity of Verbobonc. The mammoth double doors of the entrance emblazoned with the Star of Saint Cuthbert that splits with the doors as they swing open. Relief show simple men and women standing righteously against onslaughts of evil. The main aisle that divides the 22 rows of dingy white pews, each carved with winding vines and leaves, leads to a large podium at the front of the structure. The ceiling of the Veridicum has a huge Star of Saint Cuthbert. Set within the massive holy symbol are 11 ruby colored windows representing the jewels in the Star. Despite the lack of active use, the minster shows no signs of neglect. A Spellcraft check (DC 25) reveals that this is due to the *hallow* spell that is still in affect.

**Woven Pine:** The Gnarley Ranger outpost is still in use although no rangers are present at the moment. The Woven Pine stands some 120ft tall and has a platform at the top from which to keep watch on the Gnarley. Guides familiar forest can often be found here.

**Unicorn's Mane:** a Small herbalist shop is still in operation selling many of the rarest ingredients found throughout the Gnarley. The shop is currently closed as the patrol, the elven druidess Nightbreeze is off adventuring.



## Appendix Six: Troubleshooting

### Non-combat resolutions:

It is possible for PCs to complete this adventure successfully without ever engaging in combat. The DM is encouraged to convey this to the players in a subtle manner so that they are aware that other options are possible. In no case, however, is the DM to 'lead players by the nose.'

### Intra-party Conflict and Opposition

This adventure is structured to encourage role-playing decisions in the resolution of the adventure. To aid in this goal, PCs that are members of the Family and the Mounted Borderers have been given specific assignments by their superiors. These assignments place them in opposition to one another. While the PCs are directed in their orders to not reveal them to others, it is possible, even likely, that such PCs will find themselves in conflict with each other.

While no combat between player PCs is required to complete this adventure, the potential for it to occur does exist. Player PCs may only engage in nonlethal combat with other player PCs.

A PC that assaults a Mounted Borderer may be arrested by the Borderer. In that event, the assaulting PC is charged with Assault and fined 50 gp and 2 TU. See For more information on this, and other laws of Verbobonc, refer to *The Laws of the Viscounty: A Guide to Justice in the Viscounty of Verbobonc*.

Again – under no circumstance is combat between players required in order to complete this adventure.

### Laws of the Viscounty

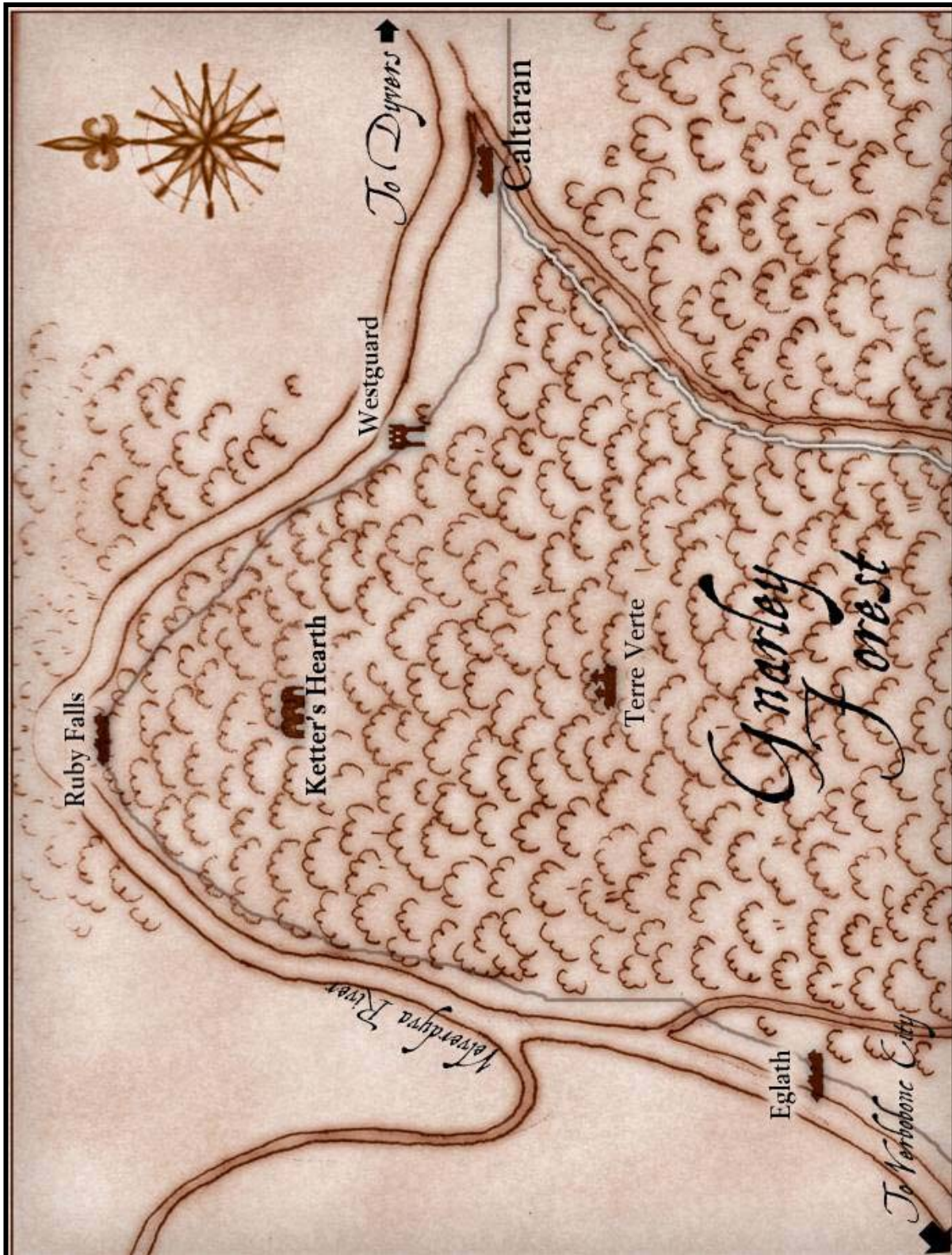
There are several instances in this adventure where the laws of Verbobonc directly impact the adventure. The DM is strongly encouraged to have a copy of *The Laws of the Viscounty: A Guide to Justice in the Viscounty of Verbobonc* available for review.

### Prisoner Interrogation

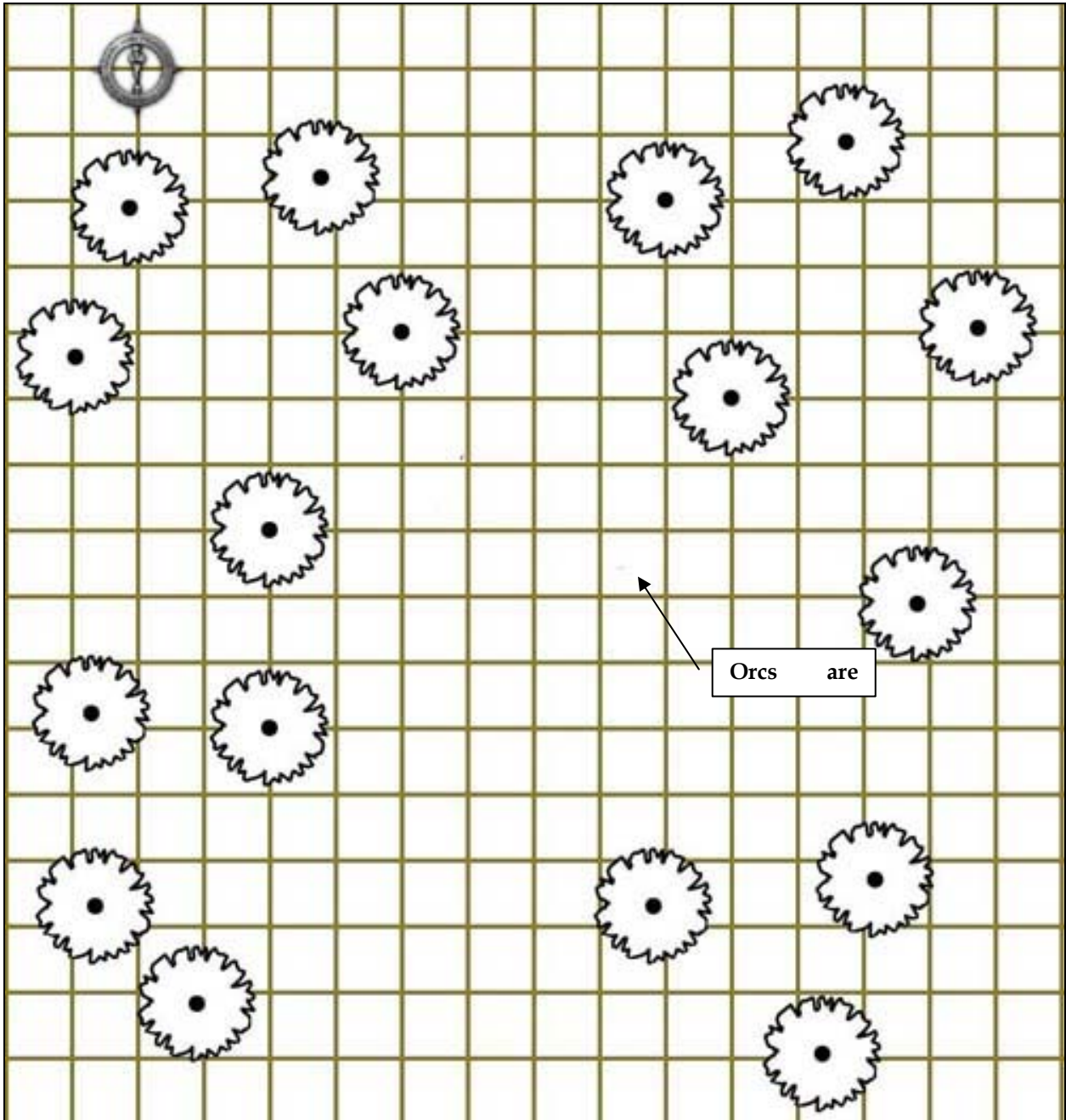
**Encounter Four** has a possible interrogation with a prisoner, Stegewood Boile. It is a law in Verbobonc that only a priest of Saint Cuthbert may use spells during the interrogation of an individual. Even then, the priest of Saint Cuthbert must be under the direction of someone with the power of Low Justice in Ketter's Hearth.

The PCs do not receive this permission from any NPC they encounter in this adventure, although it is possible that a PC may possess Low Justice by virtue of a metaorg or other benefit. Metaorgs possessing Low Justice include the Mounted Borderers (Knights of the Faithful Defender only) and the Mayor of Ketter's Hearth (Verbobonc Town Project)

Appendix Seven: Maps  
Northeastern Verboonc and northern Gnarley Forest

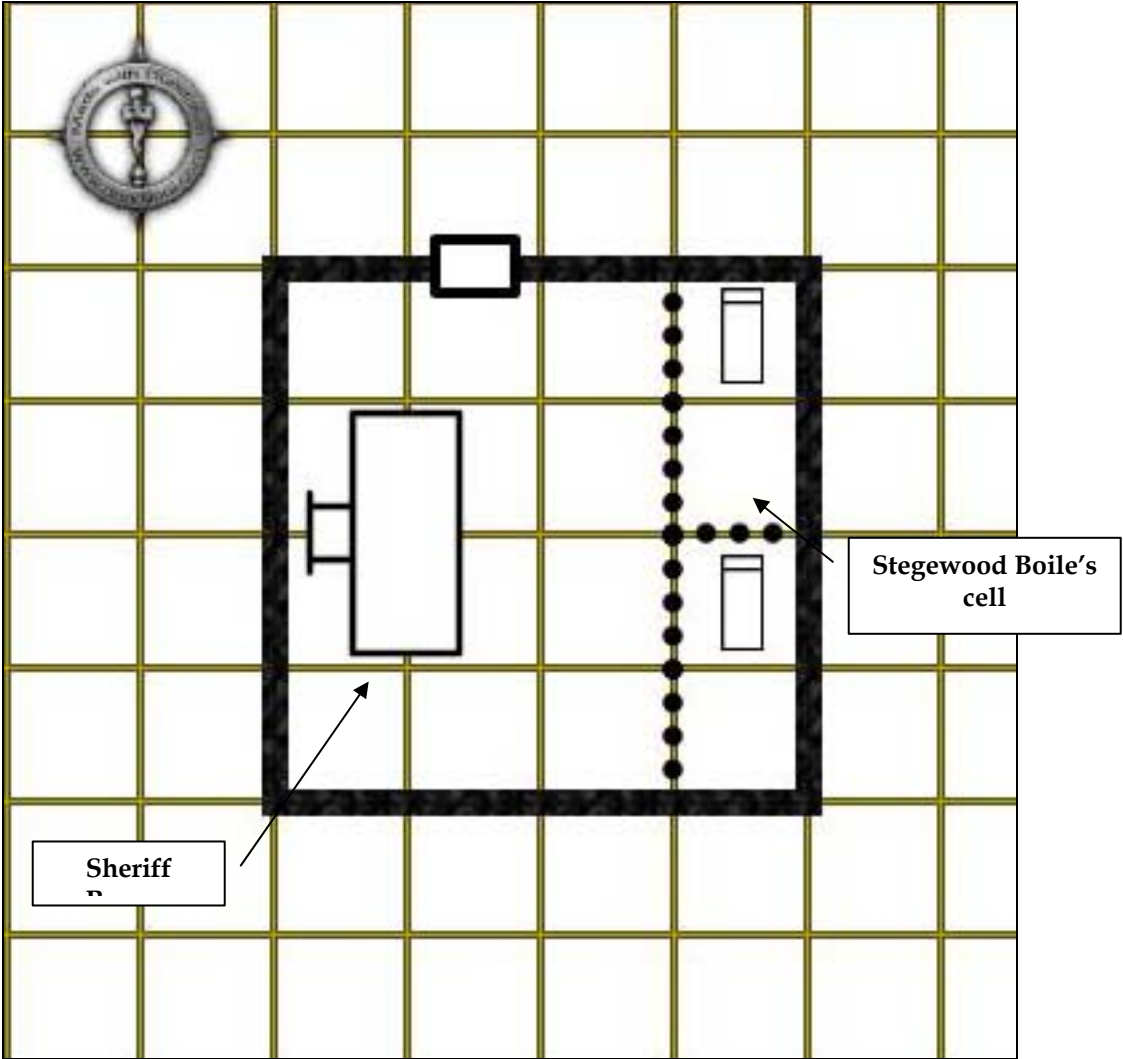


## Encounter Two: A Thorn in the Side

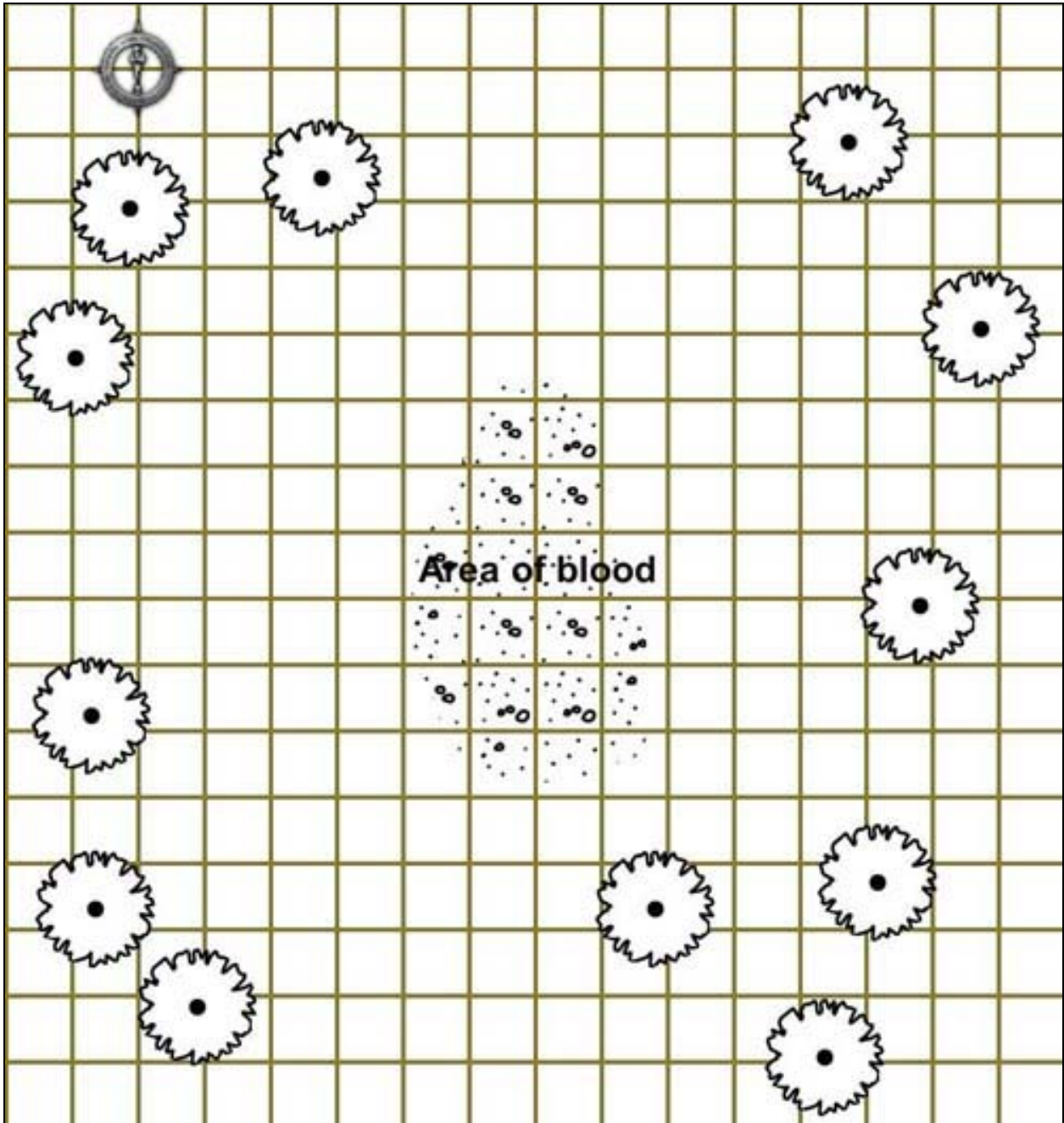




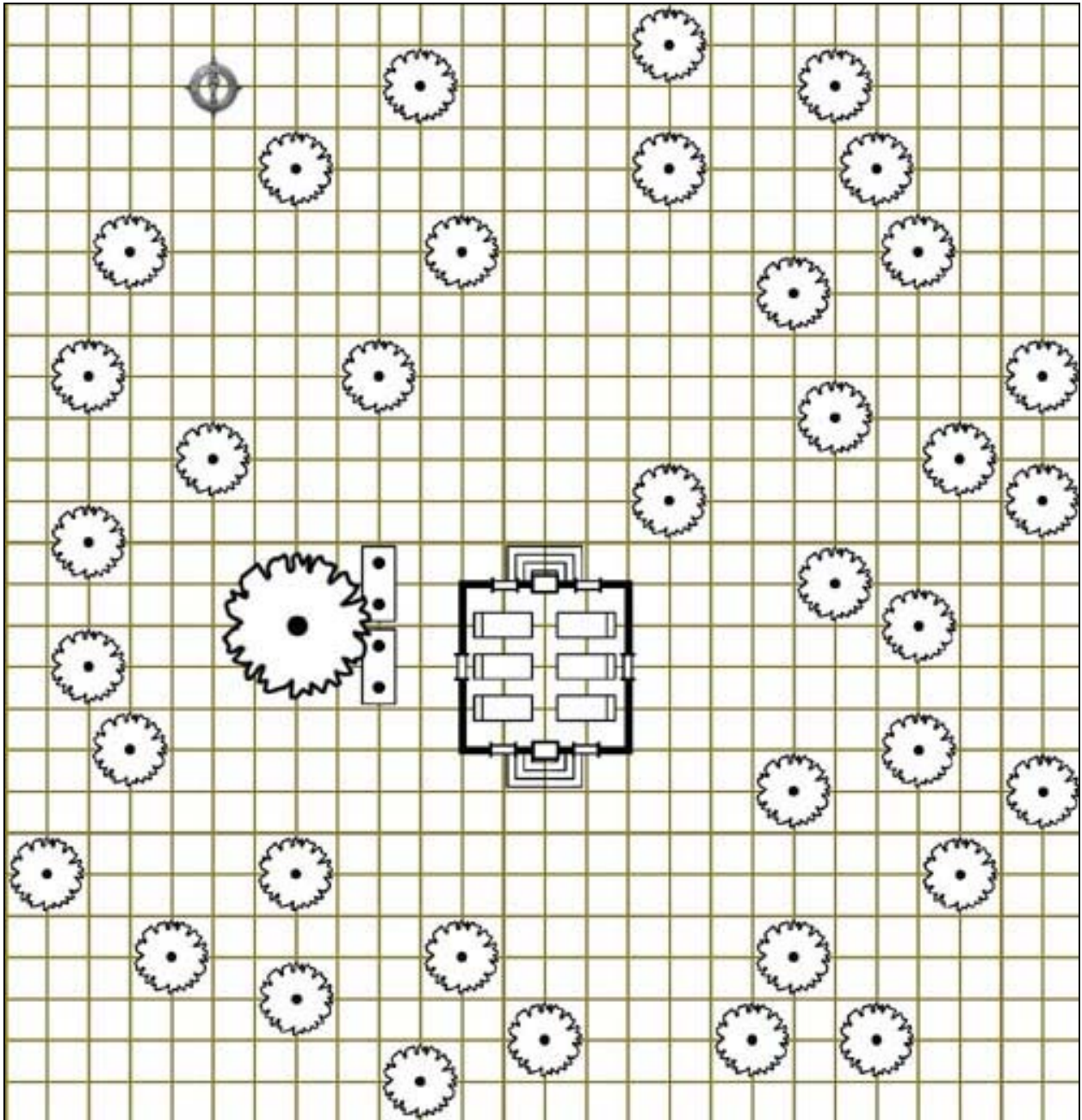
# Encounter Five: The Silence of the Scapegoat



## Encounter Seven: Winter's Bite



## Encounter Eight: Red-Handed



## **Player Handout #1**

### **Letter from Lord Estival**

Noble adventurer,

I find myself in need of a group of people with investigatory skills. A caravan shipment I have commissioned has gone missing in the northern Gnarley Forest, west of the town of Caltaran. This caravan carried foodstuffs for the common folks of Verbobonc City and surround towns suffering from the effects of the horrible winter which we have all endured.

I am currently in the town of Eglath, where the caravan was to first stop before traveling to Verbobonc City. If you will join me here in Eglath at the Wandering Minnow inn, I will explain my situation further. You will be compensated for your assistance.

With heartfelt thanks,

Wellborn Estival, Esquire.

## Player Handout #2: Assignment from the Mounted Borderers

Borderer,

A man by the name of Estival has contracted for Humming's End Shipping to deliver a food shipment from Caltaran to Verbobonc City. The caravan has gone missing near Ketter's Hearth, however we have learned that the local sheriff has a likely culprit in custody.

The prisoner, Stegewood Boile, has been linked with the Battirovka crime organization, but had a falling out some time ago. Boile has been out of the Viscounty proper for some time, and has been seen in some of the Gnarley towns and in Westguard and Caltaran. Boile has a history of petty larceny and theft, and he was last known to be in Caltaran.

You are to travel to the town of Eglath and meet up with representatives of Estival. From there, proceed to Ketter's Hearth, take custody of Boile along with any evidence, return to Eglath with Boile, and deliver him to Sergeant Veselyn.

Command knows that this food shipment has high visibility, particularly among the nobility - who have been accused of turning a blind eye toward the suffering of the people on their lands. The Viscount himself wants this resolved. Find whatever evidence you can to back up the conviction, but don't waste time. We're stretched out too far as it is. Get the goods, and bring the suspect back for trial.

Sergeant Veselyn in Eglath is authorized to take care of your billeting arrangements and other provisions.



Finally, word from Falls Keep in Twilight Falls is that they have encountered several orc war bands in the northern Gnarley. Our scouts have identified them as Blackthorn, by the black spike they have through their nose. If they're involved at all in this, report back here at your earliest opportunity. Under no circumstances are you to reveal any details of these orders to non-Borderer personnel. While we are working with Estival as a courtesy, this mission is under Borderer jurisdiction and under no account is he or any of his representatives to interfere.

### **Player Handout #3: Assignment from the Family**

To our relation!

Uncle has personally requested for you to undertake this assignment. Humming's End Shipping, one of our affiliate companies, was the principal delivery agent for a caravan of food coming by land from Caltaran to Verbobonc City. The caravan has gone missing in the northern Gnarley Forest, near the town of Ketter's Hearth.

The contractor, a man by the name of Estival, is someone seeking to make a name for himself in the eyes of the people and the Viscount.

The missing caravan isn't so much of an issue as is the person accused of the theft. Stegewood Boile used to be one of us before he had an accident several years ago. The accident left him diminished in his mental faculties, but if he were brought before a trial, the information about our operations that he has could prove embarrassing.

Estival and his agents are traveling to Ketter's Hearth to investigate the situation. You are to travel to the town of Eglath and meet with Estival and his representatives at the Wandering Minnow Inn, using the cover of representatives of Humming's End Shipping. This should provide you access to Boile and to the crime scene.

It is our wish for Boile to be removed from the equation. How he is removed is of no consequence so, to that end, the manner

of his removal is entirely within your discretion. What is imperative is that Boile does not return to stand trial.

With this, please find a bag containing five-hundred wheatsheves to assist in facilitating your transactions.

Also, we understand that Estival has made contact with the local Mounted Borderers regarding the loss of his caravan, so it is possible that some of their agents will be traveling with you. Exercise all due caution - under no circumstances are the Borderers or Estival's agents to learn of your 'motives'.

## Player Handout #4

### Unsigned Letter to Boile

Boile,

Be sure you lead the caravan along the northern Gnarley road. That's all you need to do. We'll take of the rest. You'll be rewarded once we get you out.

## Player Handout #5

### Letter to Boile from Bernard

Stegewood,

It was great to finally hear from you again. The whole family had given up hope of ever hearing from you again. I'm so glad to hear you've finally gotten your life together after your accident.

House Langmuir has been very good to me. While many don't like them, they've treated me well enough. They've even made sure we're well fed during this winter. I've spoken with Lord Adan Langmuir and he's agreed to bring you into the House on the condition that you can get here quickly. I've vouched for you, so don't let me down.

Lord Adan tells me there's a caravan leaving for Verbobonc City from Caltaran in the next few days. Here's a few wheatsheves to cover your passage with the caravan. Once you arrive, I'll meet you and get you settled in.

Take care and I'll see you when you arrive.

Your friend,

Bernard Alberson

## **Player Handout #6**

### **Instructions from Adan Langmuir**

Guardsman,

Our 'agent' is traveling with the caravan along the northern Gnarley road. When you strike, be sure to kill all of the guards, but only knock Boile out and leave him for the sheriff to find. Boile's history with him will be enough for the sheriff to pin the blame on him. By the time they realize he's not involved in this, you'll have the food and be a long way from Ketter's Hearth.

Once you've obtained the food, wait for my word before returning.

Adan Langmuir

## Player Handout #7

### Instructions from Vershan

Benan,

The caravan is traveling along the northern Gnarley road from Caltaran. When you strike, be sure to kill all of the guards, but be sure you only knock Boile out for the sheriff to find and leave evidence of Langmuir's involvement, but don't make it obvious. If the tabards aren't found, Boile's history with the sheriff should be enough to pin the blame on him. If they are found, so much the better.

Once you've obtained the food, wait for my word before returning.

Vershan

**Player Handout #8**  
**Letter to Benan from Captain Yronl**

Benan,

It was nice to see you last year at the funeral and I am very glad to hear that our purpose has found its way into your heart as well. However, you need to exercise care lest you be discovered. There are many that are not tolerant and if we are to change those attitudes, we must work slowly to convince people that we are for them.

Lady Elise sends her regards as well. I think you made quite the impression on her when you were here last and she has asked after you several times. You would do well to perhaps return for a visit sometime.

Be well and be careful.

As always,

Yronl



# Critical Event Summary

*(please submit this to the Verbobonc Triad before June 1, 2006)*

List all PCs affiliated with a Verbobonc metaorganization that participated in this adventure.

<u>PC Name</u>	<u>Player Name</u>	<u>Verbobonc Metaorg Affiliation</u>
1)		
2)		
3)		
4)		
5)		
6)		

Was Stegewood Boile convicted of participating in the theft?

Did the PCs provide 'evidence' implicating House Langmuir in the theft of the food?

Was evidence of the Church of Trithereon's framing of House Langmuir discovered?

Was evidence connecting House Avgustin to the Church of Trithereon discovered?

Did the PCs assist in the conspiracy to frame House Langmuir?

Did the PCs deliver the druid's message?

Did they keep their word and leave the forest?

Did the party make a connection between Vershan and Bernard (as Alber's aliases)?

Did the PCs do anything noteworthy? If so, note the details here and on the back if necessary.