



BAURGAR'S PRIZE



**An adventure for
6th – 9th level characters**

by Jolly R. Blackburn



ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This adventure begins with the premise of the adventuring party being in the wrong place at the wrong time. After investigating what's become of a missing merchant caravan, the party is led to a cave deep in the forest, where the thieves have apparently retreated with their ill-gotten loot and hostages.

What the party doesn't know is that they have unwittingly stumbled into a brewing war between two rival bugbear factions — a war that's about to come to a head.

The occupants of the cave are expecting trouble in the worst way, and have prepared accordingly. They have dug in, are in a high state of alert, and have bolstered their defenses -- putting in place reactionary tactics in anticipation of the assault they know is coming.

All of this could mean a bad day for the party.

BACKGROUND: KEEGAR'S HAND

Four years ago, a large group of slaves escaped from a prison barge that ran aground on a mudbank while moving up the Soult River.

Comprised of mixed humanoid races, these slaves had been trained in the fighting stables on an Absorian slave wrangler's estate and then sold to the highest bidder. The battle-worn menagerie was being transported upstream to fight, and ultimately die, in the Grand Arena (Grod Mondre) of Fangaerie when fate intervened.

Numbering almost five score, the group, consisting of bugbears, orcs, goblins, kobolds and even a pair of gnomes, were led by a fierce alpha-bugbear named Keegar. Under his command, the small army of escapees began fighting their way across the inner gut of civilization in a bid to maintain their freedom and a desire to ultimately return to their native lands.

For months they managed to evade recapture while raiding country estates to feed and equip themselves. Increasingly hemmed in on all sides by armies sent out to destroy them, and despite the fact that Keegar refused to be drawn into mass engagements, the group was slowly whittled down in size.

Hounded, "Keegar's Hand," as they came to be known, eventually reached the dense Sadok and found refuge

in the forested labyrinths within. Here, for the past few years they've been using the forest and ravines as a base from which to launch hit-and-run raids on the surrounding trade routes and settlements. In particular, they've been a thorn in the side of the town of Teron.

After arriving in the Sadok, Keegar further solidified his dominance over the group which had been reduced by attrition to less than sixty in number.

The bugbear chieftain was keen on maintaining the fighting strength of the group while at the same time intent on wreaking revenge on those who had put him under the whip and robbed him of his freedom for so many years. His hatred of humans was so great, he swore an oath to take the battle to them — only on his terms.

Unfortunately for him, tension in the ranks steadily grew as the months passed. With 46 male bugbears in the group and no females, Keegar found it increasingly difficult to maintain his authority.

With no way to propagate the tribe, or to bleed off pent up aggression within the group, many of the younger males began demanding the band pick up and move on and find others of their kind (especially females). Many of the bugbear warriors also resented the mixed-racial makeup of the group and having to share the spoils of battle, especially when it was felt they shouldered most of the risk when scouting and conducting raids.

Through it all, Keegar stubbornly refused to budge — even as mounting frustration led to his leadership being directly challenged by would-be usurpers.

Finally, just a few weeks ago, it all came to a head when the battle-seasoned bugbear, Baurgar turned on his friend and chief. Backed by the younger warriors in the band, he instigated a coup d'état.

When the smoke cleared, Baurgar had been blinded in one eye and shamed. The rogue bugbears slipped away into the night, taking a pair of prized trained war dogs and several goblins with them.

Baurgar had initially planned on taking his rogue warriors north through the forests and slowly making the 350 mile trek to the Galon Hill country (where he knew other bugbear clans would be found) — raiding villages and settlements along the way to provision and reequip themselves.

Those plans soon changed. As fate would have it, Baurgar and his warriors ran across a merchant caravan making its way along the Ludder Road, and ambushed it. Among the spoils taken from the wagons was a rare and valuable prize — a female bugbear slave being transported to eventually serve as a “comfort bugbear” for the victors in the pit fight arenas of Teron.

Scouts sent by Keegar to follow the rogues immediately picked up the scent of the female and reported the news back to their chief.

Realizing what was sure to come, Baurgar abandoned his plans of heading north for the time being. He made his way with hostages from the caravan, loot and his prize to the Ma’Kurun Caverns just a few day’s journey to the north.

Held by a small group of goblins that Keegar’s Hand had traded with in the past, Baurgar knew it to be the most defensible piece of real estate in the area. It is his best hope of defending his prize and making a final stand.

HISTORY OF THE CAVERNS

The Ma’Kurun Caverns have a long history, and have been more or less continuously occupied by various monsters and groups down through the centuries. Local legends still tell of the infamous minotaur, Kratt who lived in the caverns over a century ago. Another legend speaks of a witch in the caverns.

A few years ago a group of Sar’Dyn Mara cultists (see **KODT #201**) cleared out the caverns as best they could to establish a subterranean shrine to the Grawdygian agent Slyth. They, in turn, were run out by a roving group of goblins who have more or less controlled the caverns for the past two years.

The goblins were unable to eradicate all the monsters in the cave, but learned to more or less co-exist with them, even incorporating a few into their defensive trap network. When they eventually established trade relations with Kreegar’s Hand, they were often employed by the bugbear chieftain as scouts — eyes and ears for his raiding parties.

When Baurgar arrived at the caverns two weeks ago with his prize, his warriors quickly seized the caverns as their own and subjugated the goblins who survived the battle, forcing them into their ranks.

THE COMING STORM

When Keegar learned of a female bugbear in Baurgar’s possession, he was enraged. He had his scouts track the rogues down. After learning that they were holed up in the Ma’Kurun caverns, (“ants in a bottle” as he described it), he sent a message to his rival instructing him to give up the female and the rogue warriors. In return, Baurgar would be allowed safe passage out of the Sadok. Baurgar was given two days to comply.

That was four days ago.

Since that time, tensions both in Keegar’s camp and the caverns have been high. Keegar has been preparing to make his move and Baurgar has been busy setting up defenses and preparing to make a final stand.

ENTER OUR HEROES

Ultimately, it’s up to the GM how and why the party ends up stumbling across the Ma’Kurun Caverns and thus kicking the adventure into motion.

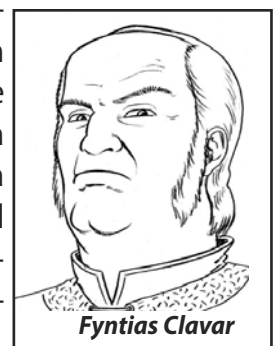
The following is but one suggested hook to nudge them in that direction.

SET UP: While the party is visiting or residing in the town of Teron, worrisome news begins to circulate that a merchant caravan that had been due to arrive from Torchgal (D707H05) is a day late.

As the day progresses, further news spreads that travellers arriving from the south reported passing several burned out wagons along the road as well as the remains of a half-dozen bodies that had been gutted and horribly mutilated.

The site has all the markings of yet another bugbear ambush perpetrated by Keegar’s Hand.

The caravan’s arrival had been greatly anticipated. For not only was it hauling the usual goods and commodities from Torchgal and beyond, but it had also been escorting the twin teenage daughters of **Fyntias Clavar**, a wealthy merchant in Teron and a generous benefactor to several public projects (including contributing to the fund for rebuild-



ing the Temple of the Guardian).

The reported body count (and some simple math) suggests that at least four members of the caravan are missing and presumably taken captive.

Fearing Keegar's Hand is attempting to lure his patrol into a secondary ambush (a tactic they have used previously), **Tential Clast**, the Captain of the Patrol, has refused to send out his men. He is concerned it would leave the town exposed. Nearly two-thirds of the men assigned to him were dispatched a few days ago to escort a shipment of gold to Abos and aren't due to return for two more days. He insists on waiting until they return before taking any action.

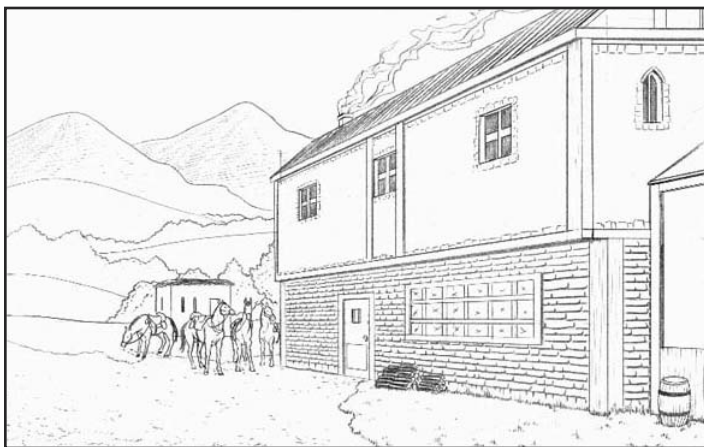
Angered by the lack of response, Fyntias Clavar has taken matters into his own hands. He has sent messengers to all the local watering holes announcing that he is offering a 250 silver piece reward to anyone who liberates his daughters and returns them to him.

This, of course, is the cue for our gallant party of adventurers to step forward and accept the challenge.

Fyntias makes it known he will be at the **Twist of Fate Inn** the remainder of the day to discuss the mission with any takers.

MEETING WITH FYNTIAS: When the party sits down with Fyntias he understandably feels an enormous sense of urgency and will insist the party leave immediately. Distraught with worry, he lovingly describes his 14 year old daughters (Malyia and Bel'sanya) and insists that he 'feels' they are still alive.

"A father knows!" he explains.



The **Twist of Fate Inn** in Teron

If the party doesn't have horses, he will loan the party mounts in order to speed their journey to the ambush site. Also, if pushed (and at the GM's discretion), he will provide several men-at-arms to accompany the group.

THE AMBUSH SITE

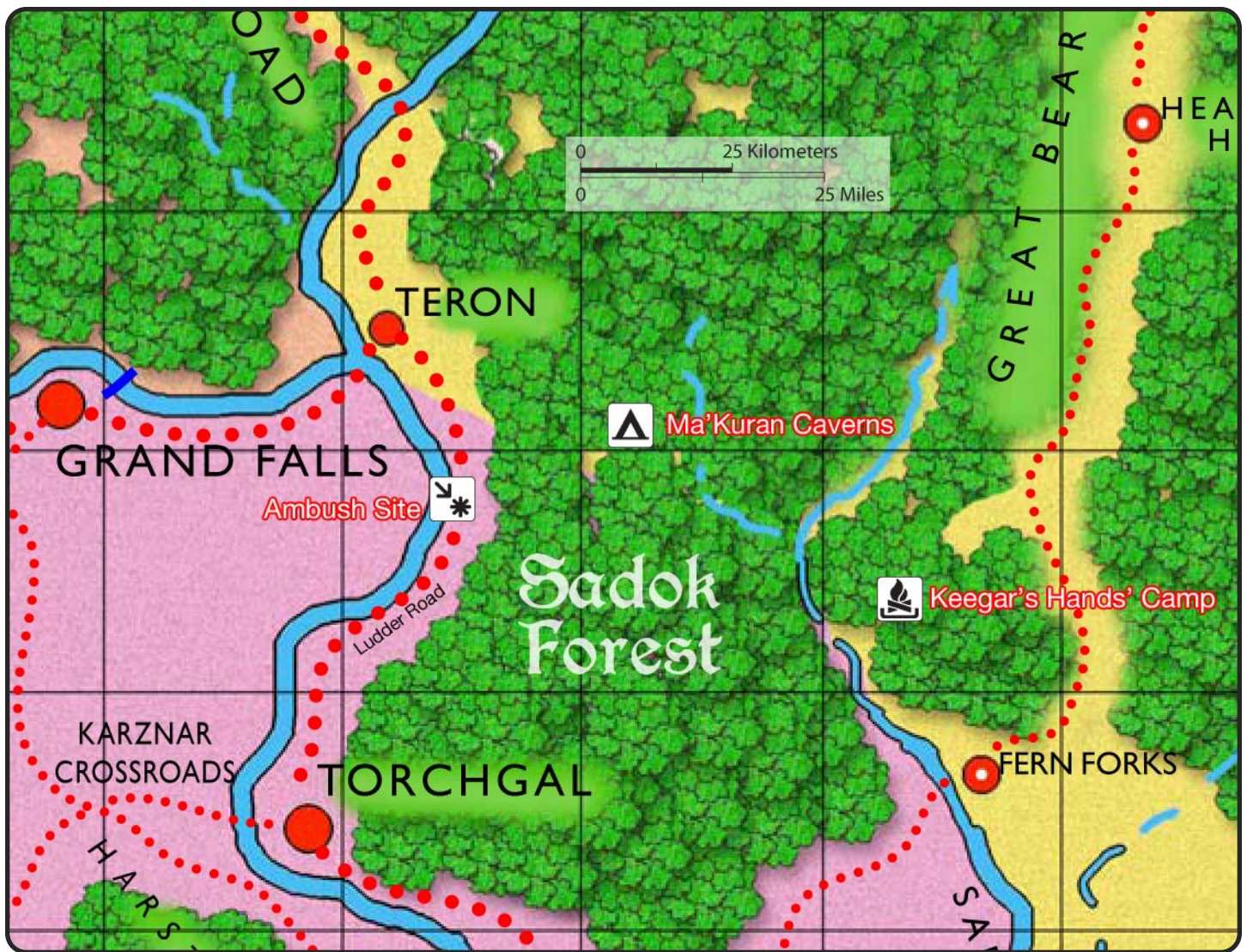
The site of the caravan ambush is approximately 25 miles south of Teron, just off the Ludder Road.

By the time the party arrives, the scene has been picked over pretty thoroughly both by thieves and scroungers. The slain horses have been gutted and cut up for their meat and carted away. What remains has attracted scavengers (crows, foxes, wolves and the like). Worse, any tracks on the immediate site left by Baurgar's raiding party have been muddied up and hopelessly obscured.

A few good samaritans have gathered the bodies of the victims and buried them in a shallow mass grave covered with rocks for later recovery. Should the party disinter the bodies to investigate, they will learn that the slain have been butchered by Baurgar and his warriors and that the choicest meats and organs have been taken. They will also learn all the bodies are those of adults and that the twin girls are not among the corpses.

Although the site has been muddied up with ancillary tracks, the bugbears left heavily laden with loot and made no effort to cover their tracks. Anyone venturing into the forest just off the road looking for tracks can make a check (**Tracking:** \blacktriangledown \diamond -80 [easy]). Success indicates a clear set of tracks leading roughly to the northeast has been detected. Anyone possessing average or better mastery in Tracking can ascertain that ten large creatures departed the area along with four sets of human tracks.

Tracking the group will be fairly easy. Recent rains have made the forest floor muddy and soupy and the tracks are deep and noticeable. In some areas where patches of rocky croppings are encountered (common to the area) or where streams are crossed, the trail will appear to grow cold. Successful **Tracking** checks (\blacktriangledown \diamond -80 [easy]) however will quickly pick up the trail again. They will also reveal that beads from



a prayer necklace have been dropped in conspicuous places. (Beads left by the resourceful twins to aid any would-be rescuers).

The caverns are approximately 25 miles from the ambush site. The first 12 miles or so, traveling by horse, presents no problems. After that point, however, the party will enter into the very rough and hilly ravine country the Sadok Forest is famous for. At that point, horses will become a hindrance to progress and the party should be persuaded to abandon any mounts or leave them in the care of a hireling left behind to watch them.

Depending on when the party left Teron, and their progress, they can be expected to have to camp at least once on their way to the caverns.

Note: By this time, Keegar has learned of Baurgar's "prize" and through his scouts has learned they have holed up in the Ma'Kurun Caverns. He's also delivered his

ultimatum to the rogue warriors and is waiting for a response. There's a chance Keegar's scouts will detect the party's presence in the forest as they shuffle back and forth relaying information. Likewise, there is a chance the party will detect Keegar's scouts. It is left to the GM whether or not this happens and when. It's quite possible one side will detect the other and manage to remain unnoticed themselves.

THE MA'KURUN CAVERNS

By the time the party reaches the area where the caverns lie, they will find the trail leads them to the basin of a particularly narrow and deep ravine. The sides of the ravine are rocky and rise up 50 to 75 feet as it wends its way through the forest.

Ancient oaks and thick fern beds line the tops of the ravine walls forming a sort of canopy overhead that creates perpetual shadow and patches of dim

light below. The goblins occupying the caverns are quite comfortable in this environment and suffer no ill effect from sunlight even during daylight hours.

As the party draws closer to the caverns they will notice an increase of runs and footpaths — created by the goblins' constant foraging for food in the immediate area.

1: ENTRANCE

Just up ahead, emerging from the steep rocky bank of one side of the ravine you see the yawning maw of a dark cave. Fringed by bushes on either side, a well beaten foot path leads into it. Bits of gnawed bones, rotted pieces of clothing and the feces from what appears to be a rather large animal litter the entrance area.

- ❑ ENCOUNTER: 2 Goblin Sentries; 1a, 1b (44 EPs)
- ❑ TRAP/CHALLENGE: Owlbeast feces (meant to mislead)
- ❑ Yield: 3 s.p. on Goblin 1a, half-jug of ale, 4 light crossbows, 8 bolts, two short swords, brass alarm horn
- ❑ STORY: Discovering Caverns (200 EP)

The entrance to the caverns lies at the base of a steep rocky hillside, nestled away in one of many off shoots of the deep ravine. Surrounded on three sides by the cliff-like walls of the ravine, a narrow well-beaten foot path leads right up to the mouth.


A small clearing standing before it, the entrance is situated so that it's abruptly revealed when making a last sharp turn on the path.


There are two thick clumps of bushes on either side of the entrance. Goblin sentries (one to the left and one to the right) have been posted here by Baurgar. Badly beaten and mistreated by their new masters, the goblins have been tossing a jug of kromian ale taken from the caravan back and forth. Although slightly inebriated they are on a high state of alert due to the impending attack by Keegar that is expected. They have a clear view of the path leading up to the entrance and anyone approaching on it.

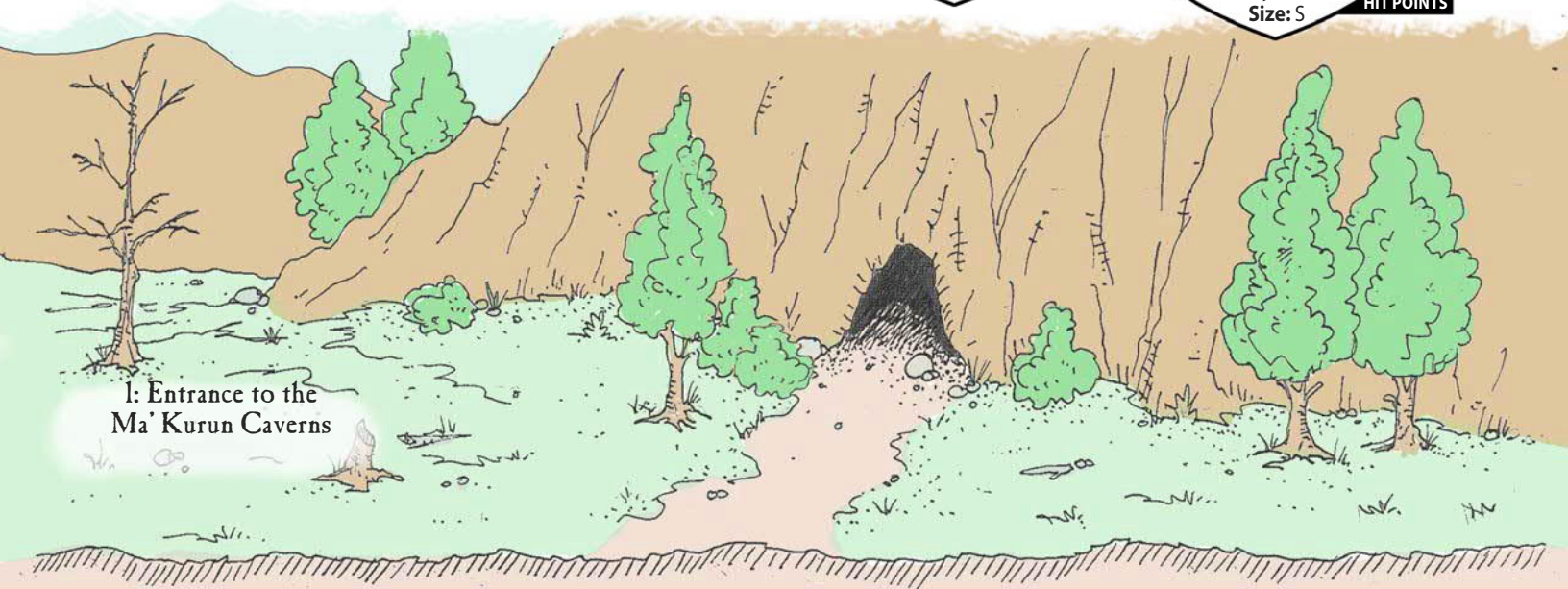
(Sneaking Check: $\text{d6} + \text{Sneaking mastery vs. } \text{d6} + \text{goblin's Observation mastery [18] + 80 [situational bonus]}$)

The goblins are well hidden within the bushes **(Observation Check:** $\text{d6} + \text{Observation mastery vs. } \text{d6} + \text{goblin's Hiding mastery [10] + 80 [situational bonus for 90% cover]}$).

There are several large piles of owlbeast feces scattered on the trail about twenty feet from the entrance. This is a goblin tactic designed to scare large predators from investigating the caverns further.

1a	PAA'KLE GOBLIN	
Crossbow		
SPEED see text	ATTACK +3	INIT +3
DEFENSE +1	DAMAGE 2d6p	DMG REDUCTION 2
line of sight REACH	THRESHOLD 8	TOP SAVE 6
Jog Movement: 5 Tenacity: Nervous Size: S		22 HIT POINTS

1b	WRAN'KLE GOBLIN	
Crossbow		
SPEED see text	ATTACK +3	INIT +3
DEFENSE +1	DAMAGE 2d6p	DMG REDUCTION 2
line of sight REACH	THRESHOLD 8	TOP SAVE 6
Jog Movement: 5 Tenacity: Nervous Size: S		20 HIT POINTS



1: Entrance to the Ma' Kurun Caverns

Both goblins have two loaded light crossbows resting next to them in their hide outs. If approaching intruders are detected, they will sit quietly hoping the owlbeast scat discourages them from approaching further. Should it fail to deter intruders, they will open fire.

After their initial shot, Goblin 1b will attempt to sound the alarm horn he has at his guard position. If confronted by more than 4 foes approaching their position, they must make morale checks. Success indicates one or both grabs their auxiliary loaded crossbow and attempts a snapshot a second later (suffering a -6 attack penalty). Failure indicates they grab the crossbows and dart inside the entrance to join their mates (**Morale Check:** + lead attacker's CHA morale modifier vs. + goblin's tenacity [-4]).

A search of the bush sentry positions will reveal rotted bedding, the half empty jug of ale and a pouch with 8 bolts.

Goblin(s) Captured?: If one or both of the goblins are captured alive and are interrogated they will yield information only on a successful Interrogation check (**Interrogation Check:** + Interrogation mastery vs. + goblin's alcohol-compromised Resist Persuasion mastery [03]).

Goblin 1a knows enough Common to convey simple information. Goblin 1b only speaks the Goblin tongue. If promises of being spared are made, they will be a bit more forthcoming.

ENTRANCE CHAMBER (CONTINUED)

There are two passageways — one on either side of the room leading out.

- Encounter:** 2 Guard Dogs; 2a, 2b (168 EPs)
2 Bugbears; 2c, 2d (350 EPs)
- Trap/challenge:** Nil
- Yield:** 2 Kegs of Kromian Ale (40 spv each), 4 bolts of fabric (15 spv each), 1 bugbear charm (spent/non-magical).
- Story:** n/a

Baugar keeps two bugbears posted in this chamber at all times. One is to be awake while the other sleeps (30% chance one is sleeping unless alerted by the goblins in **Area 1**).

Two guard dogs are kept in this room and have been trained to stay in the area at the base of the stone steps leading down from the entrance.

Both dogs are of the local wild sturdy variety found in packs that roam the Sadok and have had years of training and running with the bugbear scouts. As such, both have an upgraded tenacity of Fearless. Check for both dogs (**Listening:** -80 [easy]; *dog's Listening mastery is 90*) if the goblins in **Area 1** sound the alarm OR if there is any melee combat outside). In addition, both dogs should be allowed a check against any invisible* creatures attempting to move down the steps or versus those attempting to move surreptitiously (**Sneaking Check:** + Sneaking mastery vs. + dog's Detect Scent mastery [40]).

* *Invisibility provides a +90% situational bonus to Sneaking*

Once the dogs have been alerted, they will bark furiously. They are untethered and will immediately run and attack any intruders on sight. (**Note:** because the dogs are not fully acclimated to the goblin presence in the group there is a 20% chance per dog that they will attack any goblins from **Area 1** who suddenly bolt down the steps and startle the beasts.


Once the bugbears (2c, 2d) have been alerted to intruders, they will immediately attempt to drive them back up the steps. If the opportunity presents itself, both bugbears will pick up rocks from the fire

2: ENTRANCE CHAMBER



You are standing in a large dome-shaped cavern approximately fifty feet in diameter. Gypsum-white stalactites hang from the ceiling, on the edges of the walls they have dripped down forming faux curtains along the fringes of the room. The floor is packed pebbly clay, littered with small smooth stones and bits of decayed wood.


On the far end of the chamber is clear evidence of it being occupied. A large pile of moldy straw arranged for bedding and a darkened fire pit ringed with stones. Firewood is piled near by as well as two oaken kegs.

2a **Guard Dog** 

Bite Attack

SPEED 10	INIT -2
ATTACK +3	DMG REDUCTION 2
DEFENSE +3	DAMAGE 2d4p +2
REACH 1'	THRESHOLD 12
TOP SAVE 9	HIT POINTS 30


Jog Movement: 15
Tenacity: Fearless
Size: M

2b **Guard Dog** 

Bite Attack

SPEED 10	INIT -2
ATTACK +3	DMG REDUCTION 2
DEFENSE +3	DAMAGE 2d4p +2
REACH 1'	THRESHOLD 11
TOP SAVE 9	HIT POINTS 29

Jog Movement: 15
Tenacity: Fearless
Size: M


2c **KABORE** 

BUGBEAR

Morning Star

SPEED 10	INIT -1
ATTACK +7	DMG REDUCTION 5
DEFENSE +7	DAMAGE 2d8p +4
REACH 4'	THRESHOLD 18
TOP SAVE 8	HIT POINTS 46

Jog Movement: 10
Tenacity: Steady
Size: L

2d **HAPPAURI** 

BUGBEAR

Battle Axe

SPEED 11	INIT -1
ATTACK +7	DMG REDUCTION 4
DEFENSE +8	DAMAGE 4d3p +4
REACH 4'	THRESHOLD 17
TOP SAVE 8	HIT POINTS 43

Jog Movement: 10
Tenacity: Steady
Size: L



pit and hurl them across the room and at the steps. They will also shout to alert their brethren waiting deeper in the caverns.


Tactics: Note that Baurgar's plan is to NOT send reinforcements to **Area 2** to engage the intruders. He wants to avoid a toe-to-toe fight with Keegar's warriors since he has superior numbers. He wishes to draw his foes in deeper where he can limit intruders to a one or two man front.

After sustaining wounds amounting to 50% of their hit points or after approximately 20 seconds of combat (whichever occurs first) both bugbears will attempt to flee out the passageway leading to **Area 5**. (Their orders are to delay any intruders until defenders below are alerted and have time to ready themselves and then to attempt to lure their pursuers down the steps to **Area 7** into an ambush.

Baurgar's Tactics: A quick note on the bugbear tactics and Baurgar's leadership. During their time at the gladiatorial fighter camps, the bugbear slaves were drilled and trained constantly on hand-to-hand combat. On that count they can be considered as being typical of other bugbears and "by-the-book". They were also trained however in staged group battles for the arenas. Often against humans and mixed races. A crowd favorite in the arenas of Abos and Fangaerie where small opposing units pitted against one another as though on the field of battle. In addition, Baurgar has had nearly a week to prepare against the assault he knows is coming from Keegar and the Hand. Remember the bugbear's have special advantages. They utilize one initiative die lower & -1 to that roll; Shield use (e.g., medium shields increase Defense from 0 to +6); standard body armor provides 6 DR (unarmored bugbears have 3 DR); Hiding 50%, Listening 40%, Observation 50%, Sneaking 50%. Damage by weapon with +4 bonus.

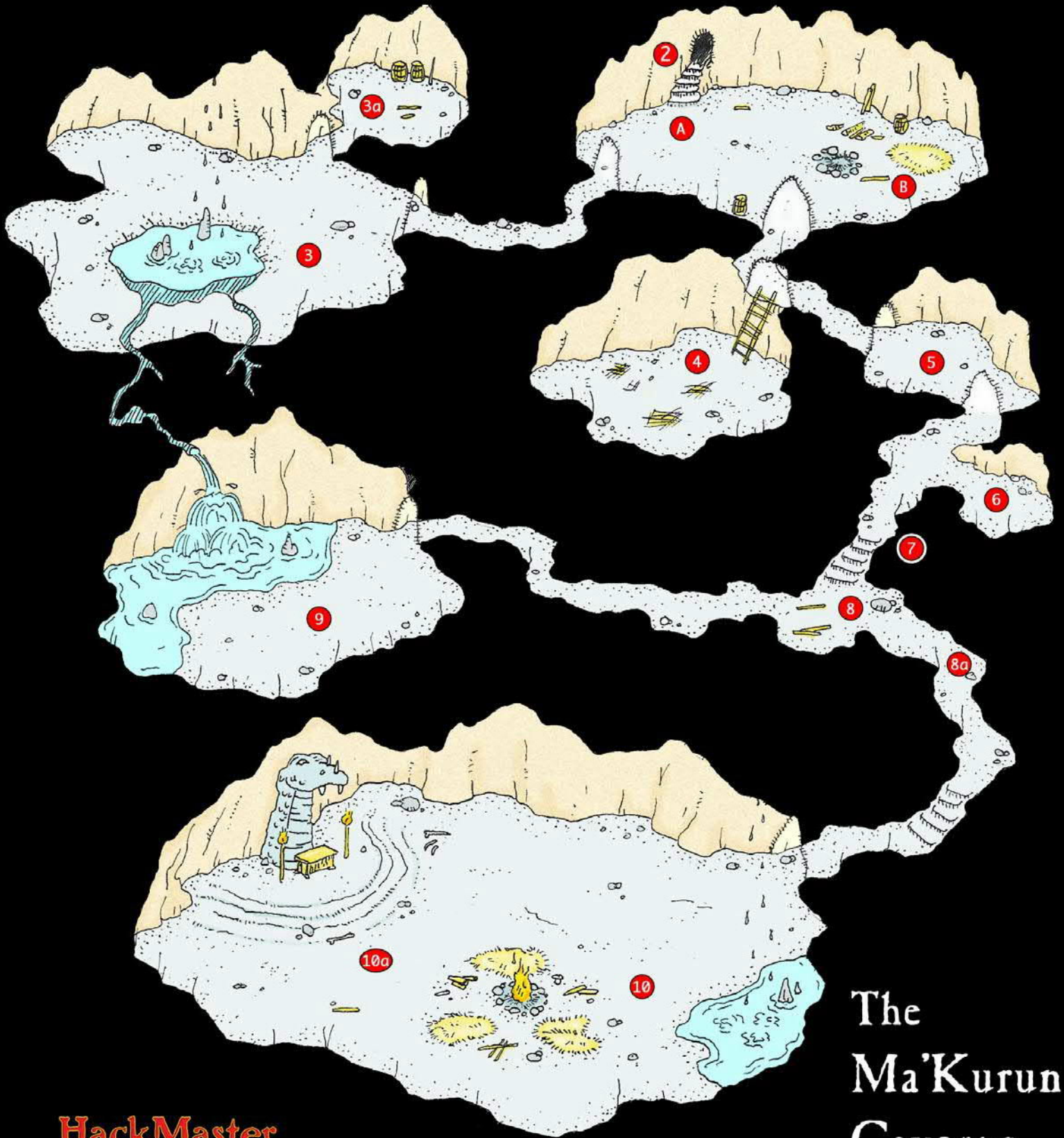
3: POOL CHAMBER

 45'  Darkness

 A crude net-like flap, woven out of coarse rope, hangs over the cavern entrance. A large cave can be seen on the other side. The sound of dripping water greets your ears. Through the net you can see that a steady stream of clear water rains down from the beautiful canopy of stalactites suspended above, dropping into a deep pool below. Bits of bone, rust encrusted weapons and armor and other debris litter the pebbly-clay floor. To the right twenty feet away you can just make out the entrance to a side passageway.

- Encounter:** 7 Strix (469 EPs)
- Trap/challenge:** Getting past a strix swarm serves as a trap/challenge of sorts.
- Yield:** Pot of Strix repellant
- Story:** Figuring out what the paste is for and using it to bypass the strix trap. (200 EPs)

During that time he has been drilling his warriors on tactics he's devised for their defense. The bugbear reactions detailed in the various locations of the caverns are according to how Baurgar envisions his warriors responding. When the fighting starts, things obviously can, and will, change. A bugbear bloodied by an enemy arrow, for example, may forget his orders and charge the attackers when he's supposed to lure them deeper into the caverns. That said, the GM should take into account the bugbears' drilling and pre-planning. The goblins are a different matter entirely. They are operating from a position of fear — to toe their new masters' plan and fight as their allies. But there is no love lost between them and their occupiers. They will fight and do as ordered, but may be prone to abandoning their posts/orders. If captured, they may be persuaded into giving up information that will undermine the bugbear's plans.



The Ma'Kurun Caverns

HackMaster

Cartography by Craig Zipse


A colony of seven Strix occupy this room and are hidden among the crevices and shadows of the stalactites above.

They are a menace the goblins failed fully to eradicate after taking over the caverns. Frustrated, they simply put up the netting to contain them.

The bloodbeaks also serve as a natural guards for the goblin treasure hoard stashed in **Area 3a**. (Something the new bugbear occupiers have not yet discovered).

The goblins get to the chamber by smearing themselves with a pungent paste that masks their smell. Once applied, they can dart into **Area 3a** (while holding their breath since exhalation can trigger the maulsquitoses to swarm). This specially prepared paste is kept in a small clay pot next to the net flap. A small stick with a wad of fur tied to one end is used as an applicator.

The net-flap is held down with several weighted stones and can easily be pulled to one side. Anyone entering the chamber will trigger a strix swarm in 1d12 seconds (Once the strixes swarm treat the encounter as an ambush for initiative purposes).

Anyone peering through the net before entering the room should be allowed a check (**Observation:**  -40 [average]). Success indicates they've noticed the numerous small piles of droppings littering the chamber floor.


Note: A player clever enough to figure out what the paste is for will also have to figure out that holding one's breath is also a requirement to get past the Strzyga. Failure to hold one's breath will result in the Strix swarming, but they will refuse to feed on anyone wearing the paste. They will however obscure vision as they flutter about. Treat any such blockage of vision as dim light.

* Note that the Foe Template for the Strix differs from others in the is adventure. The hit-point pips here indicate individual creatures.

** After a successful hit, the Strix drains d4p hit points of vital fluids every 10s (DR not applicable). A knock-back or Feat of Strength (vs. d20+12) is required to remove an embedded Strix. Attacks on an embedded Strix by a third party may injure the victim.

3a: GOBLIN HOARD ROOM



 This small damp cul-de-sac smells of rot, filth and decay. Two small oaken casks sit along one wall. Next to them lies the corpse of a goblin.


- ENCOUNTER: Unarmed Goblin; Niggles/3a (0 EPs)
- TRAP/CHALLENGE: Nil
- YIELD: Keg containing 175 sp, Keg of rum (20 spv), Owlbeast stilt/shoes, mining tools
- STORY: Utilizing Niggles to gain knowledge (50 EPs)

This small room is approximately fifteen feet in diameter with a slightly sloping floor of wet, soupy clay. Drip water from **Area 3** seeps into this area and is trapped here.

The goblins use this room to store valuables away from looters' prying fingers. The goblin lying here is actually alive. He was severely beaten and tortured by the bugbears and subsequently thrown in the pool chamber to die via strix attack. Niggles (see page 49 for a full bio on this notable NPC) managed to find enough residual repellent on the items stored in the room keep the strix at bay.

Unfortunately, the wounds suffered from his beating are so severe he is unable to defend himself and is currently at **1 hit point**.

1d6 seconds after anyone enters the room, Niggles will stir and immediately beg for his life. Put on your acting cap — time to go for an Oscar.

 Suddenly the frail figure lying on the floor stirs. "Pweeze, no hurt — no more. Pweeze!" he whimpers in broken common and goblin. He reaches for the boot nearest him and clutches at the ankle attached to it as he kisses the toe and pleads for mercy. As you look down you realize the tattered bits hanging from his shoulders and back are not shredded fabric as you first supposed. Rather, they are flesh ripped asunder from brutal whipping and beatings. Groveling before you the pathetic creature begins to sob uncontrollably as he continues to beg for his life. He is literally trembling with panic and fear.

Niggle's spirit has been completely broken. He will lie prone and grasp at the ankles of anyone within reach begging for mercy in goblin, common and

dwarven as he kisses the toe of their boot. He will swear undying loyalty to anyone who grants him mercy — anything to be spared further pain and torment.

Note: When describing the goblin, the PCs should notice he has no teeth/fangs and that he's missing fingers on his left hand (which is crudely bandaged with filthy rags).

The goblin has general knowledge of the layout of the caverns but no knowledge of the bugbears' defense plans. He does, however, know about the 'prize,' and of Keegar's imminent attack to claim her. Although he will talk willingly, any mention of Baurgar in particular, or questions about 'who's in charge' will have an obvious effect on the goblin as he shrinks in fear.

Among the items stored here are the following: A small keg filled with silver coins (175 sp), a keg of rum, a curious pair of boots (two short pieces of wooden planks carved to resemble owlbeast feet attached with wooden handles inserted into them. The goblins used these to tamp owlbeast foot prints around the entrance (**Area 1**) to scare off the curious.

Among the items stored here are the following: A small keg filled with silver coins (175 sp), a keg of rum, a curious pair of boots (two short pieces of wooden planks carved to resemble owlbeast feet attached with wooden handles inserted into them. The goblins used these to tamp owlbeast foot prints around the entrance (**Area 1**) to scare off the curious.

4: PIT CHAMBER 🏠 23' 🕯️ Low Light

🗨️ Standing on the edge of a narrow ledge, the bleating of sheep, the clucking of chickens and the "maaaaa" of goats rises up from the shadows below. The floor of this entire chamber is about ten feet lower. A crude wooden ladder is perched against the ledge.

The pungent smell of manure fills your nostrils as you gaze down on a small menagerie of malnourished animals milling about in the shadowy torchlight.

- Encounter: Nil
- Trap/challenge: Ladder being pulled up should the entire party venture down into the pit.
- Yield: Livestock (nominal value)
- Story: Rescuing the caravan drover (50 EPs)

This sunken chamber forms a natural pen which the bugbears use to hold livestock stolen on their raiding parties. There are four sheep, two goats, a half dozen chickens and a small pony (still saddled and with a broken leg from having been tossed in the pit).

A small flickering torch hanging in a sconce on the corridor wall here casts eerie shadows and provides some dim light.

All of the animals are malnourished and have been severely mistreated— literally tossed into the pit by the bugbears for safekeeping until needed for food. Although the bugbears prefer the flesh of sentient creatures, it isn't always available. Baurgar has been stockpiling sources of fresh meat in the event Keegar puts the caverns under a prolonged siege.

One of the hostages the bugbears took from the caravan is being held here. He is a wagon drover named Graas. He's hog-tied and lying among the straw and obscured from sight by the livestock milling around. Spotting him requires a successful (**Observation Check:** 🎲🕯️ [difficult]) on the part of individuals standing on the ledge near the ladder peering down.

Graas is wounded from his beatings (currently at 10 hit points) and terrified. The prospect of going deeper into the caverns with the party (should they insist on taking him with them) will terrify him. He wants to leave the caverns and he wants to leave **NOW!** He is very insistent about this point and quite vocal. If some healing is provided and he is handled properly, Graas may find enough courage to accompany the party (**Morale Check:** 🎲🕯️ vs. 🎲🕯️ + Graas' tenacity [-4] + party leader's CHA morale modifier). Otherwise, he's likely to be an anchor.



Intel: Graas can inform the party of the following if questioned:

- A one-eyed bugbear seems to be the leader.
- A female bugbear slave was taken from the caravan.

- The teenage girls were separated from the other hostages after arriving at the caverns. He doesn't know what became of them.
- Another hostage (a man-at-arms) was dragged from the pit earlier. He could hear the man screaming.


Note: *If the GM is feeling charitable and feels the group can use some help, he should feel free to fortify Graas' courage and make him fighting capable and willing to serve as an ally.*

Tactics: If Bugbears 2c & 2d (from **Area 2**) managed to flee to **Area 5**, they will attempt to pull the ladder up if the entire party ventures down into the pit.

If only one or two party members remain at the top while the rest venture down, the bugbears will be hard pressed to resist such tempting targets (**Resist Compulsion:**   vs. 12). Failure indicates one or both move back up from **Area 5** to attack.

5: REFUSE ROOM

 11'  Low Light

 The narrow stooping passageway widens here and swells forming a small pocket roughly fifteen feet in diameter. It is empty except for numerous dung heaps spread around the perimeter of the room. Small wicker baskets used for transporting waste are tossed haphazardly here and there. A narrow path wends through the dung heaps to a passageway on the far end.

- Encounter: Potentially bugbears 2c & 2d
- Trap/challenge: Nil (other than disease should the party insist on rooting around in the filth piles)
- Yield: Brass alarm horn hanging on peg.

This room is choked with waste and refuse hauled up from **Area 10** by goblin slaves. Bugbears aren't clean freaks but do prefer their immediate sleeping areas to be free of filth. When they took over the goblin lair and occupied it, one of the first tasks they put their captives to was hauling up the months of accumulated goblin waste out of **Area 10**.


If they survive the initial encounter, bugbears 2c and 2d will flee to this room. Once here, they will wait


and taunt any invaders to follow them and then attempt to lead them down the steps to **Area 8**.

There is a brass horn hanging on an iron peg driven into the wall here. If the bugbears have not already sounded the alarm, they will attempt to retrieve the horn and sound it before running off.

6: SIDE POCKET

 6'  Good Light

 *[Read if secret door is in place]*. The passageway turns here and begins to slope downward. About thirty-feet ahead it drops sharply into darkness. The pebbly-clay floor is grooved and shiny from heavy foot traffic. About ten feet down the passageway just on the left is a small depression in the wall where wicker baskets, clay pots and fire wood have been stacked.

 *[Read only if the door has been opened]* This small pocket is approximately 15 in diameter. Sharp broken stubs of stalactites jut down from the ceiling — apparently knocked off with a blunt instrument to create head room. It reeks of urine, smoke and other smells you can't identify. There is soiled bedding here.

- Encounter: Goblins; 6a, 6b & 6c (66 EPs)
- Trap/challenge: Ambush Point: 100 EPs if hidden door is detected & ambush is thwarted/minimized.
- Yield: Pouch with 25 sp hidden under rock near one of the bedding mats. Gold chalice (100 spv) stolen from caravan and pilfered by goblins. Pouch containing 8 bolts.
- Story: Learning about the ambush point (Chicken Neck) by interrogating any goblins taken alive (50 EPs)


When the party reaches this area they will find what appears to be a point where the passageway turns south and begins descending a steep set of crude steps.

It's actually an ambush point with an alcove hidden from view with goblins waiting within to spring the trap.

Baugar has given orders that at least two goblins must be in this location at all times in order to execute a rear ambush in the event of the alarm being sounded. (Musha (6c) is here because he's a sneaky little jerk that loves the idea of shooting

people in the back and didn't want to miss this opportunity).

There are four disgusting piles of flea-infested bedding mats made of moss, straw and bits of fur along the walls.

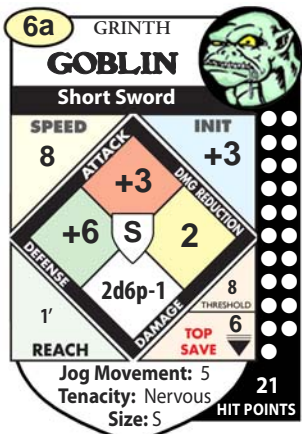
The entrance is concealed with a large panel made of woven willow limbs and packed with mud and moss to blend in with the cavern walls. It's crude but effective. Baskets, pots (all empty) and fire wood are stacked here as a distraction, as well as a torch flickering and creating dancing shadows and light. A small spy hole (at goblin height) allows those inside to look out into the passageway. A successful (**Scrutiny Check**:  [difficult]) will detect this spy hole.

If the alarm has been sounded, the goblins have been alerted and the panel will be in place with the ambushers at the ready inside. They have orders to wait until any intruders proceed past them down the steps (**Area 7**) and are engaged by the bugbears in "The Chicken's Neck". Only then will they attack from the rear. Musha will shoot his crossbow first before Grinth & Kaafa engage with melee weapons.

Grinth (goblin 6a), is antsy for a fight and eager to impress Baurgar. There's a 20% chance he will burst out of the secret door and attack as soon as he sees movement on the other side. (This abrupt act catches his comrades off guard. If this happens, roll a d6 for Initiative as they react).

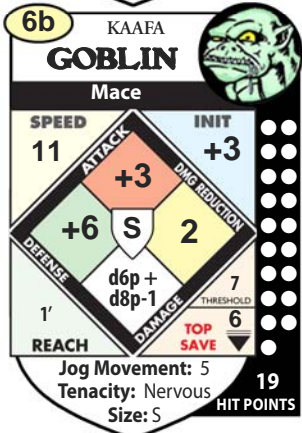
Note: If by some miracle the alarm is never sounded by this point, there is a 50% chance the hidden door will be open and a 20% chance the goblins are sleeping.

6a GRINTH
GOBLIN
Short Sword



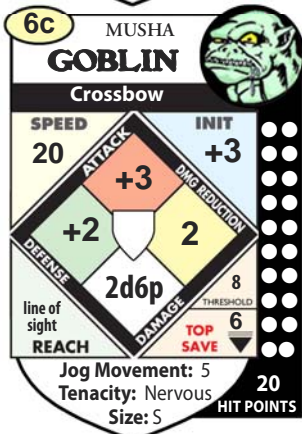
SPEED 8 INIT +3
ATTACK +3
DEFENSE +6
DAMAGE 2d6p-1
REACH 1'
TOP SAVE 6
Jog Movement: 5
Tenacity: Nervous
Size: S
21 HIT POINTS

6b KAAFA
GOBLIN
Mace



SPEED 11 INIT +3
ATTACK +3
DEFENSE +6
DAMAGE d6p + d8p-1
REACH 1'
TOP SAVE 6
Jog Movement: 5
Tenacity: Nervous
Size: S
19 HIT POINTS

6c MUSHA
GOBLIN
Crossbow



SPEED 20 INIT +3
ATTACK +3
DEFENSE +2
DAMAGE 2d6p
REACH line of sight
TOP SAVE 6
Jog Movement: 5
Tenacity: Nervous
Size: S
20 HIT POINTS

7: SLYTH'S GULLET

5' 5' Low Light

At this point the passageway narrows and decreases in height as it begins to drop sharply into darkness. The walls and floor are worn smooth from traffic. In places it appears the natural rock has been chipped away at in order to broaden the corridor. Crude well worn steps have been carved in the floor to aid travel up and down. Below, perhaps 25 feet, is a hint of light.

- Encounter:** nil
- Trap/challenge:** Anyone coming down this corridor will be beautifully backlit as a crossbow target by the torch outside Area 6 (unless it has been extinguished).
- Yield:** Nil.

This steep, narrow passageway descends to the lower level of the caverns. Baurgar has selected it as the "funnel" through which he hopes Keegar and his warriors will be fed into the ambush point below (**Area 8**). If the goblins in area 6 did their job they will emerge from their hiding place after the last intruder passes the hidden door. They initiate a rear attack on the group descending the steps using the shouting of the bugbears at **8b** as their signal. (Note: Since they are sized small the goblins will be able to fight a two-man front. M and L creatures may only mount a one-man front).

8: THE CHICKEN'S NECK

10' 7' Low Light

At the bottom of the steps the passageway levels out at a landing littered with rotted bits of lumber, discarded items and other bits of debris. Here the passageway T's to the left and right. The sound of falling water can be heard from the left.

- Encounter:** Bugbear blockers; 8a, 8b (350 EPs); possibly additional bugbears 2c, 2d, 10d & 10e
- Trap/challenge:** Ambush Point
- Yield:** Nil.

Baurgar has dubbed this area the "Chicken's Neck" because it is here he believes he can 'snap the neck' of anyone attempting to reach **Area 10** to snatch his 'prize'. This natural choke point allows him

to attack from three sides on a narrow front (two sides should the goblins fail to hold up their end).

Once the alarm has been sounded, two bugbears from **Area 10** (8a and 8b) will race up the passageway and take a position at **Area 8a** — on the bend just hidden in dim light.

Tactics: If bugbears 2c & 2d have managed to elude the party, they will take up positions to the left (as viewed on the map) of **area 8** awaiting their comrades' fusillade from the right. At that position (**Area 8a**), two bugbears are emplaced.

The first bugbear (8a) will be kneeling giving both him and his comrade behind him a clear line of site to **Area 8**. The passageway is only wide enough for a one-man front.

These two have trained to wait in the shadows and to aim and fire in unison with heavy crossbows at any targets entering **Area 8**. Once they have fired their crossbows, bugbear 8a will ready a medium shield and morning star and bugbear 8b will reach down to pick the up one of three Halberds pre-positioned here.

Once they have their weapons readied, the pair will rush forward as they have trained — attempting to block the corridor as long as possible. If present, Bugbear 2c & 2d will also move forward to crush the leading edge of the party in a vice. Note that Bugbear 8b can engage in melee from behind 8a by employing *Phalanx Fighting*. When doing so, his speed is 15 and he can only Jab (inflicting a d10+7 wound with a successful strike). Subsequent halberd-armed bugbears will employ the same tactic should their frontal ranks be taken out.


While moving forward to melee, the bugbears at 8b will shout out a verbal signal to their comrades waiting in Area 10. Once that signal is given, two additional bugbears (10d & 10e) will move up the corridor to grab the other two halberds. They will not attempt to engage the enemy (since there's no room) but will hold back until there's a hole, or someone in the front rank drops. (Note: *Baurgar is leery of Kaatcha, a bugbear shaman in Keegar's Hand, and his spell lobbing. He will try not to expose more than two to three warriors to any potential area effect spell at the same time*).

The plan of defense is for the goblins to block (or delay) escape back up the steps to **Areas 5** and for the bugbear warriors to grind down the foremost enemy combatant(s) with attacks from either side. Should bugbears 2c & 2d be eliminated, the remaining bugbears will try to force any intruders down the corridor toward Area 9 where they will be trapped (and possibly further injured by the Skiver in that chamber).

If either bugbear 8a or 8b is reduced to 50% of their hit points (or fails a morale check), they will execute a series of *Give Ground* actions working their way back down the steps to **Area 10**. Bugbears 2c & 2d will fight to the death rather than be forced into the Skiver cave.

9: FOUNTAIN CHAMBER (BACK POCKET)

50'  Low Light

 Your ears are filled with the sound of gushing water reverberating off the chamber's walls. You are standing on the edge of a chamber approximately forty feet in diameter. The floor here gently slopes downward to the edges of a large crystal clear pool of water.

Icicle like stalactites hang from the ceiling, forming an eerie dance of light and shadow as your torch light reflects off their alabaster surface.

The thigh bone of a large creature lies on the pool's edge — half submerged and calcified by the mineral deposits.


- Encounter:** Skiver (330 EP)
- Trap/challenge:** avoiding being nailed repeatedly
- Yield:** nil
- Story:** nil

This cavern is avoided by the bugbears and goblins and hasn't been used at all.

It is occupied by a skiver lurking on the ceiling and camouflaged as to be indistinguishable from the clutches of stalactites high above. After killing a few unwary goblins coming here to fetch water, they tried to drive it off but failed.

Since water is readily available elsewhere in the complex, the bugbears, like the goblins before them, have written off the cave for the time being.

An observant character (**Observation:** ▼🔍-80 [easy]) will notice bits of charred wood and scattered fire pits (evidence of the goblins' unsuccessful attempts to smoke the creature out) but the reason for their presence is a mystery.

9


SKIVER

SPEED 10	ATTACK -6	INIT -4	
DEFENSE -4	DAMAGE 3d12p +4	DMG REDUCTION 0	THRESHOLD n/a
REACH 50'	TOP SAVE +4	DAMAGE n/a	THRESHOLD n/a

Movement: 1/2 **Tenacity:** Nervous **Size:** L **HIT POINTS:** 39

Since they goblins have learned to avoid this cave, the Skiver is hungry and unusually aggressive. It has migrated to a position covering the entrance to the cave (essentially the topmost third of the dry area on the map). It will immediately notice the entrance of any warm-blooded creature and

initiate an attack. *Were it more patient, it would wait until the creatures below were standing still but hunger has caused it to be reckless.*

It will drop a stalactite-like missile on the first person entering the room. This is considered a missile attack so the target is only permitted a straight d20p for Defense versus the Skiver's Attack (made at -6 due to height). If successful, the conical rock inflicts 3d12p+4 damage (*with d12s penetrating on an 11 or 12*).

The skiver will continue its aerial bombardment dropping another rock every 10 seconds as long as any party member remains in the top third of the cave (or until it has expended its supply of 6 rocks).

Spotting the Skiver requires a (**Scrutiny Check:** ▼🔍 [difficult]). Please reference the [complete monster write-up on p. 21](#) should the party direct countermeasures against it.



10: SLYTH SHRINE

60' 🏠 Low Light

🗨️ [To be read after any combat engagement is concluded] You are standing in a large cavern with a diameter of perhaps 80 feet. Bedding material comprised of animals skins, pine needles and moss are scattered about a small campfire which casts long shadows along the walls and the stalactited ceiling nearly sixty feet above. Smoke from the fire fills the upper reaches of the chamber and hangs like a dark fog. To one side a pool of murky water stands, dripping water falling from above dancing like rain drops across its surface.

On the far end of the cavern stands an ominous looking shrine — the great fanged head of a serpent. Before it sits a stone altar stained with dark patches of crimson and adorned with small animal bones and skulls and flanked by two smoldering torches that have been recently extinguished.

- ❑ **Encounter:** Bugbear leader 10a (280 EP), 2 bugbears 10b & 10c (350 EP), bugbear female 10f (115 EP); plus any survivors of past encounters
- ❑ **Trap/challenge:** Hidden ruby eyes on statue
- ❑ **Yield:** Baurgar's battle axe +2 & large shield +2, bugbear charm, 18 gp, 103 sp, Healing Salve, Ruby eyes (350 spv), Ceremonial bundle (370 spv), clerical scroll
- ❑ **Story:** Learning the fate of the twins (250 EPs); Informing Fyntias Clavar of his daughters' fate by presenting him their butchered heads (1400 EPs or 400 if no physical proof offered); Eliminating Bugbear threat to caravan traffic (400 EPs); Gaining information about the Sar'Dyn Mara cult (225 EPs - issue award only if a PC uses Divine Lore on recovered objects or the statue of Slyth to gain info)

This cavern is approximately 80 in diameter with a 60 foot ceiling. It was formerly a subterranean Sar'Dyn Maran shrine dedicated to the great devourer of souls, Slyth (see sidebar on p. 16). Additional information on the cult appears on p. 17.

This is where Baurgar has chosen to defend his prize, the female bugbear Larranz, in a final showdown should Keegar, his old friend turned nemesis, make it this far.

The bugbear chief has held some of his warriors back in reserve for this purpose. Any intruders who

10a BAURGAR
BUGBEAR
Battle Axe +2

SPEED 12 INIT -1

ATTACK +8 DMG REDUCTION

DEFENSE +9 L 7

4d3p +7 THRESHOLD 21

REACH 4' DAMAGE TOP SAVE 9

Jog Movement: 10
Tenacity: Hero
Size: L
52 HIT POINTS

10b SCAR'TEEF
BUGBEAR
Heavy Crossbow/Morning Star

SPEED 10 INIT -1

ATTACK +7 DMG REDUCTION

DEFENSE 0 (+6) (M) 6

2d10p; 2d8p+4 THRESHOLD 19

line of sight REACH 4' DAMAGE TOP SAVE 8

Jog Movement: 10
Tenacity: Brave
Size: L
47 HIT POINTS

10c RYMP
BUGBEAR
Heavy Crossbow/Morning Star

SPEED 10 INIT -1

ATTACK +7 DMG REDUCTION

DEFENSE 0 (+6) (M) 6

2d10p; 2d8p+4 THRESHOLD 18

line of sight REACH 4' DAMAGE TOP SAVE 8

Jog Movement: 10
Tenacity: Brave
Size: L
43 HIT POINTS

10d CHA'GHEE
BUGBEAR
Halberd

SPEED 13 INIT -1

ATTACK +7 DMG REDUCTION

DEFENSE 0 6

2d10p +7 THRESHOLD 18

REACH 8' DAMAGE TOP SAVE 8

Jog Movement: 10
Tenacity: Steady
Size: L
45 HIT POINTS

10e PHARZ'NI
BUGBEAR
Halberd

SPEED 13 INIT -1

ATTACK +7 DMG REDUCTION

DEFENSE 0 6

2d10p +7 THRESHOLD 19

REACH 8' DAMAGE TOP SAVE 8

Jog Movement: 10
Tenacity: Steady
Size: L
46 HIT POINTS

make it to **Area 8a** and start the descent down the crude stairs to **Area 10** will certainly have their hands full if they permitted their enemies to retreat after the brawl in the chicken's neck.

Note: When the alarm is sounded as the party approaches and enters the caverns, Baurgar and his warriors in this area will assume it is Keegar fighting his way toward them unless one of the goblins or bugbears who has encountered the party make their way to this area and gives a report.

Tactics: As soon as the alarm has been sounded warning that intruders have entered the caverns, Baurgar douses most of the sources of light in the chamber (**Area 10**) to create dim lighting conditions. He and his warriors will then wait for further developments to be conveyed by predetermined signals via horns or shouting (See the bugbear signal chart in **GM's War Room** on page 25).

Two warriors (10b & 10c) have heavy crossbows readied and will shoot at anyone descending the stairs and about to enter the chamber.

Larranz (10f), the female bugbear "prize," is fully fight-capable. Armed with a morning star, she has been instructed to stay back. She will break those orders, however, if any intruders manage to get 10 feet or more inside the cavern.

If bugbears 2c, 2d, 8a, 8b, 10d or 10e have survived, they withdraw back to this area. Here they take up halberds positioned to the left and right of the entranceway and stand to the side. When crossbows are fired, it is their signal to step before the en-

10f LARRANZ
BUGBEAR
Morning Star

SPEED 10 INIT -1

ATTACK +7 DMG REDUCTION

DEFENSE +7 M 5

2d8p +2 THRESHOLD 16

REACH 4' DAMAGE TOP SAVE 7

Jog Movement: 10
Tenacity: Brave
Size: L
38 HIT POINTS

trance and attempt to block it. Per Baurgar's orders, each bugbear is to keep a 10-foot interval from the others if possible to diminish the effectiveness of any area of effect spells used against them (so great is his paranoid fear of the shaman).

Once they've shot their crossbows, 10b & 10c will stop (for d4p+2 seconds) to ready a morning star & medium shield and then move up to help block the entrance. They will continue to keep their intervals as much as is practical, filling holes in the line as needed.

Baurgar has a **Charm of the Barking Rauht** around his neck (See [All Things Magic, page 18](#)) enchanted with a *Mending Mane* power. If he takes any wound greater than 10 hit points or is reduced to half strength he will activate its power to restore half the damage from a specific injury. He also has a **Battle axe +2**, a **large shield +2** as well as 18 gold and 103 silver coins in a leather pouch.

The bugbears have their morale elevated by one level (Brave/+1) due to the fact that they have their backs to the wall and are fighting for a cause. Baurgar will fight to the death regardless of circumstances.

Conclusion: If the party defeats the bugbears they will learn a very sad and tragic truth — the twin girls have been slain and eaten!

This is not a failure on the party's part. Examining the bones and remains left scattered about the room reveals that they were probably eaten during a celebratory feast hours after arriving back at the cavern.

Upon exploring the shrine room they will make another horrifying discovery — charred human flesh on spits positioned over the fire pit and gnawed bones from the butchered meat taken from the corpses at the caravan ambush site. Uncooked meat and organs will also be found wrapped in fern leaves set to the side.

In addition a dozen or so severed human heads have been placed on the shallow steps before the shrine, the skull caps cracked and peeled back (brains removed). Two of the skulls are distinctly smaller and the remaining flesh and long hair identifies them as teenage girls. This is all that remains of Malyia and Bel'sanya but since the characters have never seen the girls, they will have to bring these grizzly trophies back to their father for a positive ID.

Recovering the decapitated and mutilated heads of the girls to return to the father for proper burial and closure might feel anticlimactic but it's should serve as a reminder of how evil prevails in the Sadok. Additionally, this adventure (with the shrine and its association with the Sar'Dyn Mara cult and the Za'Kaarii) is a harbinger of darker things to come for the party — the upcoming (and larger) tie-in adventure, *Temple Tomb of the God of the Dead*.

Treasure: The bugbears are on the run and accumulating booty is not their top priority. However, they do possess some pots of medicinal pastes and salves that speed the healing process. There are four earthenware pots of salve near the bedding area (4 applications per pot). When daubed on injuries, this gel restores d4p hit points to a specific wound. *Note that some or all of the paste may have been used by the bugbears if this cache isn't discovered until the second foray.* In any case, the salve will lose its restorative powers after a month.

One of the last acts of the fleeing priests before the caverns fell under goblin control was to pack clay over the eyes of the idol in order to hide the ruby eyes set in the stone work (175 spv each). These have gone undetected by the new occupiers. Anyone closely inspecting the idol may detect the variation of color around the eyes and the fact they have been crudely fashioned (**Scrutiny:** ▼◊ -40 [Average]) or (**Appraisal - Artwork:** ▼◊ -40 [Average]).

When the cultists were driven out of the Ma'Kurun Caverns by the goblins, the goblins desecrated the Slyth idol and the altar by smearing feces and urinating on them. When the bugbears occupied the site they used the serpent statue as a target for heavy crossbow practice.

The fleeing priests also wrapped the ceremonial accouterments associated with the shrine and worship

in a blanket and hid them in the pool on the eastern end of the room.

The bundle includes two sacrificial knives (45 spv ea), a golden bowl (for offering blood sacrifices to the idol) (150 spv) and two silver candleholders with the image of Grawdyng with outstretched arms (65 spv ea).

There is also a pouch with four specially prepared heart stones for the creation of Za'Kaarii undead minions (See *Rustlers of the Night*, KODT #201) along with a bone scroll case sealed in wax within which is a Cleric Scroll of *Laryngitis*.

Refuse and trash tossed in the pool by the slovenly goblins has made the water murky and obscured the bundle though it lies a mere eight inches beneath the surface. Anyone specifically studying the pool for signs of something hidden should be allowed a check (**Scrutiny:** ▼◊ [difficult]) to discern an unusual shape warranting closer inspection. If anyone actually paws around in the water, they will certainly find the hidden treasures!

Anyone examining the statue of Slyth and/or the ceremonial instruments may recognize their affiliation (**Divine Lore:** ▼◊ -80 [easy]). If successful, divulge details from the *Evil Lurks: The Cult of Sar'Dyn Mara* article that follows).



Slyth — The Devourer of Souls

Slyth is mythical serpent, an agent of the god Grawdyng. Often portrayed as a pet coiled around the god's ankles, it is believed he devours the souls of those turned into the undead by Grawdyng's minions on the prime material plane.

He is also seen as a mediator between the world of the living and the dead, 'burrowing' his way between the planes. Slyth is summoned by soul-offerings in the material plane and brings with him the blessings of Grawdyng to his followers and takes back beseechments and prayers to his master.

Crude statues to Slyth always appear in dark, subterranean places. Slyth is seen as a protector of the 'flock' — especially among the Sar'dyn Marian cult.

Although not applicable in this adventure, Slyth statues that have been sanctified with blood offerings bestow an effect comparable to the clerical spell *Sanctify Weapons* but with unlimited duration for anointed followers (as well as Shepherds and any Za'karri under their control) in its presence.

EVIL LURKS

The Cult of Sar'dyn Mara

The dark shadows of the Sadok Forest harbor many perils and great evil. These range from the Sadok Thieves that prey on the unwary, to sturm wolves and owlbeasts. As an unknown writer once scrawled, "Death comes in many forms in the Sadok." Nothing, however, conveys the same level of dread as the mention of the Sar'dyn Mara.

The Cult of Sar'dyn Mara is a perverted faith cobbled together from the teachings of Grawdyng and various tribal blood-magic cults endemic to the jungles of Zumbra. It first originated as a soldier's cult among the ranks of the infamous Obsidian Clan Warriors. It later spread north along the coast of the Kardune Peninsula where superstitious sailors and soldiers embraced it.

Obsessed with the mysteries of the dead, practitioners of Sar'dyn Mara strive to transcend into a world of twilight that lies somewhere between the realm of the living and the dead. Summoning and communing with spirits, divination and tapping into arcane powers are distinguishing endeavors of this dark faith.

Most followers are simply dabblers, lured to the cult by the promise of magical protections, healing and simple charm making. Such dabblers fail to ever achieve any real level of power. A few, however, are lured deeper into the cult and become adept in its very unique school of magic thus becoming powerful shaman.

Using scarification, tattoos, self-mutilation and blood sacrifices to derive their power, such shaman are able to not only create undead, but also to compel them to do their bidding.

What makes the Sar'dyns particularly repugnant is their ritual for creating the zombie-variants, Za'kaarii. This process requires the sacrifice of the most innocent of innocents — children who have not yet seen their twelfth year of age.

How did a death-cult rooted in Zumbra, thousands of miles away, establish itself in the Sadok Forest? By being inadvertently imported.

Several years ago, a group of Obsidian Warriors, disguised as free traders, made their way to the city of Abos to sell a cargo of karunum (a highly prized dye made from the root of a plant found only in the jungles of Zumbra). It just so happened that their visit to the capital city of Abos coincided with the Grawdyngian high-unholy day of Raamfast.

Whilst breaking the seals on a crypt in a local cemetery to perform their ceremony, the Zumbrians were discovered



and arrested by guards and subsequently sentenced to the silver mines in Teron.

The rest, as they say, is history.

As they toiled in the mines, the Zumbrians introduced the Cult of Sar'dyn Mara to their fellow slaves. Among their number was a shaman named Kumangii. He employed his powers to heal minor wounds among the laborers, as well as to provide charms to stave off exhaustion and to soothe the spirits.

Eventually, Kumangii and several of his followers escaped the mining camps and fled to the dark shadows of the Sadok Forest. There, the shaman continued his work and honed his mastery of the 'dark faith'.

Upon locating in the forest the ruins of an ancient tomb complex that had been covered in a landslide centuries ago, Kumangii raised a small force of zombies to excavate and clear away the debris to reveal the entrance. Hidden away deep in a labyrinth of densely forested ravines, the tomb was repurposed as a temple, dedicated to Grawdyng. The corpses interred within were raised as guardian undead to watch over the cult as they set about their work of performing sacrifices and garnering more power.

In recent months, the cult has been snatching young children from towns and villages on the fringes of the Sadok Forrest to produce Za'kaarii warriors.

** Zumbra and the Warriors of the Obsidian Clan are discussed further in the Aldrazar World Book (available as a digital book at <http://tinyurl.com/aldrazar>).*

Charm of the Barking Rauht



The Charm of the Barking Rauht is a minor magical item enchanted by bugbear shamans. Typically they are given to young warriors who are entering Kapang (fighting age — typically at the age of nine) during a tribal ceremony.

Carved from the bone of a sentient creature either killed by the recipient directly or who had been part of the hunting party who brought it down, the charm usually bestows some sort of protective magic. The enchantment is not long lasting — usually just a month or two (4d12p days) after which it is rendered powerless.

Barking Rauhts are three to four inches in height and approximately two inches in diameter. They are designed to be worn around they neck although some bugbear shamans create smaller versions that are meant to be braided into the mane or shoulder hair.

The charms are so named because they typically portray the crouching bugbear god, Rauht giving the 'eternal bark' or 'roar of summoning' calling clan warriors to battle. Grasping it in one hand and uttering Rauht's name activates the charm's power. It can only be called upon once per day.

There are numerous variations of the charm as far as powers. The list below features the most common ones. Although a few rare charms (5%) have the ability to use more than one power, most charms exhibit the ability to only cast one.

Charm Types

The Hiding Hand: Charms enchanted with this power diminish any sources of illumination an enemy might have. All light sources are doused, excluding magical light. The power has a range of 30 feet and the individual wearing the charm and activating its power can see normally. Any extinguished light sources can be re-lit.

Paan's Bite: This charm's power yields +2 to all melee attacks for the wearer for 30 seconds.

Shield Shadow: This power gives +2 to all defense rolls for 30 seconds to the wearer of the charm.

Mending Mane: Halves damage from any one single attack and negates a failed Trauma save (if applicable). The wearer must employ the charm immediately upon sustaining the wound.

Sharp Eye: Gives wearer +2 to all missile attacks made during a 30 second window.

The Bark of Paan: Alerts wearer to any enemy (including those sneaking, hiding or invisible) that comes within 50 feet of the wearer for three minutes. The wearer cannot see invisible enemies that are detected. He only knows the direction and approximate distance of the foe.

Power Growl: Emits a wall of sound that throws an enemy back 5 feet upon any successful hit (i.e. automatic knock back), ten feet if the target is smaller in size. Wearer gets a knockback on his opponent for 30 seconds. If all attacks during this interval miss, the growl power is wasted and has no effect.

Spent Charms: All Charms of the Barking Rauht have a chance of being forever 'spent' each time they are used. Whenever a charm's powers are called upon, roll d100 with a 20% chance the charm is rendered useless. The power being evoked still takes effect as normal but the charm will never again work. Spent charms still have a market value of 25 sp, however, as a curiosity.

Charms taken from fallen Bugbears (they are never found just lying about or squirreled away and are ALWAYS worn) can be used by other races but a successful **Arcane Lore** (▼♦ +10 [Very Difficult]) skill check must be made in order to know how they are activated and the proper command word.

Note that because of their close association with the bugbear pantheon, many faiths frown upon their use and would see them as evil divine icons or the like and desire to destroy them immediately.

ALDRAZAR

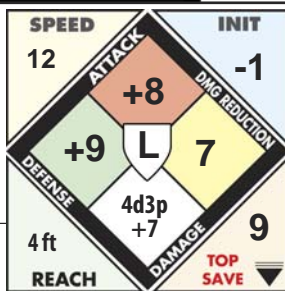
Rogue's Gallery



Baugar

Race: Bugbear (leader)
Class: n/a
Level: n/a
Size: Large
Movement: 10
Alignment: CE
Reared: Rogue Haven
Hit Points: 52

Phys: +8
Mental: +7
Dodge: +8



Possessions: battle axe +2, large shield +2, improved body armor, Barking Rault Charm (Mending Mane), 18 gp, 103 sp

Proficiencies: battle axe, heavy armor, shield, laborer.

Talents: fast healer

Quirk: stutters **Flaw:** blind one eye

Skills

hiding 40
 hunting 74
 intimidation 72
 sneaking 42
 survival 54
 torture 51
 tracking 33
 trap design 45
 recruiting 44
 language (Merchant) 35
 language (bugbear) 82
 scrutiny 37

Baugar was born just north of the Galon Hills on Ulsarn Island (D7-03-C09). As a warrior just coming of age, he was captured by slavers and brought by ship down the Red Bear Coast. Bounced from stable to stable he ended up in the pit-fighting trade in such port cities as Greely and Haarm.

A very capable fighter, he earned many victories and was something of a crowd pleaser due to how enthusiastically he entered the fray to take on all comers. All of which made him a valuable commodity. Eventually, he was bought up by an Absorian slave wrangler who specialized in providing the imperial arena in Abos with "exotics".

It was there in the stables that Baugar, for the first time in six years, encountered others of his own kind. Bugbear combatants were popular in the arenas and the crowd's appetite to see the creatures pitted against all manner of foes was insatiable. Stable Ka'Daan couldn't feed that appetite fast enough and a steady stream of bugbears entered the stables and departed week to week and month to month.

Baugar, due to his unusual size and skills was quickly deemed to have more value as 'breeding stock' rather than fodder for the arena, however. He was moved to a special area where such valued slaves were segregated for that purpose.

Given the choicest bits of meat, and plenty of females to mate with, it was in the breeding pens where Baugar first met the older and more battle-savvy bugbear, Keegar.

The two formed a tight bond, often sham fighting to hone their skills and talking about past battles and roaming free. Keegar mentored Baugar in the warrior-culture of the bugbear. Lessons the younger male had been mostly deprived of, having been captured at such a young age. From the Battlesongs of the Great Rault to tribal poetry and oral traditions the two warriors made a pact — that they would die fighting their masters when the day came and not on the blood soaked sands of the arena floor.

When Stable Ka'Daan eventually sold their entire stable of bugbears to a Fangaerian stable, Keegar and Baugar were shipped up river with the rest. Both knew the voyage might be their only opportunity to escape and they were quick to seize the moment when it presented itself.

Afterwards, during their fight across the Eder Soult river basin and setting up in the Sadok forest, relations between the two alpha males became strained. Baugar yearned to return to the Galon Hill country and rejoin his tribesmen. Keegar was intent on waging war on humans, albeit on a small scale, and exacting payment for the years he'd spent in captivity.

In the end, the two came to blows and are now enemies. Blinded in one eye during his fight against Keegar for leadership of the band, Baugar left Keegar's Hand with six warriors who had backed his play and struck out on his own. After ambushing a merchant caravan and finding his 'prize' in the form of the female bugbear Larranz, he has delayed his exodus for the Galon Hills in anticipation of the fight he knows is coming.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: Baugar has a deathwish. As such he is immune to all morale checks — unless a situation seems hopeless and there is a clear route of escape (and a chance to live and fight another day). Otherwise he will fight to the death to defend his 'prize'.

ALDRAZAR

Rogue's Gallery



Niggles

Race: Goblin
Class: n/a
Level: n/a
Size: Large
Movement: 5
Alignment: LE
Reared: Near Maurhad
Hit Points: 14

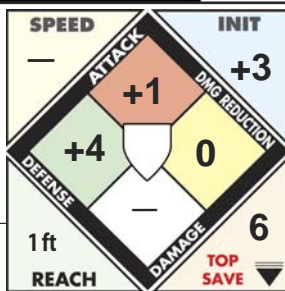
Phys: +3
Mental: +2
Dodge: +4

Possessions: Goblin Charm bracelet (non magical).

Proficiencies: laborer, knife, maintenance/upkeep.

Talents: less sleep

Quirk: Timidity **Flaw:** Missing digits



Skills

cooking 39
 fire building 53
 glean information 30
 hiding 62
 jumping 23
 listening 23
 sneaking 35
 survival 24
 listening 29
 reading lips 38
 language (goblin) 73
 language (forcuran) 22

Niggles is a pathetic creature. An unfortunate goblin who happened to be born with strange physical characteristics that others take to be vaguely human-like. Bullied and ostracized by his own band when growing up, Niggles spent much of his time alone and in hiding from his own kind. Providing for himself as he was able — which usually meant sneaking into camp to scrounge for scraps left behind by the others.

One day, while still a young whelp he wandered too far from the rocky caves his band called home and was captured by a human hunting party collecting bounties. Amused by his jester-like and freakish appearance, they kept him alive and returned to the royal city of Abos with their prize. Niggles was sold to the arena and slated to be tossed in as fodder to amuse the crowds. Had fate not intervened, he, along with his story, would have surely perished there.

A young nobleman touring the stables spotted the pathetic creature cowering in his cage. Thinking he would make an amusing gift for his father-in-law to be, he purchased the goblin, had him fitted with a jester's costume and shipped off.

For the next decade, Niggles was beaten and abused. Treated like a trained-monkey he was forced to serve drinks for guests, tumble on command, juggle and fight wild animals.

One day, while being tormented by his master's children in his cage, he lashed out and bit one of the hands beating him. For punishment, his teeth were pulled and he was beaten half to death. At that point, Niggles was completely broken in both spirit and body. The sad, nervous demeanor he took on became 'unsettling' at the estate and he was soon sold to a local slave-wrangler who dealt with exotics and monsters for the arena trade.

It was at the stables, awaiting transport up river that Niggles first met the bugbears, Baurgar and Keegar. Niggles was a trustee of sorts and assigned to bringing food, water and other necessities to the bugbear pens (And it was Baurgar who convinced the goblin to leave his cage door unsecured when the guards weren't looking).

After they escaped, Niggles became Baurgar's personal attendant, fetching him his food. Polishing his weapons and armor. Baurgar proved he could be even more cruel than his former human masters. When Niggles placed the bugbear's sandals to close to the fire to dry, and they burned — Baurgar bit off two of the goblin's fingers on his right hand. When Baurgar split from Keegar's Hand, he insisted Niggles come with him.

Recently when the goblin was caught sleeping on guard duty in his hole outside the cave entrance, Baurgar had him beaten til he passed out. Revived him. And beat him again. And when the goblin was so weak from his wounds he could be revived no further, the bugbear had him tossed in a side chamber in the caves, forbidding anyone to give him aid.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: Niggles is a sympathy monster and as such it's very possible a PC will suggest sparing him out of pity and perhaps even taking the poor creature under his wing (this actually happened during playtesting). Niggles's spirit is broken, but he is by his very nature, EVIL. He is ruled by fear and will beg for mercy/compassion — agreeing to do most anything to avoid further mistreatment and the hope of being protected. Polishing boots. Fetching water. Niggles will appear to be the obedient, grateful servant. At the same time (as an intelligent creature) he will be calculating. Natural goblin compulsions will often dictate his behavior — especially when he thinks he's not being observed. As a nocturnal creature, he will spend his nights sneaking about. Hoarding bits of food and squirreling away small items he hopes will go unmissed. A few coins here. A dagger there. Bits of rope, buttons etc. Niggles's hoarding behavior reflects his desire to feel safe. He will stash the items he's gathered in small caches. Under his bedding. In bushes near camp etc. He will be largely harmless, however. As a creature who's spirit has been broken he will not directly attack or harm others. And he will be desirous of approval from those he deems his keeper or 'master'. This include providing useful information and using his skills (as long as he doesn't feel threatened or exposed when using them).

RUSTLERS of the NIGHT™



Official Creatures for your
HackMaster Campaign

SKIVER

a.k.a. Ceiling Fiend



Old salts will spin a lot of yarns about the Living Caverns near Edros Bay. The caves supposedly “come alive” to drive off the unfaithful, or liars, or witches, or anybody at all—depending on which swabbie happens to be jawing at you. There are tall tales of “cave’s teeth” snapping down on unsuspecting victims (whatever their background may be), crushing bone and cutting sinew to feed the hungry maw of the grotto below. In other stories, the caves are simply the mouth of a lazy giant, waiting patiently for beasts and fish to find their way into his ever-rumbling belly. Any educated man could easily see through the fictions and flights of fancy for which drunken sailors are so famed. The “rumbling belly” is most likely no more than churning sea water in the depths of a limestone cave network and as for the “cave’s teeth,” it isn’t as if a stalactite has never been known to fall. Rest assured however, that if it should fall anywhere near an ignorant man, then soon it will ascribed supernatural significance.

The common narrative thread that ties all of this nonsense together, however, is that the Living Caverns are also supposedly filled to the gills with loot. These legends began to spring up just after the hanging of the pirate Moraine. No one ever found Captain Moraine’s lost hoard and for an insufferable bombast like him just burying his treasure would never be enough. So of course--of course-- he would start up all of this “Living Cavern” nonsense to keep would be looters at bay. It is therefore my belief, that with a small, properly motivated dig team one could easily march in and uncover the treasure hoard at one’s leisure, while those primitives cower behind their ale tankards back in port.

— journal entry found the hands of an unidentified cadaver skewered to the floor of the Living Caverns

Skivers are an amoeba-like being capable of propelling themselves up walls and fastening themselves to cavern ceilings. They perform this by flattening out their bodies and maximizing their surface area becoming only inches thin as they do so. Specialized organelles on the creature's exterior permit the skiver to grip stone surfaces with incredible tenacity.

These creatures develop numerous calcite-encrusted cysts as they dissolve the skeletal structures of their prey. Digestion is very slow causing the cysts to gradually form subject to the pull of gravity. These growths can be substantial, often weighing 30 pounds. As they are formed in a manner similar to stalactites (i.e. slow deposition of an aqueous carbonate), it is unsurprising that they resemble the latter. However, while a limestone stalactite may take many scores of years to develop to an appreciable size, a skiver may secrete several such protrusions in a matter of weeks.

Should these cysts grown to an extreme size (50 pounds), they will involuntarily lacerate from the skiver's body and plummet to the ground. However, prior to this, the skiver can opt to slough off the extrusion(s) of its own accord. It will always do so in an attempt to kill prey.

Combat/Tactics:

Given the fact that skivers are ambush predators incapable of pursuing mobile prey, they will always choose to inhabit well-trafficked areas. In most instances, this entails lurking above sources of potable water or areas in which nutrients can be found.

Skivers possess thermal vision allowing them to sense creatures moving beneath them even in complete darkness. When suitable prey passes beneath its center of mass, a hungry skiver will purposely sunder its bond with a calcite cyst dropping it on the tasty morsel below.

A dropped cyst is considered a projectile with the target permitted only an unmodified d20p for defense if moving (or a d12p if stationary).

The chance of striking an opponent as well as the severity of damage inflicted by a stalactite cyst is a function of elevation. Note that due to their conical shape, such objects present a far greater hazard than stones of equal weight dropped from a similar height, as they tend to penetrate rather than bludgeon.

Skiver

HIT POINTS:	30+2d8
SIZE/WEIGHT:	L / 600 lbs
TENACITY:	Nervous
INTELLIGENCE:	non
FATIGUE FACTOR:	n/a

MOVEMENT	
CRAWL:	1/2
WALK:	—
JOG:	—
RUN:	—
SWIM:	—

SPEED	INIT
10	-4
+6	-4
-4	0
special	n/a
special	TOP SAVE
REACH	▼

SAVES	
PHYSICAL:	+9
MENTAL:	immune
DODGE:	-4

ATTACK: Skivers 'attack' prey by dropping stalactite-like cysts on them. Attack bonus and damage inflicted are dependent on height.

DEFENSE: Missile attacks inflict only a 1hp wound

GENERAL INFO

ACTIVITY CYCLE:	always active
NO. APPEARING:	1
% CHANCE IN LAIR:	100%
FREQUENCY:	Unusual
ALIGNMENT:	non
VISION TYPE:	thermal vision
AWARENESS/SENSES:	Standard
HABITAT:	area with substantive foot traffic
DIET:	Carnivore
ORGANIZATION:	Individual
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	subterranean

YIELD

MEDICINAL:	no
SPELL COMPONENTS:	no
HIDE/TROPHY:	no
TREASURE:	no
EDIBLE:	no
OTHER:	nil
EXPERIENCE POINT VALUE:	330

Vertical Distance	Attack Penalty	Damage
5' - 10'	-4	d12p*-4
11' - 20'	-6	d12p*-1
21' - 30'	-8	2d12p*-2
31' - 40'	-10	2d12p*+4
41' - 50'	-12	3d12p*+3
51' - 60'	-14	4d12p*+2
60+'	-16	6d12p*

* damage dice penetrate on 11-12 reflecting the disproportionate chance of a severe head wound

Should the target fail to become immobilized, a skiver will usually drop a follow-on projectile to finish off wounded prey. Ten seconds of preparation time is required between unloading of subsequent stalactites.

A typical skiver can cover around 400 square feet or so of ceiling space and may have from 2 to 8 cysts large enough to employ as missiles. These are usually dispersed throughout the creature's underside and thus provide a substantial danger zone on the floor below. Creatures scurrying away from a near miss by a stalactite may well be in range of another.

Countering a Skiver

A skiver presents a location-based hazard best countered by avoiding said area. Given its relatively large size (roughly covering a 20' x 20' area), it may be difficult to ascertain the exact extent of the 'danger zone' beneath the creature. Compounding this challenge is the fact that its coloration and texture provide excellent camouflage (a difficult Scrutiny skill check is required to distinguish the skiver from adjacent rock).

If discovered, a skiver has scant overt defensive capabilities. However, given its dispersal of body mass, missile fire will only inflict a 1 hp wound per successful shot as such attacks are simply incapable of inflicting substantive harm. Were an opponent to fly or climb up to the skiver's roost, they would be able to carve the creature up at their leisure – assuming they approached from an orthogonal vector to avoid further rocky droppings.

Habitat/Society:

Skivers have carved out an ecological niche for themselves as ambush predators within the endless leagues of subterranean caves and tunnels that comprise the Netherdeep. One should always be careful near pools of fresh water or rarified patches of edible fungi as such desirable spots beckon these creatures.

Should a skiver kill or cripple a creature via aerial bombardment, it will slowly flow down the wall to envelop its prey. This may take a couple of hours as the skiver moves at a glacial pace when ascending or descending vertical surfaces.

Skivers are attuned to the traffic patterns of the cave systems in which they dwell and will respond by moving when prey becomes wary of their presence. Often this will merely be to an access corridor leading to the spot now being avoided as moving is a slow and laborious process. However, given time and the impetus of starvation, the creature may relocate to a wholly different cavern.

Ecology:

Skivers are asexual organisms that reproduce by budding. When of sufficient size, a skiver will begin to develop several buds along its perimeter. When sufficiently large to be self-sustaining, it drops these offspring to fend for themselves. The most successful breeders will deposit their buds into moving water that can disperse these hatchling far and wide establishing new colonies in downstream caves.

On Tellene:

Some of the most prominent limestone cave systems in which Skivers are likely to be encountered are located along the coast of Edros Bay, on the northern shores of the Straights of Svimohzia near Miclennon and in the Grottos underlying the Ubikokeli Highlands.

GAMEMASTER'S WAR ROOM

Running Baurgar's Prize



Welcome to the **War Room** — this is where we talk, GM to GM. Here you'll be presented with a few suggestions for running the adventure and some options for mixing things up. I'll also explain a few of the strange symbols and icons littered through out the text in case their meanings aren't obvious.

ADVENTURE NOMENCLATURE

Through out the adventure you'll notice some cryptic new icons and symbols.

SYMBOLS & ICONS

Roll above or equal to to succeed	Roll below or equal to to succeed	Opposed Roll	Roll a d20
Corridor/ passageway width.	Ceiling Height	Light Level	Roll percentile

These are used to put information at the GM's fingertips and help cut down on rule look ups and page flips. Some of them are used in notations such as the following example.

Scrutiny: ▼🎲 -40 [average]

The above indicates a Scrutiny check should be made rolling percentile dice. The difficulty rating is "average" yielding a -40 modifier. The result is a success if it is "equal to or below" the character's Scrutiny mastery.

(Morale Check: 🎲🎲 + lead attacker's CHA morale modifier vs. 🎲 -4 [Nervous])

The above line indicates if a morale check is called for in the encounter in which it appears, it will be an opposed roll using d20s. The monster's tenacity is "Nervous" which yields a -4 modifier to its roll. Note that the attacker compelling the morale check factors into the equation – *bad news for fighters using Charisma as a dump stat.*

RAMPING THE ADVENTURE UP/DOWN

As mentioned in the introduction, **Baurgar's Prize** can be run in a variety of ways and against parties of various levels and make-up.

As already pointed out, the players enter the Ma'Kurun Caverns at the worst possible time. Baurgar knows he can never defeat Keegar's superior numbers in the open. Nor can he outrun him.

The bugbear leader is dug in and preparing for the imminent attack he BELIEVES is coming at any moment. He and his warriors are in a high state of alert. They have had several days to prepare for the attack that is coming.

Baurgar's overall strategy is simple — draw Keegar and the Hand into the caverns and pick them off one by one by limiting engagements to small one and two man fronts taking advantage of narrow passageways and choke points.

All of which means the PCs end up in the right place but at the wrong time and the adventure may be much tougher than it normally would be.

As the GM, it's ultimately up to you how challenging you want to make the adventure and if you should scale the difficulty up or down. The following are suggestions:

RAMPING UP

- Add more trained dogs to Baurgar's band. Consider placing two or more in **Area 10** to be released just prior to the final encounter.
- Add 2 to 4 additional goblins who were out foraging for food when the party assault began. Have them return to join the battle at some point after the party enters the cavern.

RAMPING DOWN

- Remove the trained war dogs in **Area 2**.
- Give some of the bugbears wounds (damage taken during the caravan ambush that has yet to be healed).
- Add two or more fighting capable hostages to the pit room (**Area 4**). Once freed they can be armed with captured bugbear or goblin weapons to join the party as they continue the assault. A pair of men-at-arms proficient in halberds and phalanx fighting would be a good choice.

MONSTERS WITH PERSONALITY

All the bugbears and goblins in this adventure have been given

names or nicknames. This is to encourage the GM to give individual foes a bit of character and help transform them from yet another stat block to something with a bit of flesh, blood and attitude.

For example, it's mentioned that Baurgar (10a) is bit fearful of magic. Kabore (2c) is extremely fond of the two war dogs that he personally captured and trained. If the dogs are injured or killed, you have the option to have him become enraged and abandon his orders.

If the party should engage the bugbears, wound and incapacitate a few then return later to fight them again, Bugbears who felt the bite of a particular dwarf's axe might hold his buddy back and give him the "I've GOT his one!" look when he finds he has a chance to settle the score. All of this is just a reminder to have fun with it.

SUBSEQUENT FORAYS AGAINST THE CAVERNS

There's a good chance a party on the lower end of the suggested party strength range won't be able to clear the Ma'kurun Caverns before withdrawing to lick their wounds and heal. Should they return for a second (or third) try, you should have any surviving bugbears prepare accordingly.

Remember, every day the party spends healing, recruiting reinforcements, etc., before returning to hit the caverns again is also another day for the bugbears to do the same. The bugbears will not be static just waiting for the party to return. They busy themselves at recovering and learning from the previous assault, as well as bolstering their defenses.

Healing: The bugbears and goblins have no magical sources of healing. They do, however, have pots of medicinal pastes and salves that speed the healing process (1d4p points of healing to any specific wound it's applied to). There are four earthenware pots of salve in Area 10 near the bedding area (4 applications per pot). In addition, the bugbears should be allowed the benefits of critical care and nursing to remediate their wounds as Larranz has a mastery level of 28 in First Aid.

Bolstering Defenses: If Baurgar survives the initial assault, he will bolster the cavern's defenses by ordering any remaining goblin slaves as well as his bugbear warriors to dig pits as indicated by the X's in the map to the right.

It will take 70 goblin-hours to dig one circular (5' diameter and ten foot deep) pit fitted with sharpened spikes and covered with woven matting. 40 bugbear hours are required to complete the same task. Excavating solid rock is very laborious.

(For computational ease assume that Baurgar commands all individuals not on guard duty to work in shifts around the clock. This permits them to complete one pit per day in sequential order beginning with the one at the base of the stairs in Area 2. If the bugbears and goblins have suffered significant casualties, reduce their productivity down to 1 pit every 3 days.)

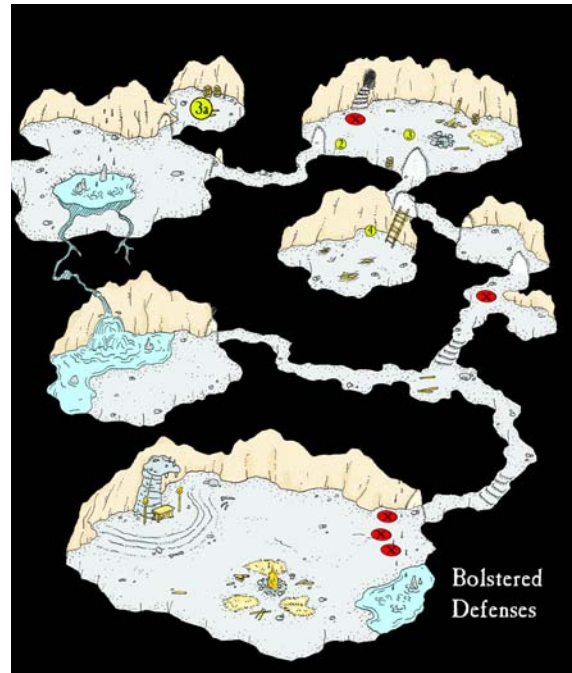
Anyone tumbling into in a pit will suffer d6p-1 damage from the fall as well as being impaled by d3 spikes each of which inflict a d6p wound.

BUGBEAR SIGNALS

Horn Blast

- One short blast: "Enemy has entered the caverns."
- Two short blasts: "Luring the fox to the chicken neck."
- One short blast: One long blast: "Moving your way with enemy in pursuit"
- One long blast: "Enemy has been repelled."
- Two long blasts: "False alarm."

On the Sly: If the party waits longer than five days before returning, the bugbears will have set up a new trap involving the strix in the Pool Chamber (Area 3).



Baurgar (or his replacement should he have been killed) will place half his remaining warriors in the Goblin Hoard chamber (Area 3a). Daubed down with the strix repellent, they have orders to wait for a signal of any intruders entering Area 1 before setting fire to a specially prepared fire pit placed in the room filled with bark and vegetation that produces an irritating smoke. Once lit, the strix net will be removed and the strix will evacuate the chamber within 2d20 seconds, fleeing to the scent of fresh air in Area 1. Any living creature in the Entrance area will be subject to strix attack.

Once the strix trap is set off, (regardless of its success) the bugbears in 3a will move down the passageway to engage any intruders.

THE SIREN CALL OF AN EMPTY NEST

If the party manages to clean out the caverns, they will still exist as a vacuum waiting to be filled by the first opportunistic creatures to wander by.

Perhaps any surviving goblins that fled or abandoned Baurgar will recruit some buddies and return later to pick up the pieces. Alternatively, a pair of mating owlbeasts looking for a new lair could discover the complex.

Note that the Sar'Dyn Maran cultists still operating in the area will definitely want to regain control of the caverns. If news of the adventurers' success spreads to Teron or among the bands of Sadok Thieves in the forest, it's a certainty that cultists will wish to claim it and reconsecrate the Slyth Shrine.

Speaking of the cultists, if the party shows or attempts to trade the Slyth ruby eyes or any of the ceremonial objects taken from the caverns, they are sure to draw the attention of Sar'Dyn Marans in Teron or operating among the thief bands.

They will attempt to recover these items at any cost. These adventure hooks will undoubtedly put the party on the scent of eradicating this evil.

VIRTUAL TABLE TOP PACK

With the popularity of virtual table top role-playing (on such platforms as Maptools, Roll20, D20 Pro and Battlegrounds), Baurgar's Prize contains a VTT PACK. This packet includes all the tokens for NPCs and monsters in the adventure as well as the full color maps (labeled and unlabeled, which can be uploaded and used in the game.

That's it. Have fun. Would love to hear how this adventure plays out at your table.

—Jolly Blackburn

EPILOGUE

Keegar's Hand and the Coming Storm: As fate would have it, the anticipated attack by Keegar and his warriors ends up being delayed. Just as the band was preparing to set out for the caverns, the bugbear shaman, Kaatcha, portended disaster for the Hand if they marched under a full moon (Shadis). In response, Keegar put off the attack for another four days.

Of course, it's up to you the GM if and when Keegar's attack on the caverns occurs. You could be evil and have the chieftain arrive just as the party is mopping up. You could be *royally evil* and have them arrive while the battle is still ongoing within the Ma'Kurun caverns and confront the party with a new and very dangerous enemy advancing directly up their egress route to sandwich them between the rival groups of bugbears. Your game. Your table.

For purposes of this prepared adventure, Keegar's Hand has left to be dealt with another day. However, should you wish to include this enemy, a few details are provided here.

Keegar's Hand consists of Keegar (a bugbear chief), his shaman/advisor Kaatcha, 37 bugbear combatants, a pair of gnoles (Neech and Kreech) and various goblin thralls. This is a **very** dangerous group of brigands so use caution when pitting them against your players. Note that the assault team only contains 16 bugbears (plus Keegar, Kaatcha, Neech & Kreech) - presumably adequate for the task at hand...

Kaatcha the Shaman

<p>Race: Bugbear Class: 5th level Cleric EPV: 400 Size: Large Movement: 10 Alignment: CE Reared: Rogue Haven Hit Points: 59</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Phys: +7 Mental: +7 Dodge: +7</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">SPEED 11</td> <td style="text-align: center;">INIT 0</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">ATTACK +9</td> <td style="text-align: center;">DMG REDUCTION 6</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">DEFENSE +7</td> <td style="text-align: center;">DAMAGE 2d8p +5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">REACH 5 ft</td> <td style="text-align: center;">TOP SAVE 8</td> </tr> </table>	SPEED 11	INIT 0	ATTACK +9	DMG REDUCTION 6	DEFENSE +7	DAMAGE 2d8p +5	REACH 5 ft	TOP SAVE 8	<p style="text-align: center;">Skills</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr><td>cartography</td><td style="text-align: right;">13</td></tr> <tr><td>divine lore</td><td style="text-align: right;">21</td></tr> <tr><td>first aid</td><td style="text-align: right;">28</td></tr> <tr><td>hiding</td><td style="text-align: right;">50</td></tr> <tr><td>language (Bugbear)</td><td style="text-align: right;">65</td></tr> <tr><td>listening</td><td style="text-align: right;">40</td></tr> <tr><td>literacy (Bugbear)</td><td style="text-align: right;">22</td></tr> <tr><td>oration</td><td style="text-align: right;">39</td></tr> <tr><td>persuasion</td><td style="text-align: right;">30</td></tr> <tr><td>recruiting</td><td style="text-align: right;">27</td></tr> <tr><td>religion (Creator of Strife)</td><td style="text-align: right;">37</td></tr> <tr><td>rope use</td><td style="text-align: right;">25</td></tr> <tr><td>weather sense</td><td style="text-align: right;">27</td></tr> </table>	cartography	13	divine lore	21	first aid	28	hiding	50	language (Bugbear)	65	listening	40	literacy (Bugbear)	22	oration	39	persuasion	30	recruiting	27	religion (Creator of Strife)	37	rope use	25	weather sense	27
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<p>Possessions: Flail +1, Knife, Minor Healing Potion, Scroll (<i>Hold in Place</i>)</p>	<p>Proficiencies: knife, flail specialization</p>																																			
<p>Spells: (1) Moderate Emotion: Cause Fear (2) Sanctify Weapon (3) Cursing (4) Flaming Weapon (5) Induce Fratricide</p>																																				
<p>Quirk: Close Talker Flaw: Limp (slight)</p>																																				

Keegar Trooper

BUGBEAR

Morning Star

SPEED 10	INIT -1
ATTACK +7	DMG REDUCTION 6
DEFENSE +7	DAMAGE 2d8p +4
REACH 4'	TOP SAVE 8

18
THRESHOLD

Jog Movement: 10
Tenacity: Steady
Size: L

46
HIT POINTS

16 Individual Bugbears

ALDRAZAR

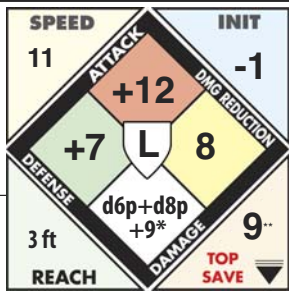
Rogue's Gallery



Keegar

Race: Bugbear Chief
EPV: 512
Size: Large
Movement: 10 (*can't sprint*)
Alignment: CE
Reared: Rogue Haven
Hit Points: 59

Phys: +9
Mental: +8
Dodge: +8



Possessions: footman's mace +3, large shield, improved body armor, Barking Rauht Charm (Paan's Bite, Shield Shadow)

Proficiencies: mace, morning star, heavy armor, shield, laborer.

Talents: tough as nails

Flaws: arthritis, limp (moderate), myopia

- Skills**
- hiding 40
 - hunting 74
 - intimidation 92
 - sneaking 42
 - survival 54
 - torture 51
 - tracking 33
 - trap design 27
 - recruiting 44
 - language (Merchant) 35
 - language (bugbear) 82
 - scrutiny 37

Keegar is the leader of Keegar's Hand — a band of escaped slaves dwelling in the Sadok Forest. Past his prime and battle-scarred from countless scrapes, this mature alpha-male bugbear's name still instills fear, in spite of his battered body. As arthritis, dimming eyesight and joint problems plague him, Keegar pushes himself and his crew to maintain his grip on power in the forest, because he is deathly afraid that he will appear to be weak and this will invite usurpers. He knows that he isn't at his peak anymore, and he frets that others will see it too. He's slowing down, but, he hates to admit it and refuses to quit.

That's not the only reason Keegar terrorizes people in and around the Sadok. His body may be less than it once was, but his ferocity is as strong, or perhaps even stronger, than it ever was. He is, as always, ruthless and hates humans more than anything. Since his imprisonment as a slave so many years ago at the hand of humans, he has thought of little else but ways he can hurt humans and assuage his rage. Even now, as he ages and laments his passing glories, he strives to inflict all the pain and misery on humankind that he can, before he dies. He might not win every time, like he once did, but he is bound and determined to leave his life as a proud warrior, and hopes to hear the wailing of as many human vermin as he can as he fades away. Nothing would make him happier.

His band raids humans traveling to and from Teron as much as he can, for instance. Raids are always swift and devastating, with at least two captives taken, one for ransom and at least one to give Keegar some enjoyment in killing them slowly. It's the little things like these that keep him going.

Recently, Keegar's Hand has burned a roadside inn about twelve miles north of Teron and taken the innkeeper and two merchants hostage. He is demanding that a wagon filled with ale, beef, skins and weapons be left at a designated spot along the roadside in order to free the hostages.

He will, in all probability, torture and kill at least one of the hostages. Sometimes he will torture hostages but not kill them, so that he can get the ransom and still have the delight of hearing the screams.

Keegar is aware that some of the younger members of his band will possibly try to take over leadership at some point. Inter-band rivalries are at an all-time high, and Keegar trusts no one.

* ignores 2DR for heavy armor types, ** Trauma check made on d12

ADDITIONAL NOTES: Keegar hates humans when they are alive, but has a taste for them after they're dead. He will often have slain humans cooked up for him for dinner. Some say he cooks people alive too, but that has not been confirmed.

ALDRAZAR

Rogue's Gallery



The gnole siblings, Neech (female) and Kreech (male) were born in captivity — to a slave mother in Ka'Daan Stables. Plucked from a litter of six, the pair were selected for gladiatorial training to one day satisfy the ravenous appetite of the Arena crowds.

Specializing in paired-fighting, brother and sister were entered into local pit fights at the ripe age of six. Neech was nearly killed in her first bout when a javelin was lodged in her throat. Gushing blood, she continued to fight from a prone position while her brother stood over her keeping the other combatants at bay as best he could. Their bravery led the crowds to shout out for them to be spared. Months later after healing and further training the duo made a better showing of themselves and went on to an unprecedented twenty-four consecutive victories. Now battle hardened and their potential as champions made evident, Master Ka'daan pulled them from the lowly pit fight circuit and began training them for the imperial arena in Abos.

After escaping with Keegar's Hand, the gnole siblings remained with group as it fought its way across the Eder Soult. Neither one of them particularly likes Keegar, but at least it's better than being slaves, and they have a modicum of freedom. When they aren't required to be with the bigger group, Neech and Kreech keep to themselves, sleeping outside of camp, plotting their own strategies and hoping to one day be away from the stinking, idiotic bugbears.

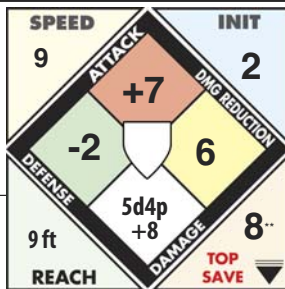
They don't care much for any of the other creatures in the group either, and when they can, they bully the smaller goblins and kobolds. They took special delight in torturing poor Niggles, the goblin, kicking him when he was asleep, urinating in his food, slapping and punching him whenever they were near him.

They have a dark, cruel nature that rivals Keegar's ferocity, except for the fact that they are sneaky about it. Whenever Keegar's Hand is in a fight, for instance, the gnoles are the ones who come out of nowhere, from the shadows, to get in as many rear attacks as they can.

Kreech

Race: Gnole Leader
EPV: 235
Size: Large
Movement: 10
Alignment: CE
Reared: Stable Ka'Daan
Hit Points: 46

Phys: +7
Mental: +3
Dodge: +6



Possessions: Javelin, Glaive, Knife

Proficiencies: knife, glaive specialization, javelin

Talents: Tough as Nails

Quirk: Cruel **Flaw:** Lisp

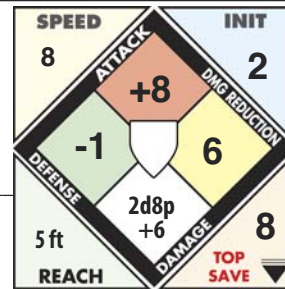
Skills

torture 49
 fire building 21
 tracking 33
 hiding 50
 jumping 31
 intimidation 34
 sneaking 44
 survival 37
 listening 39
 language (goblin) 36
 language (gnole) 75
 language (bugbear) 31

Neech

Race: Gnole Leader
EPV: 250
Size: Large
Movement: 10
Alignment: CE
Reared: Stable Ka'Daan
Hit Points: 46

Phys: +7
Mental: +3
Dodge: +6



Possessions: Flail, Knife, Javelin

Proficiencies: knife, flail specialization, javelin

Talents: Resolute

Quirk: Cruel **Flaw:** Strange Body Odor

Skills

torture 45
 fire building 47
 tracking 28
 hiding 52
 jumping 26
 intimidation 37
 sneaking 42
 survival 39
 listening 34
 language (goblin) 33
 language (gnole) 73
 language (bugbear) 35

BAURGAR'S PRIZE is an adventure that ties in with the Teron: Den of Thieves town setting. The adventure centers around a cave (the Ma'Kurun Caverns, hidden among the deep ravines of the Sadok Forest) that is occupied by a bugbear splinter group who have peeled away from their band after a period of infighting. It can be easily dropped down into pretty much any remote forested area by simply disregarding the backstory or making minor changes.

The GM should note that this adventure reflects the author's fondness for allowing players to wade in over their heads if their actions so dictate. Life isn't always fair and balanced. Some encounters can't always be tackled with brute force and spell lobbing. As such, Challenge vs. Party Level isn't strictly by 'the book'.

Depending on the party (and your players), they may be confronted with the realization at some point, "Dudes — we need to pull out!" There's no shame in having to regroup, recruit allies to help with the challenge, or — simply deciding to move on. Here's hoping it doesn't come to that.

If things do turn south for the group, there are ample opportunities for them to withdraw, lick their wounds and try again (unless of course they push too far before taking advantage of those opportunities).

Although a recommended party level has been given, the adventure deals with a dug in enemy that is expecting trouble in a big way and have been preparing accordingly. The GM should feel free to ramp up or shave down the challenge level as he deems fit. Suggestions for this and more can be found in the *GameMaster's War Room* appendix.