

# ADVENTURE FRAMEWORK

Collection #1



Stephen J. Grodzicki



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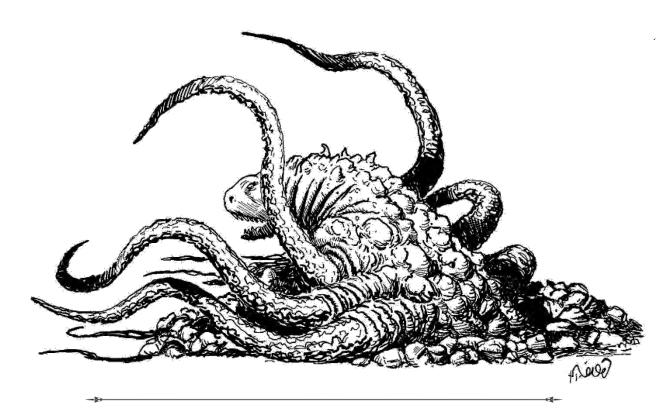
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### HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Welcome Wanderer.

You hold in your hands a compilation of twenty two **B&W** Adventure Frameworks (no's 12, 18, 23, 28-46, ie all of the B&W adventures post *Midlands Low Magic Sandbox Setting*) providing a range of short, independent, episodic adventures set in common locations such as cities, forests, mountains, hills, swamps and underground.

Specifically designed for low prep, improvised play, each framework comes with hooks or rumours, a core scenario, NPC details & statistics, random encounters, and B&W line art. Nineteen of the adventures include hand drawn maps.

Armed with this compilation, filling your sandbox with small to medium sized adventures has never been easier. Browse through the frameworks, throw out a few hooks, and let the players bite where they may. Whichever direction they take, you'll be ready to handle it with aplomb.

These adventures use the *Low Fantasy Gaming* system, and are set in the *Midlands Low Magic Sandbox Setting* by default. They are easily adapted to other d20 based systems and medieval worlds.

### What's Missing

Consistent with Low Fantasy Gaming's open world philosophy, there are no level guides for adventures. If your intended system does not include a Party Retreat rule of some kind, you might consider implementing one. Some adventures are clearly more difficult than others however, and ballpark "danger" guides are provided below.

Finally, frameworks do not include "read aloud" text. Every time a GM reads boxed text, an ad-lib fairy dies, and we've too much blood on our hands already. Paraphrasing and natural speech from the GM keeps players guessing what's pre-planned, and what's off-the-cuff-I-totally-planned-that awesome. And we wants that awesome, precious. We wants it.

No	ADVENTURE	PAGE	SITE	DANGER	SUMMARY
1	A Debt Unpaid	6	Forest	Moderate to High	Every few generations, a powerful fey sends an agent of destruction into the world, seeking vengeance for a past wrong. This time the PCs are its target.
2	A Perilous Voyage	16	Lake	Moderate	As the PCs sail to another location, this side trek hits them with a terrible storm, a washed up corpse, and a horrifying virus. As the crew become infected, madness and mutation follow Drink up me hearties, ho ho!
3	Call of the Colossus	28	Hills	Special	A Zero Level Ordeal designed for 12 - 16 zero level PCs, most of whom won't survive. Will the PCs emerge victorious against the perils of the bronze Colossus?
4	Carnifexum	47	City	Low to High	Carnifexum, the Great Games, are upon the shackled city of Melek once more! Perhaps the PCs will compete in the Ogorien Fighting Pits, the chariot races, or brave wild beasts



					from across the realm? Fame and fortune are up for grabs.
5	Cultists in Crow's Keep	55	City	Low to Moderate	A missing "orphan" child, a lord in need of discrete inquiries, and a dark night full of terrors - man made or otherwise. Can the PCs locate the child before it's too late?
6	Curse of the Salt Queen	65	Forest	Moderate	The PCs are hired to clear out an abandoned mine, but <i>Agueda</i> (an exiled witch and <i>Medusa</i> ) and her <i>Urgot</i> worshippers, have other ideas.
7	Den of Thieves	74	City	Moderate	In <i>Port Brax</i> , the <i>Sumptown Rats</i> have declared war on their criminal rivals the <i>Dungart Dukes</i> . The PCs are recruited as extra muscle to protect <i>Jester</i> ; the Dukes' guild boss.
8	Fane of the Frog God	85	Forest	Moderate	The PCs escort <i>Master Rovos</i> , a wealthy explorer, bent upon exploring the submerged ruins of an elven temple, now home to hostile frogmen.
9	Folds Between Worlds	97	Mountains	Moderate	Something strange is happening in <i>Yellow Cliffs Grove</i> , and rival holy factions want to know why. Can the PCs navigate religious politics, escort an old druid to the cliffs, and sort out the <i>Tentacle Spawn</i> lurking below?
10	Halls of the Dwarf Lord	105	Forest	Moderate	An archaeologist hires the PCs to investigate the Fortress of Dûmora, a lost dwarven hall, defended by Cyclopes and the Barrow Wight Gorvex.
11	Hanging City of Nenchagi	116	Underground	Moderate to High	PCs search for the <i>Mask of Distant Suns</i> , said to be lost in a subterranean city beneath the <i>Argos Plateau</i> (occupied by mutants and their aberrant "god" <i>Xochnomogu</i> ).
12	Hive of the Mudmen	126	Underground	Moderate to High	The PCs investigate <i>Mudmen</i> sightings along <i>Northgate's</i> borderlands, leading back to a hidden hive and progenitor overmind.
13	Last of the Longbeards	137	Underground	Low to Moderate	Dwarven slaves from <i>Dol-Karok</i> have escaped into the <i>Lost Roads</i> beneath the <i>Ironhull Mountains</i> . The PCs are tasked with retrieving them.
14	Red Moon Harvest	148	Swamp	Moderate	Interdimensional aliens are kidnapping outlying farmers to harvest their organs; can the PCs solve the mystery and end the threat?
15	Rooftop Rumble	163	City	Moderate	The PCs become embroiled in a rooftop chase scenario, seeking to apprehend



					notorious assassin Skanta Claws (comedic
					xmas theme).
16	Ruins of Ashabat	170	Mountains	Moderate to High	PCs seek a magical gem in a ruined mountaintop city, occupied by three vying, monstrous factions.
17	Shadows & Dust	178	Mountains	Moderate to High	PCs accompany <i>Drar Fjorg</i> in his search for the ancient citadel of <i>Ortu Menon</i> , and the <i>Altar of Resurrection</i> said to be hidden within. The citadel is under an <i>Undead</i> curse.
18	Vault of Goblin Dreams	191	Underground	Low to Moderate	The <i>Druvtog</i> (goblins), slumber in their underground vault in the depths of <i>Wistwood</i> . Can the PCs sneak into the complex for some stealthy looting, or will they accidentally rouse the vault's guardians.
19	Vengeance at Trollbridge	203	Hills	Moderate	Thraani, last of her barbarian tribe, wants only one thing: vengeance against the trolls that slew her kin. But she can't do it alone. Do the PCs have mighty thews enough to join her quest?
20	Whitestone Tower	213	Forest	Moderate	In the skies above <i>Vorngard</i> , a winged beast is causing trouble, killing messenger ravens and outlying sentries. The monster lairs in a decrepit tower, once home to a long dead sorceress. Will the PCs investigate and end the threat?
21	Riddle of the Golden Rat	223	Any	Moderate	A cursed rat idol "treasure" shrinks the party to tiny size and swallows them. Can the PCs escape from the inside out?
22	Dungeon Flip: More Skulls for Ulgoth	232	Special	Special	This is a "reverse dungeon"; players control the monsters and their underground lair, whilst being invaded by a band of merciless, treasure hungry NPC adventurers.





# A DEBT UNPAID





# A Debt Unpaid

Wrong place at the wrong time. Sometimes bad things happen to good adventurers. And bad adventurers. And the rest. Helm on, sword up, you'll be right. Just remember, if it looks too dangerous to fight, it probably is.

#### The Gorrog & the Bruhga

In the Elder Forest, where some thuel tribes stretch back to before the founding of the walled cities, there are skalds that remember the oral histories of the primeval world; secret accounts of hidden spirits and portents, unheard of by civilized men.

One such tale involves the *Gorrog*; a dreadful beast of frightful wrath, born of the unseelie in their struggle against the mortals of the First Age. When the last unicorn died, the *Bruhga of Still Dreams* reanimated the corpse with her grief, infusing it with hatred stronger than the bones of the earth.

Every few centuries, as the skalds well fear, the *Bruhga* unleashes her twisted pet upon *Drelnor Forest*, slaying humans across the woodland in a fever of bloodied vengeance, undulled by generations of slaughter. Single minded and unforgiving, the *Gorrog* must have its fill of mortal life before returning across the Veil.

#### Star Crossed & Ill Fated

Sometimes the PCs go looking for trouble, but every now and then, trouble comes looking for them. This is one of those times.

Aye, grip firmly to your rail carts, gentlemasters; this scenario dumps the PCs into a situation not to their liking, nor making. But things aren't all bad; there are exciting monsters to be faced, treasures

won, and perhaps, just maybe, a favour earned from a power strange and incomparable. Given the forced introduction however, and the danger level of some foes, GMs might reserve this scenario for  $4^{\text{th}}$  level PCs and above.

In this adventure, the PCs are inexplicably marked as the *Gorrog's* prey; an unfortunate consequence of being in the *Forest of Drelnor* (or other large woodland) at the wrong time. Perhaps an extraplanar conjunction whilst camped on a leyline or fey graveyard? A tragic prophesy? A cursed bloodline or eldritch debt? Whatever suits the GM's purposes. What really matters is what the PCs are going to do about it.

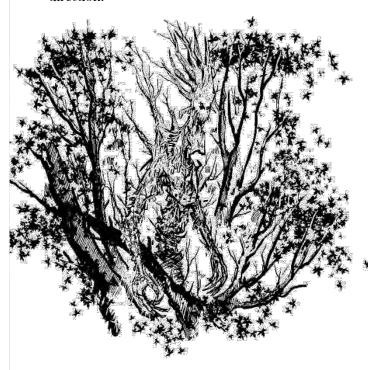




#### A Warning

The first warning that the party have been marked by the *Bruhga*, and are now prey of the *Gorrog*, is a lack of shadows.

During the witching hour, while sitting on sentry duty, one of the PCs notices their shadow detach and slip away into the darkness, faster than they can follow. At about the same time, other PCs' shadows also detach and depart in the same direction.



An Int (Arcane Lore) check by a trained character recalls vague legends about fey spirits tracking humans by stealing their shadows, using them as links to scry on their flesh and bones. A great success reveals some fey used such clairvoyant techniques to not only spy upon, but also hunt, human prey. A *Pierce the Veil* spell resonates divination magic from the shadows and each of the PCs. *Sever Arcanum* suspends the divination effect for 2d6 rounds, but does not dispel it.

#### Guidance

The *Bruhga* despises humanity, particularly those armed with iron weapons, but like all unaging fey

is capricious beyond mortal understanding. Fond of games of all kinds, the unseelie is willing to turn this hunt into a contest of sorts, and provide clues that might assist the prey.

The next morning, after the party get underway to wherever they're heading, the PCs are visited by a herald of the hunt; an animated 20 ft "treeman" that communicates with a creaking, wind addled rustling.

The treeman is non-violent (unless attacked). It does not speak, but sprouts a single green leaf on the tip of its finger, and leans down to one of the party, showing it to them. The leaf turns yellow then drops off of its own accord, drifting lazily to the ground. The herald then departs.

If the leaf is inspected, a map of sorts if revealed, formed with the leaf's veins and mottled colouration. Holding the leaf tip high, the map indicates:

- 1. A Heart icon in the centre.
- 2. Waterfall icon to the north.
- 3. Dead Tree icon to the east.
- 4. Ruins icon to the south.
- 5. Skull icon to the west.

The heart refers to the PCs present location, and the other icons locations to the north, south, east and west of the party, where their shadows are being held captive. If the party travel to the sites, they might find ways to retrieve their shadows and break the connection with (or weaken) the *Gorrog*.

Naturally the PCs are free to simply ignore all this and go on their way (perhaps heading to the nearest outpost or city for protection). Wherever they roam, however, the *Gorrog* will come for them eventually.

Herald of the Hunt, AC 18, HD 12, 2 Batter 3d6, 19: special, S22 D10 C20 I3 P13 W17 Ch4, L11, Mv 20 ft. The herald is immune to nonmagical



weapons, except those of *cold iron*. *Causes Injuries* on a natural 19-20 attack roll, 10 ft reach. Fire causes double damage and sends it into a rage, gaining *Off Turn Attacks*.

#### **Random Encounters**

Travelling to and locating the waterfall and other shadow locations takes 1 day from the PC's current, central position. Travelling diagonal routes from say the northern waterfall to the eastern cave takes 1.5 days. An Int (Wilderness Lore) check reduces these times by half a day (a great success also reduces the chances of a random encounter by 20%).

There is a 40% chance of a random encounter every 12 hours, increasing by 10% each morning (max 80%). If a random encounter occurs, roll 1d8, adding +1 for each day that has passed since the PCs' shadows departed.

- 1. 4d6 *Skorn* (aka *Beastmen*) are sleeping nearby in a small clearing, nestled under ferns and bracken. Their sentry, and two prisoners (rival skorn children, trussed up and gagged) have also fallen asleep. They all look exhausted.
- 2. 1d4+2 *Giant Scorpions* can be heard skittering and chittering beyond the next grove of trees. They are hungry, but wary of foes with large amounts of metal. They will attempt to snatch up one PC and back away, retreating to their nest (where 3d6 hatchlings await, 1 HD).
- 3. 2d6 *Ogres* led by *Sebbor* (a staggering 11 ft female, tiny eyes, huge jaw, dual axes, 7 HD) are on their way to "talks" with a rival ogre clan (ie armed to the teeth with their biggest, spikiest clubs). Some fresh mansnacks would impress their brutal (and doubtless hungry) kin.

- 4. The forest suddenly drops away into a steep ravine, with a rope bridge crossing (of ancient thuel construction). The bridge is old and worn, but safe enough. There is a 50% chance 1d4+1 *Giant Eagles* or *Dire Bats* swoop down to attack those who cross.
- 5. In an especially dark portion of the forest, a clump of rare *Scaleburn* mushrooms are growing (1 ft, lumpy charcoal coloured top, with lighter spots). An Int (Apothecary) check may harvest 2d4 doses of *Scaleburn* powder (poison, air vector, throw up to 30 ft, affects 5 ft radius, *Luck* (Con) save or 2d6+3 damage for 2 rounds). A failed Apothecary check accidentally triggers a defensive spore puff, causing 1d6 damage to the PC.
- 6. A pair of *Giant Serpents* are nesting here, watching over their clutch of 2d6 infant snakes (3 ft, 2 hp, 1d3 poison damage). Scattered thuel bones conceal some loot (1 x Carry Loot).
- 7. A winged *Sprite* named *Mew* (golden haired, silver wings, carries a tiny wooden sword) has taken a liking to one of the PCs (highest Cha, or perhaps demonstrated a love of wilderness or games in the last few days), and is spying on them from nearby treetops (Perc check to spot). If treated kindly, Mew warns that "the Gorrog comes" and encourages the party to "fly now, fly away!".

Mew is most exasperated if told that the PCs don't have wings, and no, they aren't hiding them beneath their cloaks. Mew can also reveal that the party's "shiny pointers" (swords) and "hard shells" (steel armour) won't help them. The Gorrog causes such things to "dull, crack,



crumble". If the party has anything rusty, she points to it for emphasis, "like that". If charmed (magically or otherwise), Mew gives the party 1d3 doses of pixie sleep poison ("dreaming dust") before departing.



8. The party sees/hears trees snapping and breaking 2d4 rounds before the *Gorrog* suddenly arrives. It looses an ear drum shattering roar, then charges directly at the closest PC (see page 12).

#### Dragon Falls (Waterfall icon)

The northern water fall is fed by a steady stream cresting a high rise, dropping down 40 ft into a shallow 80 ft pool, before being carried away by underground rivulets. At its peak ancient rocks are carved in the likeness of a dragon's head with open jaws, through which some of the stream flows. The pool and surrounds are lush and verdant, teeming with greenery and speckled with sunlight, somehow penetrating the canopy above.

One of the PCs' shadows (determine randomly) appears to be floating on a calm patch of the pool's

surface. Careful inspection for a short period identifies the shadow's owner, and suggests it is "asleep"; stretching and rolling over, as if in bed.

But the shade is not asleep. It is a puppet of the *Bruhga* and very much awake, hoping to lure one or more PCs into the pool. If arrows or similar ranged weapons are fired at the pool or shadow, if "awakens" and flees into the waterfall, disappearing behind it.

If one or more PCs enter the pool, the shade eventually strikes, seeking to wrap icy hands around one adventurer's throat (ideally the owner) and drag them beneath the pool to drown them.

Shadow, AC 12, HD 6, Strangle 1d8+1, 19: the target suffers a moderate madness (Will check resists), S16 D15 C15 I10 P13 W10 Ch7, L8, Mv 30 ft inc walls, ceiling, etc. The shadow is infinitely flexible but not incorporeal and cannot fly. It is immune to non-magical weapons except for silver, cold iron, fire and holy water. On a hit, the target is automatically grabbed by the throat, and a Str contest required to avoid being dragged underwater.

The shadow is utterly silent, ink black and featureless, but for its overall shape (which conforms with the owner). If reduced to zero hp, it vanishes instantly, reappearing at the side of its owner (completely normal, non-magical; an Int (Arcane Lore) check confirms an absence of magic, as does *Pierce the Veil* (for that PC and their mundane shadow, but not other PCs whose shadows are yet to be restored).

Behind the waterfall is a small 10 ft cave, sacred to local barbarian tribes. It contains a small rock and moss shrine, plus a few years' worth of offerings (1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Valuables, 1 x Trinkets & Curios). If the shadow fled here, it hides behind the shrine, striking when the opportunity arises.



#### Crucifixion Tree (Dead Tree icon)

The eastern dead tree icon refers to a squat oak tree, long dead and leafless, in the centre of a small 30 ft clearing. Visibility here is particularly dim and the air cold; adventurers without a light source suffer disadvantage on vision checks.

The tree at the centre has a skeleton nailed to it, wooden stakes hammered into the hands and forearms pinning it upright. Over time, vines have grown up around the bones, further securing them in place.



One of the PCs' shadows is bound to the bones of the skeleton (determine randomly). If the owner approaches within 40 ft, the shadow manifests, spreading out from the ribcage to envelop most of the skeletal structure. It rattles the bones like a puppet, trying to get free of the tree, but unable to.

The only way to free the shadow is to release the skeleton from the tree. This might be done a number of ways, including for example hacking off the skeleton's arms, shooting it with arrows until it

falls apart, burning away part of the tree, prying out the wooden spikes and cutting away the vines, etc.

The skeleton was once *Annash*, a female thuel warrior captured by skorn, tortured and devoured. *Annash* died horribly, but her suffering did not end there; her soul blighted and bound to her earthly remains as a *Ghost*. Local thuel and skorn tribes are aware of the spirit, and do not venture here.

If her skeleton is disturbed, *Annash's* ghost is summoned from beyond the Veil. She is wholly insane, wracked with fury and despair, but how she responds to the PCs depends mostly on how they interact with her bones.

If the skeleton is wantonly and significantly damaged or defiled (cut to pieces, set on fire, etc), *Annash* goes into a merciless, psychotic rage, seeking to slay every living thing she finds. But if the bones are recovered with respect, and particularly if buried or given funeral rites, her soul is released, and the PCs gain 1 *Luck* (may temporarily exceed normal maximum).

Annash, Ghost, AC 12, HD 8, Touch 1d4 + special, 19: the target ages twice as much as usual, S-D15 C-I10 P13 W17 Ch3, L9, Mv 30 ft flying. Incorporeal (LFG p.94). A ghost's awful caress instantly ages the target 3d10 years (no Luck save) and requires a Luck (Will) save to resist a serious madness. A target aged more than its expected lifespan dies a desiccated husk.

Either way, once the bones are removed from the tree, the PC's shadow is freed and instantly returns to its owner (as in **Dragon Falls** above).

#### Temple Ruins (Ruins icon)

The southern ruins icon is reference to a crumbling temple dating back to the Second Age, sandstone blocks dangerously cracked by sun and



rain. A recent wildfire has cleared much of the undergrowth that had reclaimed the area.

The civilization responsible for the temple is long erased, with no surviving books or obvious identifying paraphernalia. Searching the ruins completely might turn up a few preserved inscriptions or sigils (Perc (Detection) check at disadvantage, suggesting perhaps it was a compulsory "refuge" for unwanted half-elves, spirited away by their xenophobic, and much longer lived, forebears (Int (General Knowledge) check, great success required).

In any event, the site is currently occupied by small warband of *Skorn*; scouts from the prevalent *Shezgak* (fleshfeasters) tribe, identified by their dark purple warpaint.

The warband is led by twin sisters *Mogru* and *Ormus*, 7ft, powerfully built warriors with shaved heads tattooed purple. The sisters are "blessed" with wolf lycanthropy, and command a pack of *Dire Wolves*.

The *Bruhga* has no power or influence over the skorn. She has however concealed one of the PCs' shadows with one of the *dire wolves*; it appears as part of the beast's shadow, as if it were riding it. So far, none of the skorn have noticed (indeed, if this is pointed out to them, they immediately attack the beast – correctly assuming it is cursed with forbidden sorcery). Killing the *dire wolf* releases the shadow (same as earlier sites).

Skorn, AC 11, HD 2, Club 1d6+1, 19: the target is clubbed in the head, losing its next action (*Luck* (Will) save resists), S15 D10 C13 I7 P12 W8 Ch8, L5, Mv 30 ft. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage when detecting danger or scents.

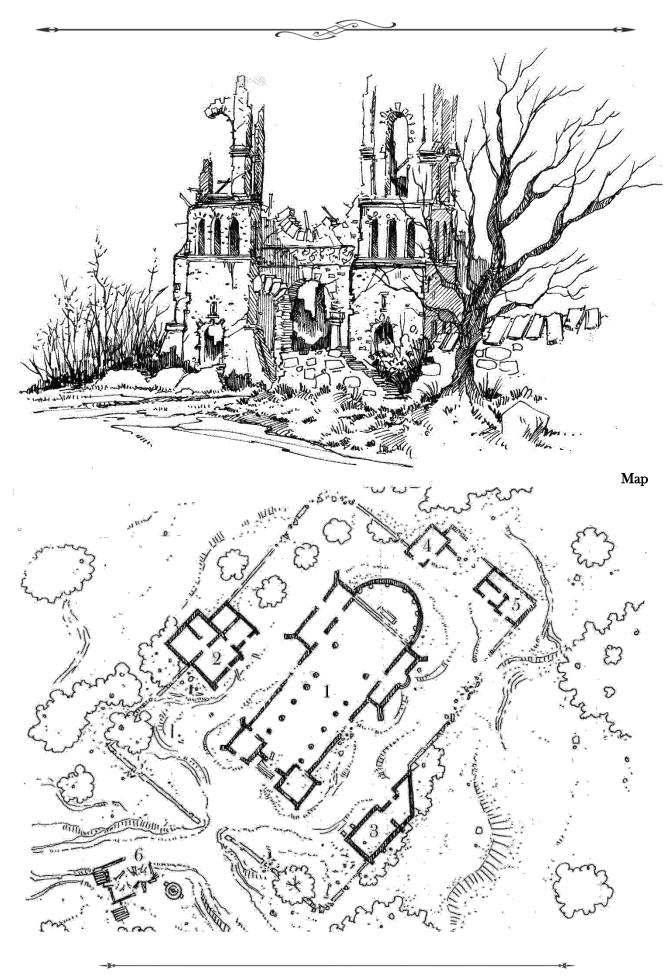
Mogru & Ormus, Werewolves, AC 13, HD 6+4, Bite 2d6, 19: a wolf (60%) or dire wolf (40%) comes to the lycanthrope's aid, S18 D14 C14 I10 P15 W13 Ch8, L8, Mv 30 ft. Lycanthrope with all

the usual benefits. May spend an action to exert control and issue orders to *wolves* and *dire wolves*, which are compelled to obey. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage when detecting danger or scents. Skorn lycanthropy cannot be spread to non-skorn.

Dire Wolf, AC 13, HD 3+4, Bite 2d4+1, 19: a wolf (60%) or dire wolf (40%) comes to aid the dire wolf, S18 D15 C17 I2 P13 W14 Ch6, L6, 60 ft. Advantage when tracking and on attack rolls when flanking.

The keyed locations are as follows:

- 1. Temple Ruin, missing most of the ceiling, housing 2d6+12 skorn. One or more cookfires are burning. 50% chance of one or both sisters. Stacked around a broken altar are stolen goods (1 x 4 HD Lair Treasure). In the southern towers, 1d4 skorn keep watch with primitive bows.
- 2. Dire Wolf Kennels. 1d6+1 Dire Wolves lair here, compelled by the authority of the sisters. If the sisters are slain, the wolves turn on the *skorn*, exacting vengeance for past cruelties. There is a 50% chance the wolf with the PC's shadow is here.
- 3. Dire Wolf Kennels as in Area 2. If the shadow wolf is not in Area 2, it is here.
- 4. Shaman's Hut. This ruin houses the skorn witchdoctor, Raakma (5 ft, squat and obese, greasy, blood dyed hair, facial scarring). Raakma has 5 HD, grants Adv on nearby skorn morale checks, and carries a random Potion.
- 5. *Prison*. This largely intact stone outhouse, patched up with crude wooden panels, houses a prisoner; *Miridine*, the only survivor of a caravan set upon by the





Shezgak. She is delirious with lack of food and sleep, badly injured and obviously tortured. Her left hand has been bitten off. *Miridine* is actually quite wealthy and will pay the party 600 gp if freed and returned home (and will owe them a great debt of gratitude).

6. Rog, an exiled Ogre, lives in these ruins. He is particularly dull (Int 3), and is effectively the sisters' enforcer. Rog enjoys tormenting the smaller skorn, and the sisters enjoy using him to keep the warband in line. He is a status symbol for the sisters, and doubles as an effective porter. 1 x Carry Loot may be found here.

#### Locating the Shadow

Finding the PC's shadow in this location is like looking for needle in a haystack. If they observe the wolves however, a Perc (Detection) check great success notices it. Alternatively, if the PCs are here during twilight (dusk or dawn), the shadow owner experiences a slight but tangible *pull* in the direction of their shadow. A series of Perc checks will lead them to it. Killing the wolf, or the sisters (and releasing the wolves from their compulsion), frees the shadow (as earlier).

#### Battlefield (Skull icon)

The western skull icon represents the overgrown remains of a bygone battlefield, where some chartered explorers, and their mercenary protectors, fought a terrible battle with barbarian forces, leaving both sides decimated.

The dead have lain buried for centuries, their armour stained and pitted, the site avoided by superstitious thuel. With the *Gorrog's* return, the *Bruhga* has infused the remains with fey anima, granting them supernatural grace of movement.

The 4d6+20 skeletons now house one of the PCs' shadows, split up into each of them, which can be

seen as a darkness flickering in their ribcage. *All* of the skeletons must be destroyed in order to free the PC's shadow. The skeletons target the owner of the shadow above all others, mindlessly risking opportunity attacks to position themselves to strike.

Skeletal Mercenary, AC 13, HD 2+2, Sword/Axe 1d8, 19: another skeleton emerges from the ground to aid this one, S15 D13 C14 I- P14 W-Ch, L6, Mv 40 ft. *Undead* (LFG p.95), automatically sense the living within 60 ft and are immune to piercing weapons such as arrows. If the skeletons are defeated, up to 1d6 pieces of armour or weapons may be scavenged, in addition to 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Valuables (LFG p.136, 147).

#### The Gorrog Appears

The *Gorrog* appears when the triggered on the random encounters table. If the party have left the wilderness and are safely ensconced in an outpost or city, it waits for them to leave before resuming the hunt.

If the party manages to retrieve all of their shadows before the *Gorrog* is triggered, they manage to avoid the fell beast altogether (it likely eats a tribe of barbarians or skorn instead).

The *Gorrog* bears no likeness to the unicorn it once was. At 30 hands high (approx 15 ft tall), the hairless creature towers over horses and men, heavy as an elephant, with a single jagged horn and twin, razor toothed jaws.

The Gorrog, Boss Monster, AC 15, HD 13 (96 hp), Horn 2d6 + special, Bite 2d6+2, and Stomp 3d6, 19: the target's metal weapon, shield or armour turns to rust and is destroyed (even chance, no Luck save unless a magical item), S21 D8 C23 I- P10 W- Ch-, L13, Mv 30 ft and leap 20 ft. Boss Monster with the usual benefits (LFG p.95). The Bruhga imposes disadvantage on Party Retreat tests. Horn attack requires a Luck save to



avoid a metal weapon, shield or armour (randomise) turning to rust and being destroyed.

For each PC shadow retrieved, the Gorrog loses one of the following special abilities (even chance):

- 1. *Corroding Hide*: metal weapons striking the *Gorrog* turn to rust and are destroyed (*Luck* save resists).
- 2. *Venomous Bite:* the bite attack causes 1d2 Str loss (*Luck* (Con) save resists).
- 3. Fey Roar: When staggered, the Gorrog unleashes a maddening roar; all enemies within 30 ft suffer Malediction of Lunacy (as the spell, Luck (Will) save resists).
- 4. *Bruhga's Kiss*: when reduced to zero hp, all enemies within 60 ft of the *Gorrog* suffer a serious madness (no save).

If destroyed, the *Gorrog* decomposes within moments in a swarm of buzzing flies, until only the beast's horn remains (substitute for unicorn horn, worth 3d6 x 100 gp, or may be fashioned into a magic weapon that causes the monster's rust effect as part of an action, once every 1d3 days).

#### Aftermath

If the party defeat the *Gorrog*, the *Bruhga* is outraged, but also bound by cosmic accords to offer the party a boon for defeating her champion (equivalent of a single spell up to  $5^{th}$  level, that may be called on at some future time, by invoking the *Bruhga's* title seven times). The unseelie imparts this understanding to the party during the next twilight, appearing in a fleeting vision as a 7 ft dryad surrounded by curling vines.

If the PCs simply flee the forest, without some or all of their shadows, the *Gorrog* waits for them in woodland outskirts. The next time they leave civilization, it attempts to resume the hunt. Destroying the *Gorrog* releases any shadows not yet freed.



# A PERILOUS VOYAGE



# A Perilous Voyage

Word about the docks is *Maddie Croke*, Captain of the privateer ship *Gale Cutter*, is seeking hardened mercenaries for a trade voyage across *Lake Argos*.

#### **Bad Blood**

A Perilous Voyage is a water based side trek that occurs whilst the party is sailing to reach another adventure location.

When the side trek begins, the party has booked several days passage aboard the *Gale Cutter*, a carrack (large, pirate like vessel, with 2d6+20 crew) operated by privateer *Captain Croke* and her quartermaster *Barnabus*. The party departs *Port Brax* on the western side of *Lake Argos*, headed for eastern shores, a voyage of 2-3 days (weather depending), where some lost ruin or other unrelated adventure hook awaits.

Unfortunately for all concerned, a terrible storm almost sinks the vessel 24 hours from port. When the storm ends (ideally at night or pre-dawn), the crew emerge from battened down hatches to discover the body of a bizarre sea monstrosity tangled in damaged rigging.

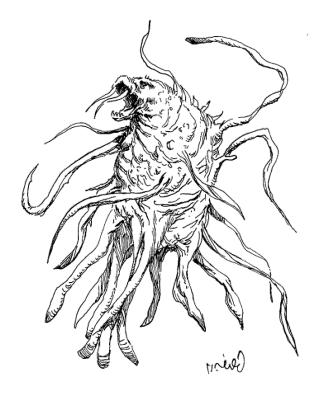
Seemingly dead, the abomination's presence has tainted the ship, contaminating it with a horrific parasite; a quasi-sentient virus of the *First Age* that spreads mutation and madness.

The adventure then proceeds on a timer, with certain events triggering until the party either destroys the virus and its infected hosts, or they succumb in the attempt.

#### Weathering the Storm

After twelve hours of darkening skies, fierce winds and flashing lightning, a terrible storm is unleashed across the vast lake. Ten metre waves relentlessly hammer the *Gale Cutter*, forcing all hands below deck and the hatches sealed.

Efforts to safeguard the ship, whilst being tossed around in the hull, require a *Luck* (Con) save to avoid 1d2 Con loss due to exhaustion or injury. The check is made at advantage if the PCs take precautions to minimise their risk of damage.



As the storm subsides, when the waves no longer crash onto the deck, characters in the mess (Area 4) notice a black fluid dripping through the boards above. The fluid is similar to oil (does not mix with water), but is warm. Some NPCs in the mess (and any PCs that took shelter there) are exposed to the airborne virus at this time. There are 1d6+1 crew in the area who become infected with the virus.



Any PCs require a *Luck* (Con) save to avoid contamination.

#### The Body

After a few hours, the storm abates, allowing the crew and passengers to return topside. The deck is in disarray, but more concerning is the limp body of a bizarre looking lifeform, tangled in torn rigging on the port side of the forecastle. The creature is approximately 11 ft long, bulbous, rubbery white flesh spotted with hard nodules. The body is covered with smooth (suckerless) tentacles, the head reminiscent of a giant catfish. Black blood oozes from the monster's mouth, forming a large pool (and dripping into the Mess in Area 4).

The monster is almost, but not completely, dead. Any attempt to move it causes it to latch onto nearby humans with its tentacles (3 attacks, +8 to hit), before pulling them in close (Str contest vs Str 19), and vomiting black blood over them (automatic infection). The abomination then shudders and dies.

Closer inspection of the corpse suggests it died due to air exposure, or perhaps some form of internal injury (most of the blood comes from the mouth/throat, other wounds are minor). The curious nature of the blood is also revealed (black, oil like quality). If the blood is kept in a jar or vial, after an hour it manifests a strange bubbling quality, as if trying to escape. In another 1d4 hours, the blood turns ashen grey and "dies".

Cutting the beast open autopsy style reveals the creature is almost drained of blood, despite no obvious cause (Int (Apothecary) check). On a great success, the PC also locates three tiny eggs in what appears to be a redundant bowel. The eggs contain embryos in the form of (i) a similar monstrosity, (ii) a gilled bird with tentacles instead of legs, and (iii) a starfish like mass bearing five eel headed appendages.

#### Virus Events

After the body is discovered, the following timeline unfolds, subject to the PCs' actions and random encounters. A *Virus Event* occurs every few hours (GM discretion).

	VIRUS EVENTS				
+2 hrs	A nest of rats mutates and attacks a random PC (see Random Encounter 6).				
+1d3 hrs	1d3+1 of the crew, <i>Womat, Eisen, Lo Mai</i> and <i>Juggers</i> (who were in Area 4 during the storm, or moved the corpse/scrubbed the deck) are infected, and begin exhibiting madness (see Madness table). One of them destroys the rowboats in the forecastle with an oil fire (whispering " <i>into the flames</i> " over and over).				
+1d3 hrs	Infection spreads to 50% of the crew, all of whom exhibit madness. If the original 1d4+1 infected are still alive, they suffer a mutation (see Mutation table).				
+1d4 hrs	A mutiny occurs. The infected, now composing 75% of the crew, attempt to seize control of the ship. If <i>Captain Croke</i> or any officers live, they barricade themselves in Area 8, barring the door.				
+2 hrs	All infected are mutating and take control of the ship. The entire crew is infected unless the PCs somehow stem the tide.				
+1d3 hrs	The infected are now more virus than man, incapable of sailing the ship. The <i>Gale Cutter</i> careens off course (see End Game).				
+1d3 hrs	The virus achieves its final iteration and merges into a single abomination. The monster tears the boat apart before sinking beneath the waves.				

#### Guarding against Infection

PCs might come up with various ways of protecting against infection, including quarantining themselves, cleansing the infected with fire, wearing face masks, etc.



The virus is spread by contact and air vectors, but PCs taking precautions gain advantage on any saves. A PC that successfully resists need not make another save until re-exposed to the virus after 4 hours has passed (or other period determined by the GM).

A PC forced to swallow any part of an infected (blood, saliva, severed finger, etc) automatically contracts the disease.

#### **Madness**

NPCs suffer a Pervasive madness after the first few hours. A PC may make a Will check to postpone lunacy until the next Virus Event. Each check after the first suffers a cumulative -1 penalty. If madness occurs, roll 1d10:

MADNESS				
1	"I hear my blood coursing inside my veins. Do you hear it too? Hmm, now that I listen closer, I sense the squeezing and squelching of your organs. You have a loud liver, landlubber."			
2	"The wood of this ship is utterly delicious.  Particularly this patch where the sea creature's blood split. I must consume it.  Who has taken my whittling blade, you pack of dogs?"			
3	"Why should I bother conversing with any of you lumpy fleshsacks? The change is upon me, I ascend to a higher form!"			
4	"The mists are the ghosts of sailors past, don't ye know? We must know this, here on this boat. We will be joining them soon enough."			
5	"One of us. One of us. One of us" (whispering to self, nodding).			
6	"Ye know, I cut off part of the beast before they burnt it/threw it overboard/etc. It is most pleasant when roasted. You should try some. You must try some. I insist."			
7	"The sun burns my eyes, the wind grates my skin. How can you stand it here above			

	deck? I must get below. As low, and as
	deep, as I can."
	"Know ye this: our skin is alive. So too our
	hearts, our lungs; every part of us. Yea
	especially that part. They have their own
8	thoughts, of a kind. Desires, hates. They
	have been sleeping, aye, for the longest
	time. But they are waking, and I fear we will
	not like what they have to say."
	"There is something very wrong with
	Barnabus. Look it! See how he skitters
	across deck. Like a crab? His hands:
9	pinchy. Like a crab. Is Barnabus a crab?
	He looks a crab to me. Hard shelled, is he
	not? Aye, a crab, a crab, Barnabus is a
	crab!"
	"The water, she calls to me. Do you hear it
10	also? The playful beckoning of the waves;
	see how they frolic! Why do we linger here
	on this wretched boat? This wooden cage.
	This coffin."

#### Mutation

Characters suffering a mutation roll 2d6 on the following table. Mutations are permanent barring excision or *Purge the Accursed*. A special herbal medicine (correct herbs and Int (Apoth) check) grants PCs (only) a *Luck* (Con) save to shake off the virus. Mutations occur painfully over 1d4 hours (or as the GM determines).

All mutants suffer an ongoing compulsion to spread the virus by biting or mating with other living creatures (excluding *Barnacle Forms*). A Will check suppresses the urge for 1d6 x 10 minutes. Each check suffers a cumulative -1 penalty until triggered (resets to zero).

	MUTATION				
2-3	Character mutates into a <i>Fleshpod</i> (see below).				
4-5	Character mutates in a <i>Vomitor</i> (see below).				

19



	The character becomes a <i>Hybrid</i> . A body part is transformed or sprouted, roll	
6-8	1d10: (i) arm change, (ii) leg change, (iii) genitals change, (iv) grow tail, (v) grow arm, (vi) grow leg, (vii) grow head, (viii) hybrid head change, (ix) torso change, (x) eyes & mouth change.	
	Roll 1d8 for form: (i) fish, (ii) shark, (iii) octopus, (iv) crab (v) eel, (vi) coral (vii) starfish, (viii) ooze.	
9-10	Character mutates into a <i>Spinehost</i> (see below).	
11-12	Character mutates into <i>Barnacle Form</i> (see below).	



Hybrids use the same stats as Crew, but 2+1 HD, and some other change related to their mutation (not all beneficial, but for example, an extra arm might allow an extra attack, a head change might

gain gills, a leg change might halve movement rate, tentacle might gain adv on grabs, etc).

Vomitor, AC 11, HD 3, Vomit 2d4+2 (20 ft range, Luck (Con) save or infected), 19: spews on target's face, disad on infection save, S13 D8 C13 I7 P11 W14 Ch1, L6, Mv 30 ft. When reduced to zero hp, explodes in a 10 ft radius (as Vomit).

Vomitors might be mistaken as humans from a distance or in half light, but up close their sunken eyes, sagging skin and gurgling breath gives them away. Human skeletons surrounded by virus slough, encased in skin, the walking virus spews acidic contagion on its targets.

Fleshpod, AC 12, HD 6, Bite 3d6 (Luck (Con) save or infected), 19: Psychic scream; Luck (Will) save or cannot regain hp from short rests for 24 hours, S15 D15 C14 I4 P10 W17 Ch1, L8, Mv 30 ft inc up walls etc. Fleshpods are 4ft horrific gestalts of quivering flesh, eyes and claws, with boundless hunger. Immune to surprise and piercing damage, double damage from fire.

Barnacle Form, AC 19, HD 5, Slashing Arm 3d6, 19: Bear hug for an extra 3d6 damage and lose 1 Con, S18 D10 C17 I3 P10 W17 Ch1, L8, Mv 20 ft (inc swimming). Barnacle Forms are 6ft humanoids encased in iron like barnacles with sharp edges, brought into being to protect other virus forms. They move slowly but purposefully, attacking threats to the virus until they or the threat are destroyed. Amphibious, Off Turn Attacks.

Spinehost, AC 14, HD 3, Spines 2d6, 19: Poison spine, Luck (Con) save or Slowed, S14 D6 C15 I3 P9 W14 Ch1, L6, Mv 30 ft inc swimming. Spinehosts are 4 ft blobs of urchin like spines, crawling about on human arms. They display supercharged echinoderm regenerative ability, healing all damage at the start of their turn (unless reduced to zero hp, in which case they decompose into a foul smelling, pulpy puddle). Fire suspends their regeneration for 1 round.



#### Random Encounters

In between each *Virus Event*, roll 1d8 (+2 after the first crew are infected) or choose from the random encounters below.

- 1. A small, mysterious island is found, recently risen from the depths after a brief volcanic eruption. In the centre of maze like coral is a giant clam, worshipped by a tribe of *Toadmen*. Within the clam lies an orb sized pearl (2d6 x 500 gp).
- 2d6 Argosan Stranglers (Midlands) latch onto the hull (ideally during the night), and clamber aboard. They attack noninfected in preference to infected. After 1d4 rounds of combat with infected, they instinctively flee.
- 3. The ship is *becalmed*, with nary a gust of wind for 2d6 hours. After this period, the party may make a group *Luck* save to determine whether the winds return.
- 4. A thick fog rolls in, enveloping the ship overnight and persisting until mid morning. Visibility is reduced to 30 ft. Stealth checks above deck gain a +2 bonus.
- 5. A half mile line of water is releasing large pockets of deep water gas (huge bubbles burst on the surface), causing light headedness. Crew must make a *Luck* (Con) save or suffer 1d2 Dex loss.
- A nest of infected rats (and/or Mr Rumples) on the lower deck mutate into Leech Vermin, dropping onto an unsuspecting PC from the rafters at an opportune moment (eg: when asleep).



Leech Vermin, AC 13, HD 3, Bite 1d8+2, 19: a nearby light source is smothered by the swarm, S5 D14 C6 I3 P10 W8 Ch4, L6, Mv 15 ft inc up walls etc.

Leech Vermin are treated as a single swarm entity: one attack against all adjacent foes, half damage from weapons, double damage from AoE attacks. The swarm splits in two when Staggered (once only, 2 HD each half). The virus makes them fearless, and they see as well in darkness as in light.

- 7. The decaying remains of a half sunken wreck is spotted on the horizon, washed onto a shallow reef. Searching the wreck scavenges 1 x Carry Loot in and a locked box with 1 x Valuables within. There is a 50% chance of a *Giant Octopus* lurking within the deeper corridors of the reef.
- 8. An enormous *Sea Serpent* (12 HD, Bite 3d6, Swim 90 ft, water breathing) can be seen undulating across the waves towards the ship, before disappearing below. It attempts to eat 1d4 crew before departing, its hunger satiated.



- 9. An infected crew member mutates and attacks a PC, ideally when they are alone (in their cabin, somewhere below deck, etc).
- 10. A *Hybrid* mutates into a *Vomitor, Fleshpod, Spinehost* or *Barnacle Form,* either in a PC's presence, or ambushes them from hiding (ideally when the PC is alone, or the party is split).

#### **Crew & Politics**

When the adventure begins, the crew are slowly splitting into two camps: the Captain's men (supported by *Navigator Thorne*), and a mutinous faction led by *Quartermaster Barnabus*.

Recent smuggling trips (on the side of the *Gale Cutter's* legitimate cargo business) went astray, causing a number of deaths, and half the men think *Barny* could do a better job. *Barny* agrees, and is biding his time to seize control.

Crew stats and a handful of brief NPC descriptions appear below, for easier GM improv. The vast majority of the crew are *Midlanders* or *Varnori*.

Crew, AC 12, HD 1, Cutlass/Axe 1d8, 19: as weapon, S12 D13 C11 I10 P10 W10 Ch10 L4, Mv 30 ft. Also armed with knives, 20% chance of a light crossbow and 10 bolts.

- Rumbelly (5'4", sunburnt Midlander, rotund, booming voice. Amiable alcoholic).
- *Hilders* (6', Varnori, hook hand. Mute; had his tongue cut out. Mysterious).
- Alsun (Midlander, slim and wiry, with grey-brown hair pulled back in a ponytail. Whimsical, ladies' man).

- Cadence (5' 6", Midlander, stocky, raven haired, a short gaff hook on her belt. Impulsive and fiery).
- Seigfinna (6' 4", Varnori, blazing red hair, missing some teeth. Gambler in both love and cards).
- Roper (5' 9", Midlander, brawny and tireless, stern gaze. Practical and non-plussed).
- *Hughes* (Midlander, medium build, 50's, grey haired, peg leg with hidden blade compartment. Fearless).
- *Mr Rumples* (a rusty brown rat with long whiskers; the ship's "lucky" mascot. Greedy and inquisitive).

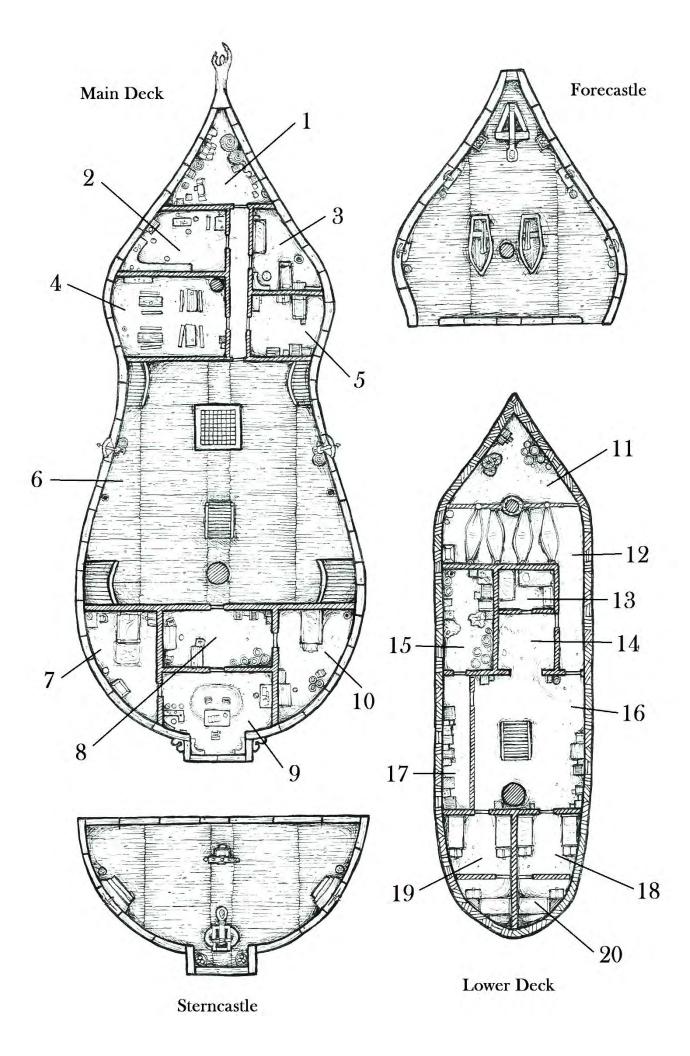
#### The Gale Cutter

The Gale Cutter is a large carrack, approx 105 ft long and 55 ft wide at her broadest point, armed with twin ballistae (port and starboard) and twin onagers (bow and stern), manned by 2d6+20 crew (excluding Captain Croke, Quartermaster Barnabus, Surgeon Mariata and Navigator Thorne).

The boat is old, creaky, and smells like the lake (or sea). She is made of solid oak and in fine condition. In rough waters, staying upright might require a Dex check (at advantage unless in combat). Con checks might also be required to suppress sea sickness for land lubbers.

#### Area 1 - Nautical Gear

This 15 ft triangle storage area contains shipping equipment such as nets, rigging, lines, hooks, belaying pins, and so on. The door is unlocked.





#### Area 2 - Galley

The ship's kitchen is run by *Briccus* the cook (dark skinned Nydissian, short and lean, goatee, always in his black apron, belt festooned with various cooking knives, stats as crew but Cha 15). No-one makes a bitier fish guts stew. The galley has enough food, water, wood and oil to last one day, further provisions are kept in Area 15. *Briccus* generally keeps the galley free of rats and bugs (occasionally serving up "*Squeek onna stick*" and "*Fried crunch pie*").

#### Area 3 - Infirmary

This approx 15ft by 12 ft cabin usually houses ship surgeon/apothecary *Mariata* (overweight albino Karok with darting eyes, stats as crew but Int 14, knife with *Ghoulsheen* poison), with an extra bunk for any current patient. The surgeon knows of the crew's unrest, and *Barnabus'* plot, but has yet to choose a side.

With the party on board, *Navigator Thorne* (tall, black haired Midlander, usually at the helm steering the ship, stats as crew but 2HD and Int 14) is also sleeping here. The bunks are hard but functional. Chests of personal items contain 1 x Carry Loot each. *Mariata's* herbs, tinctures, healer's kit, scalpels, etc are here. The door has a lock, *Mariata* has the key.

#### Area 4 - Mess Hall

The 20 ft by 12 ft mess hall contains a number of small bench tables and liquor barrels. A serving window is set into the northern wall. Mugs, plates and utensils are generally scattered about. 1d6 crew will generally be in here eating, socialising or scheming. If the PCs are in here during the storm, black, bubbling blood drips through the beams above, contaminating the room (airborne vector, check for infection) until scrubbed clean with alcohol and vinegar.

#### Area 5 - Guest Quarters

These 20 ft quarters are usually occupied by *Navigator Thorne*, but have been vacated for the party. *Captain Croke* arranges for bunks, blankets, pillows and a low table to be set up. The door may be locked and the party are given a key. If the PCs have any valuables they want specially secured, the *Captain* is willing to store them in her strongbox in Area 7, or the Valuables Store in Area 15.

#### Area 6 - Main Deck

The main deck is approx 90 ft by 55 ft at its widest point, with stairs up to the forecastle and sterncastle in each corner. The enormous main mast, sails and rigging stretch overhead, up to the Crow's nest 80ft high (enough room for two people).

Near the main mast, stairs descend to the hold, and a large 8 ft grate covers the Small Hold below (Area 14). Twin ballistae on 180 degree swivel mounts are positioned port and starboard (750 ft range, vs humanoids *Luck* (Dex) save or reduced to zero hp (for giant creatures, 6d8). 2 actions to reload, ineffective against enemy hulls).

#### Area 7 - Captain's Quarters

Captain Croke (5' 10", long black hair, athletic, eyepatch, left hander) sleeps in this 12 ft by 15 ft bedchamber, containing a wide bunk, table and 3 chairs, shelving (ledgers, quills), and wardrobe.

The single door is heavily reinforced, with a quality lock (-3 penalty to pick, or requires a Str (Ath) great success to break down). A locked strongbox in the wardrobe contains 1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Valuables and 1 x Trinkets & Curios.

Croke is shrewd, with more than enough gumption to put down a mutiny, if only she sees it coming. Preoccupied with guilt over recent crew deaths during a smuggling operation gone wrong (including *Jakob*, whom she had a brief fling with), she might be blindsided.



Captain Croke, AC 14, HD 4 (18 hp), Cutlass 1d8+1, 19: Disarm, S14 D15 C12 I14 P12 W16 Ch15 L10, Mv 30 ft. Croke has Off Turn Attacks. Backstab, Skirmisher and Finisher abilities like a 4th level Rogue, may choose from the following tricks three times per combat: Choking Dust, Hidden Blade, Quick Reflexes.

#### Area 8 - Officers' Hall

This 20 ft by 10 ft chamber has a handful of tables and chairs, along with some barrels of wine, rum and water. Ordinarily, only the officers are allowed here (Captain, quartermaster, navigator, surgeon), or crew by invitation. The door is lockable, banded with steel, and has a barring beam (requires significant time to break down, ideally with an axe/hammer and 3 x Str (Ath) great successes). In case of mutiny, officers use the stern as a panic room.

#### Area 9 - Captain's Study

The *Captain's* 30 ft by 20 ft study contains a desk, chairs, small bar, as well as a cupboard. Charts, maps and nautical instruments are spread about. The door has a lock (*Croke* has the key).

#### Area 10 - Quartermaster's Cabin

Quartermaster Barnabus (6'3", muscular, dark green bandana, knife bandolier, gruff, respected) resides in this 12 ft x 15 ft chamber (well appointed, with an extra stash of small rum barrels, lockable door). He is the second highest ranking officer on deck, managing provisions, arms, sleeping arrangements and discipline. Like the Captain, Barnabus receives a double share of any profits.

*Barnabus* and half the crew are plotting to seize control of the *Gale Cutter* in the near future. Indeed a mutiny is imminent (per the Virus Event table), but not in the way *Barnabus* expects!



Barnabus, AC 12, HD 4 (24 hp), Axe 1d8+3, 19: as weapon, S17 D10 C16 I12 P13 W14 Ch14 L9, Mv 30 ft. Barnabus has *Minor Exploit Protection*. Fighter *Adaptable* ability, with the *Charger* style (may swap styles three times per combat). When staggered, Barnabus gains a free melee attack against everyone in range.



#### Area 11 - Smuggling Hold

This 15 ft triangular space stores incidental supplies and gear such as crates of dry clothes, barrels of bait, blankets, hooks, lines, etc. A hidden compartment in the floor (removable panel, expertly fitted and concealed, Perc check great success to notice) serves as the smuggling hold.

At the GM's option, a chest of 2,000 counterfeit gold coins (Karok *Orots*) are stashed within (only known to *Croke*, *Barnabus*, and deckhand *Rico* (blonde haired Varnori, tattoo of the *Deep One*, addicted to cards and dice)).



#### Area 12 - Crew Hammocks

Oversized double hammocks hang here in parallel rows (one beneath the other), capable of sleeping 16 men. Bedrolls, a small card table and sitting barrels are also present. Crew effects are generally bundled up under pillows or stored under removable floorboards (1 x Carry Loot).

Hidden beneath one floorboard is a hankerchief (hummingbird motif - belongs to *Croke*), wrapped around a red mahogany ring (2d6+30 gp). The ring was *Jakob's* (see Area 7, he stole it), who was planning on gifting it to the *Captain* as a sign of affection. *Jakob* was unaware the ring is enchanted. If attuned to, the user may gain the benefit of a *Life Leeching* potion once per week (during which time, his/her eyes glow red and issue brimstone like smoke).

#### Area 13 - Brig

The brig has two bunks and a latrine, with a quality lock (-2 penalty to pick). There is a 50% chance one of the crew, *Morton* (scabby rough nut, Str 15, with a long moustache, rage issues) is serving two days for insubordination. He is sullen but might be befriended if engaged with.

#### Area 14 - Small Hold

This 20 ft square storage is mainly used for fresh fish or sealed goods that don't mind a bit of water splashing on them from the main deck's large grate. At the time of the adventure, the small hold is stacked with sealed barrels of charcoal (50%) or raisins (50%), tied down with water resistant oilskin tarps.

#### Area 15 - Valuables Store

This 20 ft by 10 ft storeroom holds the ship's more important commodities, including water, dried beef, hardtack, salt, spices, spare charts, rum barrels, brandy bottles, oil (2 drums), textiles, and other trade goods (glassware, pottery, etc).

An assortment of weapons are also stacked here, including 20 x swords/cutlasses/axes, 1 x shield, 5 x light crossbows, 1 x heavy crossbow, 30 bolts, 5 daggers, and 1d6 fire pots.

A locked chest includes 1 x 3 HD Lair Treasure. The storeroom is locked (good quality lock, -2 penalty on attempts to pick, the officers and the Cook have keys).

#### Area 16 - Main Hold

At the GM's option, the 20 ft by 18 ft main hold is either mostly vacant (but for a few empty barrels/crates, with the intention of picking up goods at a destination port), or stacked with trade goods (forming a tight knit "maze" of heavy boxes, barrels and baskets, holding a mix of bound fabrics, jars of foodstuffs and spices, pottery, woodwork, fancy metal utensils, intricate tiles, etc, total value 500+ 2d4 x 100 gp).

#### Area 17 - Steerage

This partitioned off 25 ft corridor is stacked with crates, barrels and shelves of common goods (smoked fish, blankets, spare clothes, oars, tools and timber for temporary ship repairs, lines, gaff hooks, etc). The door is unlocked.

#### Areas 18, 19, 20 - Crew Cabins

These 20 ft or 15 ft crew cabins contain small bunks, bedrolls, and chests of personal effects. 1d4 crew are in each compartment if not on duty. Emptying the chests (poor quality locks, pick with Ady) garners 1 x Carry Loot.

#### **Forecastle**

The forecastle area is approximately 45 feet wide at its broadest point, and 50 ft long. Two 12 ft rowboats are lashed to the deck and foremast. An onager (small catapult) on a 270 degree swivel occupies the nose (shoots flaming pitch up to 750 ft.



#### Sterncastle

The sterncastle is 55 ft wide at its broadest point, and approx 30 ft long. 75% of the time, *Thorne* will be here at the helm, otherwise *Croke* is steering. An onager (similar to the forecastle) is located at the rear.

#### **End Game**

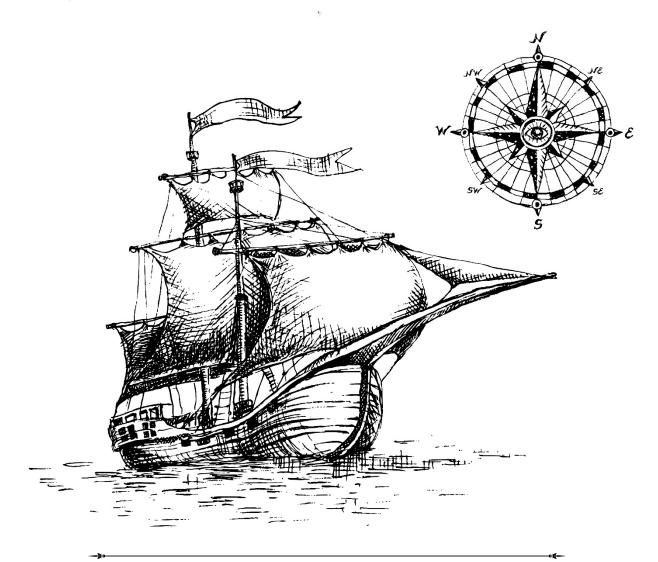
If the virus hosts are not killed and burnt, or removed from the ship, the infected eventually gather in the main hold, merging into a single, terrifying gestalt of slapping, slurping flesh. The incalculable horror of the virus' final form burns a hole into the human psyche, requiring a *Luck* (Will) save to avoid turning catatonic (helpless) for 1d4 rounds. On a successful save, the PC gains a madness instead (1d6: 1-3 minor, 4-5: moderate, 6: serious).

Final Form, AC 15, HD 20+4, Slap 15 ft reach 2d10+5 and Bite 4d6, 19: the target is absorbed and instantly slain (Luck (Dex) save negates), S20 D5 C22 I4 P10 W19 Ch1 L14, Mv 30 ft. The Final Form has Major Exploit Protection and Off Turn Attacks.

Once joined, the *Final Form* grows larger and larger, tearing the boat apart within 4d6 rounds. The vessel sinks into the darkest trenches of the lake, and the abomination with it.

#### **Aftermath**

If the PCs survive the wreck, a group *Luck* save results in a merchant caravel passing by within hours, retrieving any survivors from the flotsam. Whether the virus survives, or is ever seen again, is a matter for the GM.





# CALL OF THE COLOSSUS



## Call of the Colossus

The noble leant forward, his one good eye fixed upon the shrinking informant. "Silence pitiable slud. I know of the tavern incident, I was there, remember? What I want to know is who are they? Where did they come from? And what binds them together, so that I might unbind them."

#### Zero Level Ordeal

Warning: This adventure framework is not your usual mini adventure; it is intended for approximately 12 - 16 "zero level" characters (each player controls 4 PCs), the majority of which are not expected to survive. Those that live are awarded with 1 Level in a class of the player's choosing.

If the GM already has a developed party, this adventure might be used as a one off experiment, or perhaps to create hirelings or henchmen for the PCs. Alternatively it is easily adapted as an ordinary introductory adventure for low level PCs.

#### Adventure Overview

When the adventure begins, the PCs are the only escapees of a caravan massacred by ogres in the *Ulgoth Foothills. Womek*, a mutant sorcerer and cultist, has an arrangement with the *Gruutar* ogre clan to deliver captives to him for sacrifice at the *Colossus*, a 150 ft Temple of *Yargoth* (long forgotten goddess of wealth, commerce, and accords), about a day's march distant. A number of NPC travellers are taken prisoner by the giantkin, and conveyed to the *Colossus*.

The scattered party has the opportunity to group up and (perhaps) take down the last few scavenging ogres before combing the battlefield for supplies. After this they are presented with two obvious choices: (i) follow the ogre tracks and rescue the captives (leading to the ancient temple, *Womek*, and his cultists), or (ii) press on to *Therg's End* (two days trek), the outpost their caravan was originally bound for.

Investigating the Colossus requires facing a number of dangers, including random encounters, traps, monstrous guardians and cultists, as well as the sorcerer *Womek*.



Heading to *Therg's End* for reinforcements leads to disappointment. The outpost has been recently raided by barbarians, decimating the population and protectors. With so few guards remaining, there is no help to be found. Furthermore, half the outlanders are secret cultists (including *Overseer Kinnon*), and careless PCs might end up victims of the sect.



As the label "Zero Level Ordeal" might suggest, most of the PCs will not survive the adventure. Yet those that do will have braved great peril, fought for not only their lives but the lives of others, acquired treasure, and undergone experiences that transform them into fully fledged level 1 classed characters. Best of all, surviving such a trial by fire forges organic party bonds, "show not tell" backgrounds, and a unique attachment between a player and their neophyte adventurer(s).

#### Zero Level Rules

The process for creating zero level characters for LFG is outlined below (assuming 4 PCs per player):

- 1. Roll 4 sets of Attributes.
- 2. *Luck* is set at 4. HP is 4 + Con bonus.
- 3. No class attack bonus, *Reroll Pool* or Skills.
- 4. Roll 4 times on the *Background* table.
- Allocate one background to each PC (background might be usable in lieu of skills, see below).
- 6. Roll for Bonus Gear.
- 7. Choose culture(s) if any.
- 8. Name your PCs.

As might be surmised, initial character creation is a highly unpredictable affair; which classes might ultimately be available for the player to choose from is subject to the dice and decisions made during the adventure. Be assured however that this adventure has been crafted to provide opportunities to engage with various class related roles, laying the foundation to develop into any of the LFG classes (including magic users, monks, cultists, and artificers). If using PC races other than human, players will need to choose/randomly determine which.

To simplify dealing with many PCs, GMs might consider (i) having all of a player's PCs act at the same time in combat, and (ii) allowing only one PC per player to attempt checks to recall lore, etc, with a +2 bonus if another PC is helping.

Note that as zero level PCs do not have skills like a 1<sup>st</sup> level PC, skills are not referenced in this adventure. At the GM's option, if a PC's background is relevant to the task at hand, they gain a +1 bonus on their roll, and may spend a point of *Luck* to reroll a failed check (once only).

Lastly, (i) when testing to see if a zero level PC is *All Dead* or *Mostly Dead*, they require a successful *Luck* save instead of a Con check, and (ii) when using the *Party Retreat* rule, zero level PCs always treat their *Luck* score as 10.

#### **Pre-Gen Characters**

For tables that prefer to jump straight into the action, the (free) DTRPG *Call of Colossus* PDF includes 21 pregen characters in the back (plus six blank templates). Participants need to name their pre-gens, but otherwise they're ready to print and play. Relevant stat modifiers for HP, AC and weapons are already included in the pregens.

#### 1. Roll for Attributes

Attributes are randomly generated by rolling 4d6 and dropping the lowest die. Numbers are allocated in order, that is Str, Dex, Con, Int, Per, Will and Cha. At the GM's option, one randomly determined attribute is automatically 15 (determine before rolling the remainder).

#### 2. Roll on the Background Table

Players roll 1d66 (1d6 twice, the first die is the tens, the second die is the ones) on the *Background* table to determine their PCs' recent history and default starting gear. Characters also start with 1d6 days rations, a waterskin, and 2d4 silver coins.



BACKGROUND				
11	Pickpocket	Knife, Secret pocket		
12	Rat Catcher	Spikepole (as spear) Cheese		
13	Grave Digger	Shovel (as club) Rope 30 ft		
14	Beggar	Crutch (as club) Bitey Dog		
15	Trapper	Big knife (as shortsword) Bear trap		
16	Cook	Skillet (as club), Spices		
21	Fishmonger	Gaff hook (as shortsword) Fishing rod		
22	Gardener	Pruning shears (as dagger), Anti-toxin		
23	Slave	Sling, Chain 6 ft		
24	Brigand	Shortsword, Ale flask		
25	Lay Preacher	Staff, Holy symbol		
26	Amateur Tinker	Wrench (as club) Crowbar		
31	Butcher	Cleaver (as light axe) Salted meat		
32	Street Sweeper	Broom (as staff) Lucky coin (1 use reroll)		
33	Farmer	Pitchfork (as spear) 1d3 Chickens		
34	Yellow Lotus Addict	Knife, Yellow Lotus powder		
35	Outcast	Light axe, Ferret		
36	Mutineer	Cutlass (as longsword) Parrot		
41	Beekeeper	Iron bee smoker (as club) Jar of bees		
42	Wagoneer	Whip, Lantern (full)		
43	Brewer	Iron tankard (as club) Small barrel of spirits		
44	Pilgrim	Staff, Scriptures		
45	Deserter	Light mace, Shield		

Miner	Pickaxe (as battle axe)	
	Lantern (half full)	
	Good scissors	
Weaver	(as dagger)	
	Ball of yarn	
T 1:1-4	Wick pole (as staff)	
Lampiignier	Flask of oil	
Alchemist's	Knife, Acid flask	
Assistant		
	Bonesaw	
Organlegger	(as shortsword)	
	Diseased kidney	
Ploughman	Mattock (as battle axe)	
	Bag of seeds	
Hunter	Shortbow, 10 arrows	
	Trip wires	
Busker	Knife, Instrument	
Swineherd	Staff, Burly Pig (as dog)	
NT '	Surgical blade	
Novice Apothecary	(as dagger)	
	Healer's kit	
D 1	Rolling pin (as club)	
вакег	Bag of flour	
Gong Farmer	Shovel (as club)	
	Wheelbarrow	
7.7	Hangman's axe	
Hangman	(as battleaxe), 30 ft rope	
	Weaver  Lamplighter Alchemist's Assistant  Organlegger  Ploughman  Hunter  Busker  Swineherd  Novice Apothecary  Baker	

#### 3. Roll for Bonus Gear

In addition to their default starting gear, each PC receives one piece of bonus gear (1d66):

	BONUS GEAR					
11	10 ft pole	41	Ferret			
12	Javelin	42	Deck of cards			
13	Mirror	43	1d3 oil flasks			
14	Fireblood poison (1 dose)	44	Parchment, ink and quill			
15	2d4 torches	45	Iron pot			
16	Backpack	46	Bag of Marbles			

31



21	2d4 iron spikes	51	Lockpicks
22	Warhorn	52	Battered shield
23	Holy water vial	<i>5</i> 3	Chain 10 ft
24	Heirloom bastard sword	54	Signet ring (2d6+15 gp)
25	Manacles	55	Compass
26	Sack of flour	56	2d4 candles
31	1d2 firepots	61	60 ft rope
32	Healer's kit	62	Bedroll
33	Tent	63	Fishing net
34	Chalk sticks	64	Tripwires
35	Iron tongs	65	Light Crossbow 6 bolts
36	Lantern and 2 oil flasks	66	Roll on the Trinkets & Curios table

#### Ambushed!

From the outset, the PCs are thrust straight into the action; their caravan to the isolated outpost of *Therg's End* has been ambushed by ogres, and the party are the only (free) survivors. But for a handful of captives taken away by the ogres, the balance of the caravan are dead.

Womek (50s, balding, sorcerer with a corrupted crabclaw arm, when in town he wears a sling as if lame), a cult leader living in *Therg's End*, has an arrangement with a local ogre clan to deliver human sacrifices to *Yargoth's Colossus*; a nearby temple in the shape of a forgotten goddess.

The ambush location is a thickly wooded area adjacent to a river and 150 ft waterfall. Players roll 1d6 to determine how their each of their PCs survived the massacre:

1. Driven, fell or jumped off the edge of the waterfall, plunging into the river below.

Blind luck allowed them to survive when many did not, including the PC's parent, partner, child, or other ward (1d4 or player's choice).

- 2. Left for dead on the battlefield, rolled off a corpse pyre or accidentally missed by ogre scavengers. Presently playing possum, and hoping for an opportunity to escape into the forest. Lying nearby is the body of a favourite pet, uncle/aunty, niece or nephew (1d4 or player's choice).
- 3. Driven or fled into the trees, separated from the ogres by an out of control fire. Fortunate winds blew the flames towards their pursuers, allowing the characters to escape. Through the smoke, the PC saw three ogres making off with the caravan master's heavy strongbox (containing a large sum of gold, silver and trade jewels).
- 4. By sinew and grit, the character drew on reserves of courage they never knew they had, fighting off an ogre before using a horse to escape! Alas, the PC's close friend, mentor, student or good natured rival (1d4 or player's choice) was captured by ogres (dragged from another horse). The PC's mount later succumbed (arrows, struck lame, set loose to act as a decoy, etc).
- 5. Caravan Master Harriman (bald, pock marked and powerfully built), fought a rearguard allowing the PC and others to escape. Harriman and his retinue were slain. His wife Kiriana was captured in a crude net, slung over an ogre's back, and carried away shrieking.
- 6. Unbeknownst to the rest of caravan, the sorcerer *Vorgrist* was secretly among them. Unstable magic caused purple vapours to envelop the west flank,



enabling the PC to escape into the trees, but not before inhaling some of the foul mist (Con check or roll for a moderate madness, and bags under eyes turn purple). *Vorgrist* himself choked to death.

Depending on their rolls, different PCs will end up in different groups. As fortune would have it, each group of PCs (or lone individuals) are within either sight or earshot of at least one other group or individual, allowing them to reform as a single, larger band when the time is right. Attribute checks might be required to spot friendlies and/or successfully sneak away from loitering ogres at the GM's option.

1d3 *Ogres* remain on the battlefield, slaughtering the dying, looting corpses, and ensuring the last wagons burn to ash. The giantkin are fearsome opponents, but widely scattered about the site, and might be picked off by PCs working together.

Ogre, AC 12, HD 4+3, Spiked Club 2d8, 19: special, S19 D8 C15 I6 P7 W8 Ch7, L7, Mv 40 ft. When staggered, an ogre enters a murderous rage, gaining a free attack against every foe within reach. On a 19+ attack roll, the target rolls on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Con) save resists). 10 foot reach.

By and large, the battlefield is a wasteland of smoking carts, charred (and often half devoured) corpses, and damaged gear. Whatever the ogres couldn't (or wouldn't) steal has been bent, smashed or defiled, leaving little in the way of salvage. Clearing an area of ogres however allows the PCs to do a thorough search, granting a roll on the salvage table:

SALVAGE TABLE				
11	Spear impaled in a corpse	41	2d4 candles	
12	Leather armor	42	2d10 sp	

13	Unexploded Firepot	<b>4</b> 3	Brooch (2d6 gp)
14	Flask of oil	44	Dented helm
15	1d4 days rations	45	1d4 days rations
16	Backpack	46	Box of nails
21	2d4 spikes	51	Sack of salt
22	Warhorn	52	Splintered shield
23	Child's ragdoll	53	Chain 6 ft
24	Notched longsword	54	Keepsake of friend, etc
25	1d4 days rations	55	Grappling hook
26	Waterproof boots	56	Charred healing herbs
31	2d4 torches	61	20 ft rope
32	Keepsake of friend, etc	62	Bedroll
33	1d4 gold	63	1d4 days rations
34	Mirror	64	Pipeweed pouch
35	Iron pot with heavy lid	65	Heavy Crossbow with 1d4 bolts
36	Lantern (half full)	66	Vorgrist's spellbook

#### Where to Next?

After picking the battlefield clean (or simply fleeing deeper into the forest), the party has a decision to make.

In terms of orienting themselves, the PCs know they are about two days march east to *Therg's End*, or one week back west to their originating city of *Crow's Keep*. The ogre war party (approx 30) made no attempt to conceal their southerly tracks and are easily followed (no check required). Also south, rising above nearby hills, is an ancient and colossal statue; rusting and broken (a woman, missing its head and one arm), towering 150 ft tall. The statue is approximately one day distant.





Depending on the characters' massacre survival rolls, a number of hooks arise with respect to following the ogres (leading to the *Colossus*):
(i) revenge for the attack and slain friends/family, (ii) mounting a rescue effort to free captives, (iii) reclaiming *Harriman's* strongbox, and/or (iv) reckless curiosity.

Alternatively, the party might head for *Therg's End* (for their own safety, or to gather reinforcements - in either case they will be sadly disappointed). For GMs wishing to add increased time pressure, an Int check reminds PCs that ogres generally eat human captives (after tormenting them for a time).

#### **Random Encounters**

Wherever the party goes, there is a 40% chance of a random encounter in the hills every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8:

- 1. 3d4 *Wolves* begin tracking the party. They might be appeased with food or scared away with fire.
- 2. A lone *Griffon* dives out of the clouds with a screech, hoping to pick up one of the PCs and fly away with them (dropping them onto rocks before devouring them). It avoids characters with long weapons such as spears.
- 3. 2d4 thuels (barbarians of the xenophobic *White Hoof* clan) can be heard approaching on horseback, from a nearby ravine.
- 4. A heavy storm lasting 2d6 hours saps the party's strength, turning the ground to sucking mud and slippery pools. 2d4 PCs lose 1 Str (Con check negates). The party's travel speed is halved for 12 hours (Int check negates).
- 5. Despite landmarks the party loses its way in a series of narrow ravines, requiring them to double back, wasting half a day's travel. There is a 50% chance of a nest of 2d4 *Giant Trapdoor Spiders* (Dex vs Perc to notice the trapdoor) lairing in one of the valleys.
- 6. An injured *Brown Bear* (as *Owlbear* but 5 HD), with two arrows in her flank, is dying from infected wounds. Her soft moaning can be heard from outside a wide mouthed cave (Perc check). She is in such a state that she barely resists anyone trying to aid her (she swipes at someone once, at disadvantage).

If patched up by a PC with a healer's kit or animal/apothecary background (Int check), she swiftly recovers (and might make an appearance later in the adventure as a surprise ally).



- 7. 1d3 *Giant Worker Ants* and 1d2 *Giant Soldier Ants* are carrying some dead ogres back to their nest. Some human snacks would also be welcome.
- 8. Tersuda, an outcast Cyclops (9 ft, bandaged left leg, 25 ft speed instead of 40 ft), is sleeping beneath a low overhang, a sack of coins by his side (2 x Carry Loot).

#### THE COLOSSUS

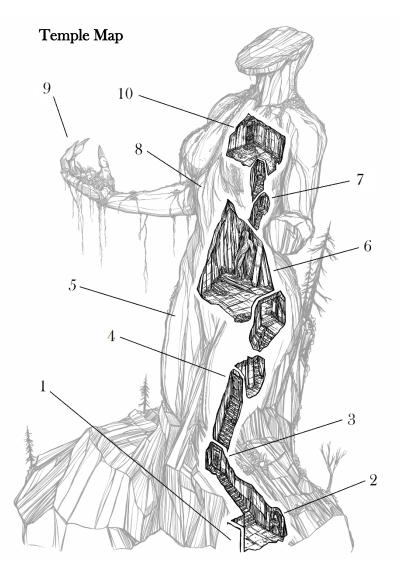
The *Colossus* is a towering, 150 ft statue of stained, yellow-orange bronze, heavily corroded with green verdigris and spotted with dark creeper vines.

Once a temple to *Yargoth*, goddess of commerce, wealth, and accords (a precursor entity to what would later be subsumed into Argona, goddess of wealth, health and happiness), shameful greed and corruption eventually brought the priesthood to ruin. Sacked during a civil uprising, the site was abandoned to rust and decay; a poignant reminder of the evils of excess, and the fate awaiting those who succumb (indeed, the interdiction of male priests of *Argona* can be traced back to the *Yargoth* catastrophe).

Long abandoned, the bronze doors sealing the entry tunnel buckled twelve months ago, allowing access for the first time in centuries. *Womek*, a warlock hidden in *Therg's End*, was the first to investigate and attune himself to the temple.

Unlocking the secrets of the *Palm of Sacrifice*, *Womek* soon turned half the outpost into *Yargoth* worshippers. Cultists experience prophetic dreams that come true if they are willing to pay the price (generally blood sacrifice, often people; see Area 9).

The ogre trail leads to the tunnel entrance at the temple base, then continues southward. An Int check suggests the giantkin gathered at the tunnel for a time before moving on without their captives



(tracks of dragging via ropes/nets end here - the ogres handed over their captives to *Womek*).

#### Entrances

There are two entrances into the temple. The first and obvious entrance is the tunnel (Area 1). Both entrances are protected by a *Copper Gargoyle*, which likes to perch between the Colossus' shoulder blades. The guardian has keen hearing and will investigate any potential intruders.

Copper Gargoyle, AC 14, HD 3+3, 2 Claws (1d3+1), Bite (1d4+1) and Gore (1d4+1), 19: the target's weapon shatters against the gargoyle's supernatural hide (*Luck* save resists, blunt



weapons are immune to this effect), \$16 D14 C20 I10 P14 W13 Ch3, L6, Mv 30 ft or 60 ft flying. A natural 1 or 2 attack roll against the Gargoyle requires a *Luck* save or the weapon shatters (blunt weapons are immune).

The second entrance is the door to Area 8; (heavily corroded, green and discoloured, can be spotted from ground level with a Perc check, situated in the colossus' right bicep). The door has no obvious handle, but a Perc check reveals a hidden switch beneath a false panel.

The door is approximately 90 ft off the ground. Climbing the statue is possible (there are many corroded pockets to act as handholds) but taxing: 3 x Str (Athletics) checks are required to reach it (climbing approx 30 ft per check, or 45 ft on a great success). A failed check means a fall to the ground (and probably death, unless precautions are taken, such as roping to another pc or pitons secured).

If the gargoyle notices climbers, it attempts to snatch them up and drop them at high altitude.

# Area 1 - Entry Tunnel

The bronze doors that once sealed the entry tunnel are clearly buckled, and pulled closed. A Str check is required to drag them open. Obvious scuff marks on the ground suggest the doors have been opened/closed recently.

The interior of the tunnel is cool, lit by flickering candleholders (maintained by *Womek* and the cult). The tunnel is 10 ft high, 10 ft wide and 50 ft long, the floor lined with rusting, iron plates that clatter or crunch underfoot. Bronze sheets (perhaps once shined to a mirror finish, but now green with corrosion) line the walls. The far end of the corridor opens into a larger chamber.

About 20 ft into the tunnel is a trap; a series of scything blades that swing out from the connecting

edges of the wall panels. *Womek* maintains the chamber, which is reasonably clean, and free of the blood of past victims. Careful studying of the walls (Perc check) reveals this area is cleaner than most. The trap is sprung via a pressure plate (50% chance), causing 2d6 damage (*Luck* (Dex) save to avoid).



# Area 2 - Narthex

The 20 ft narthex to the temple has an alcove housing a 7 ft idol in the northern wall. Beside the southern wall is a 3 ft copper urn. Stairs lined with bronze panels ascend to the west.

The idol is approximately 7 ft tall, carved of granite, simplistic in form with twin malachite gems for eyes (shades of dark green, 1d4 x 100 gp total). A pressure plate built into the right shoulder of the idol causes it to swing outwards, revealing a closet of 3d6 yellow, hooded robes, adorned with *Yargoth's* symbol (a trail of coins).



The copper urn is inscribed with prayers to long forgotten *Yargoth* in ancient common. An Int check deciphers the words as litanies professing the holiness of tithes, and the unholiness of failing to meet one's spiritual obligations.

Placing coins or other small objects of monetary value in the urn invokes a magical boon, gaining 1 *Luck* (may exceed normal maximums, works once only). Inside the urn are 4d100 gold coins. The urn ceases to function if removed from the temple.

PCs ascending the stairs without making an offering, or stealing from the urn or idol, suffer a spiteful curse. Roll 1d4:

- 1. Ominous thunder echoes from outside (attracts cultists from Area 6).
- 2. All current light sources in the vicinity are snuffed out and will not relight for 24 hours (other torches etc are fine).
- 3. Suffers a serious madness, Will check resists.
- 4. Roll on the *Dark & Dangerous Magic* table.

# Area 3 - Iron Door

This iron door is marked with the icon of a battered shield with wings (an archaic symbol for determination, resilience and persistence).

Pulling or pushing on the door will not open it. Instead, the door must be raised up into a vertical recess where it locks in place (Str check, or by depressing a secret stud button on the left border; Perc check). The door locks into place before lowering itself after 10 minutes. Banging or attempting to break down the door draws attention from Area 6.

# Area 4 - Silver Door

This extremely steep staircase is lined with bronze plates, continuing from Area 2. The door at the top is inlaid with silver (worth 1d6 x 10 gp if extracted) and well preserved, lacking any significant corrosion. It is decorated with a young man's face with eyes downcast (an old *Yargoth* symbol for etiquette, manners and respect; an Int check great success recalls such).

The door is unlocked. Opening it without first activating the safety switch (Perc check; depressing both eyes) causes the stairs to drop flat, sending PCs tumbling back down, causing 1d3 points of damage. Furthermore, one random PC lands in the doorway of Area 3 (if still open), which immediately slams closed, automatically crushing the victim to death (*Luck* (Dex) save to roll 1d6 on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table instead of dying).

# Area 5 - Cells

The secret door in Area 6 reveals stone steps winding 30 ft down into candle lit darkness. Moans can be heard emanating from below. The steps lead to an iron portcullis, sealing 2d6 captives in a 15 ft cell.

Most of the captives are injured, and all in a drug addled stupor, in no condition to fight (unless the party is severely depleted already, in which case the GM might make some captives available to fight if a PC inspires them into action with a successful Cha check). One captive is particularly unusual: *Lopai*, a one eyed, 80 year old *Shenzu* pilgrim with a penchant for cursing (see **Aftermath**).

There is a 50% chance each of the PC's kidnapped friends/partners/mentors etc are alive, as well as *Kiriana* (and PCs kidnapped by *Therg's End* cultists, if any). If the PCs do not head straight for the *Colossus* after the ambush, each day of delay increases the risk of death by 5% (max 90%). Check for each potential survivor individually.



Those that did not survive were either eaten by the ogres or sacrificed by *Womek* in Area 9. Opening the locked cell requires a Dex check and a lockpick, or the key (which *Womek* carries).

# Area 6 - Worship Nave

In ancient times, only the ordained clergy of *Yargoth* were permitted into the primary worship chamber. 40 ft square, with a 60 ft ceiling, the walls are hung with panels painted in silver and gold (1d6 x 100 gp if taken), lorded over by an imposing 40 ft statue of *Sersulamor*, martyred High Priest and immortal saint of the Golden Goddess (Int check). A sealed sarcophagus is adjacent to the western wall.

3d6 cultists are present here, participating in rituals of blessing and devotion, preoccupied with their chanting, the air thick and hazy with pungent incense.

If the PCs have kept quiet, and disguised themselves in the robes from Area 2, they might take the ritualists by surprise (Group Dex check). Any attempt to talk to the cultists leads to requests to see their holy brands (coin icon on forearm, see *Therg's End*), as the devotees don't recognize the PCs' from prior cult ceremonies.

Cultists, AC 11, HD 1, Ceremonial Knife 1d4, 19: poison causes 1d6 extra damage (Luck (Con) check for half), S11 D10 C10 I9 P10 W12 Ch10, L 4, Mv 30 ft. The cultists are fanatical and fight to the death.

If *Womek* hears the sounds of battle below (Perc check), he will appear from Area 10 in 1d4+1 rounds to aid his brethren. If the cultists are defeated, 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Valuables may be looted from the sarcophagus (crumbling remains of *Sersulamor*).

PCs investigating behind the statue find a concealed stairway leading up (a narrow archway

covered with a hanging tapestry, depicting *Yargoth* raining gold down on her followers).

In the southwest corner of the chamber is a secret trapdoor. If the floor is searched, a particularly uneven floor panel stands out (Perc check), which may be opened by pulling on it (see Area 5).

# Area 7 - Flaming Stairs

The final set of stairs is dimly lit, with widely spaced candles. About half way up is a tripwire (Perc check at -2 penalty) that causes a barrel of oil to pour onto the first two people in the stairwell, catching one of the candles, and setting them on fire for 2d4 damage (*Luck* (Con) check for half). If the trap is detected, a Dex check allows a PC to disarm and scavenge/repurpose the barrel.

# Area 8 - Secret Entry

As noted earlier there is a secret door allowing access to the temple in the colossus' right bicep (approx 90 ft up). The entry is trapped with a swinging log, which activates when the door is half opened (*Womek* disarms the trap with a safety catch on the inside when he uses it). A character opening the door with their hands is knocked off the colossus and falls to the ground (9d6 damage, *Luck* (Dex) save avoids).

Beyond the door is a steep 30 ft staircase leading directly to Area 10 (the High Priest traditionally used this sacred corridor to reach the *Palm of Sacrifice*). The staircase has shelf recesses containing candles, but they are unlit. At the top of the stairs is a door with a pull handle.

# Area 9 - Palm of Sacrifice

The enormous clawed hand of the *Yargoth Colossus* cradles the bones of several recent sacrifices; some of whom were friends/mentors/relations of the PCs until butchered by *Womek* - see the captives entry in Area 5). If the bones are sorted through, 1 x Trinkets & Curios may be retrieved.

The Hand is enchanted and the source of the cult's power. When a person is ritually sacrificed, all genuine cultists receive a vision of what they must do to make a prophetic dream come true (typically blood sacrifice, beast or human). The cultists inevitably develop signs of madness, and if exposed long enough (as *Womek* is), mutation. The true source of this "blessing" is uncertain and left for the GM to determine.

# Area 10 - Golden Sanctum

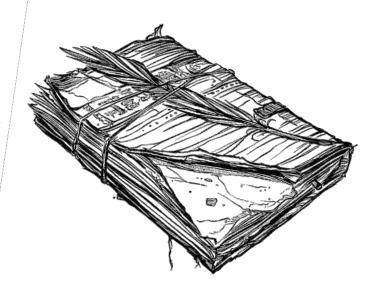
The main door to the sanctum is inlaid with gold (worth 2d6 x 20 gp if extracted), adorned with iconography of coins falling into cupped hands (one of *Yargoth's* symbols).

The door is unlocked. There is also a secret door in the western wall, which may be opened by pressing on a golden panel (careful inspection reveals handprints, leads to Area 8).

The room beyond is 25 ft by 20 ft, with a 10 ft ceiling, lined with panels of tarnished gold (worth 2d100 + 100 gp) and lit by a hanging lantern. A broken bookshelf is in the northwest corner, and *Harriman's* strongbox beside the southern wall (locked, may be picked or broken open with sufficient time/crowbar, 1 x 4 HD Lair Treasure).

If the party have been quiet, *Womek* is here kneeling over a drugged captive, cutting runic symbols into their flesh in preparation for sacrifice (50% chance it is an NPC related to a PC). A Dex vs Perc contest (at disadvantage for *Womek*) will allow the party to take him by surprise.

If *Womek* knows the party is coming, he casts *Tainted Vigour* upon himself (+4 bonus on melee damage instead of +1), and then stands at one side of the door, hoping to ambush them.



Womek, AC 12, HD 5+1, Heavy Mace (1d8+1) and Claw 1d6+1 or spell, 19: Womek invokes a word of power; roll on the *Dark & Dangerous Magic* table, S13 D15 C9 I14 P9 W14 Ch14, L8, Mv 30 ft. May choose from the following spells three times per combat (5th level): *Lash of Unerring Pain*, *Fusing of Flesh*, *Shennog's Blessing*, *Gaze of Beguilement*, *Strands of Ensnarement*, *Tainted Vigour*, *Runic Rite of Wonderment*, *Call Forth Simulacra I*.

On *Womek's* person is the key to Area 5 and a pouch containing one dose of *Blackbile Fungus* tincture (highly rare, potent hypnotic, if imbibed victim enters a drug addled stupor for 2d6 hours, *Luck* (Con) save resists).

If the bookshelf is searched, a hidden compartment behind it (Perc check) may be found. Within is the *Nova Scriptora*, or Book of Stars, containing the discoveries of an anonymous, long dead *Yargoth* Confessor (spell casting exorcist), worth 2d4 x 200 gp to the right collector.

A PC interested in becoming a 1<sup>st</sup> level Cultist or Magic User may do so gleaning secrets from this tome (see **Aftermath**).



# THERG'S END

Therg's End is 18 months old, with about 50 current residents. When the PCs arrive, the outpost's situation is precarious; almost all the guards are dead, and less than half the original number of occupants remain. Without the caravan's men and supplies, there is every chance the outpost will have to be abandoned.

Additionally, about half of the residents are secret *Yargoth* cultists, fanatically loyal to *Womek* and his teachings. Every cultist is marked with a coin brand on their forearm; ostensibly part of a "traders' guild", but in reality a sign of their devotion to the lost goddess of greed. If *Womek* is dead when the PCs arrive, all of the resident cultists have received a vision of his death. This will create some tension/confusion among them (who will be the new cult leader?), and they will be suspicious of the PCs.

Guard, AC 14 (chain & shield), HD 1, Longbow 1d8 or Sword 1d8, 19: as weapon, S14 D10 C12 I10 P12 W10 Ch10 L4, Mv 30 ft. The guard's shield may be used to negate one attack.

*Outlander*, AC 10, HD 1d4 hp, Club or Big Knife 1d6, 19: another outlander comes to aid this one, S10 D10 C11 I10 P10 W10 Ch10 L3, Mv 30 ft.

Cultist, AC 11 (leathers), HD 1, Knife 1d4, 19: the cultist invokes *Yargoth*, 50% chance of rolling on the *Dark & Dangerous Magic* table, S10 D10 C11 I10 P10 W11 Ch10 L4, Mv 30 ft. Cultists are fanatical and immune to morale checks.

# Area 1 - Wooden Palisade

The original 8 ft wall was burned down by barbarian invaders, and is in the process of being rebuilt, with 15 ft towers. Work is far from complete, but each tower provides <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cover (+4 AC). With the depleted guard numbers, there is only 1 archer keeping watch in each tower.

# Area 2 - Barracks

Captain Sully and her 2d6 guards are all that remain of the 45 men-at-arms once protecting Therg's End. The captain was expecting reinforcements with the PCs' caravan, and is visibly shaken to learn none survived the ogre assault. Sully explains that they cannot hold the outpost with so few, and they will likely have to abandon the settlement. The barracks includes some basement cells. Ordinarily, there would also be a cache of spare weapons and armour, but these have already been distributed to residents.

# Area 3 - Brass Badger Inn

Overseer Kinnon (short, moustached, grim and humourless, unfond of dwarf related jokes), controls the outpost, and is also owner of the Brass Badger Inn, along with his wife Ymelda. Importantly, both are Yargoth cultists loyal to Womek. A still and full barrel of Widow's Grin whiskey may be found out back.

With so few residents, the tavern is empty apart from the PCs, whom the owners are grateful to receive as guests (there are plenty of rooms upstairs). *Kinnon & Ymelda* are genuinely distressed at the ambush (they knew of *Womek's* 





# Outpost Map





arrangement with the ogres, but slaughtering the entire caravan was never agreed to!) and project stoicism in their resolve to rebuild. An Int or Perc contest vs either NPCs' Cha suggests they are hiding something (body language cues, slightly faltering voice, odd twitch in the neck, etc).

The pair are always on the look out for new sacrifice victims, and might target any late night drinkers, loners or suspicious investigator types with a sleeping draught (Con check or comatose; they end up a captive in Area 5 of the Colossus, delivered there by *Calix* (see Area 9) – treat as an NPC until/if they are rescued). If the owner's bedroom is searched, two yellow robes adorned with coin icons may be found hidden beneath their mattress (symbols of *Yargoth*).

# Area 4 - Hugo's (General Store)

Hugo (medium build, clean shaven, purple vest, always smoking a pipe) runs the general store, which always smells of pipeweed. The place is crowded with shelves, but without the latest caravan shipment, most of them are empty. Hugo is one of the cultists, probably the most avaricious man in the outpost, and his prices exorbitant (twice normal).

Hugo will be (genuinely) outraged that the caravan was destroyed, and keen to ensure sacrifices are swiftly made to help maintain his uncanny prosperity. If possible, he will hatch a plot with Kinnon, Ymelda, Tybalt and Calix to deliver one or more of the PCs for sacrificing. If the PCs want to buy or trade, use the following percentages to determine whether Hugo has the goods available:

• Common: 70%, quantity 1d6

• Uncommon: 40%, quantity 1d3

• Rare: 10%, quantity 1

# Area 5 - Miners' Domicile

4d6 miners live in this double story domicile, led by *Leanora* (albino Karok, hulking female with Str and Con 15, blunt and impatient). Half of them

are secret *Yargoth* cultists (but not *Leonora*, who would be quick to brain them or throw them in the barracks' cells). The miners avoided the barbarian slaughter because they were in the hills prospecting for silver. Every now and then, a miner dies in a freak "accident" (ritually murdered by cultists). Searching the home reveals a handful of yellow cloaks with coin symbology concealed beneath some floorboards (*Yargoth* vestments).

# Area 6 - Herbalist

Two herbalists *Ercan* (6 ft, rail thin) and *Gijord* (northerner, long blond beard, black cloak), and their families live in this house, collecting rare herbs in the nearby woods and hills. They are normally escorted by a handful of guards, but recently have been forced to make short expeditions alone. They can supply healing herbs (as Healer's Kit) and anti-toxin for trade or reasonable prices. PCs affected by sleeping draughts or similar can be cured here.

# Area 7 - Weaver

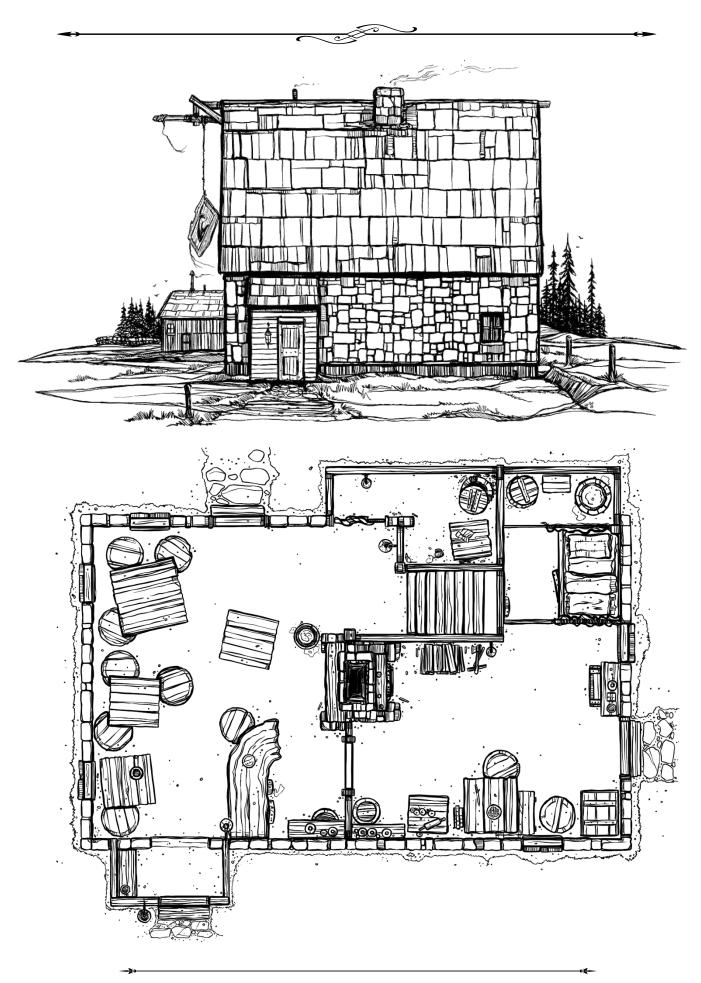
The charming *Einid* (20s, brunette female, athletic, easy manner) and her twin children, live and work as weavers, making clothes and baskets. Einid's husband *Gray* died in a tree felling accident six months earlier (a dream prophecy of *Tybalt* come true, see Area 13).

### Area 8 - Potter

Burty (Burton) the potter (stubbled alcoholic, fond of whiskey, rotund, often wearing an apron) and his extended family live in the pottery, which has shelves of bowls, plate, jars, urns etc. PCs interested in creating Molotov cocktail devices could do so with whiskey (from Area 3), rags and some of Burty's jars (throw 40 ft, 1d6 fire damage in a 5 ft area).

# Area 9 - Archaeologist (Womek's home)

Womek lives here masquerading as an archaeologist, making armed expeditions into forgotten places in the search for lost relics. The





sorcerer struck gold in *Therg's End*, gaining access to the *Colossus* and a ready supply of sacrificial victims.

The house is locked and empty of people (Dex check with lockpicks to open, or by breaking (Str check). If the PCs visit here, *Womek* is at the *Colossus* (with a number of cultists assisting him on an "expedition"; either engaging in blood rituals or dead if the party have dealt with him).

Searching the house reveals a box beneath a wardrobe false floor (trapped with a poison needle; *Luck* (Con) check or dead (Perc check to spot, Dex check to repurpose the device or harvest 1 dose of poison). Inside the box are 1 x Valuables, 1 x Carry Loot and a hooded, yellow robe with coin icons (*Yargoth* vestments).

# Area 10 - Stables

The stables and horse yard are overseen by *Calix* (dark skinned Nydissian, dyed blonde hair, thick beard, reckless extrovert), a long time member of *Yargoth's* sect. He currently has 2d6 horses and is happy to trade or sell them at reasonable prices. From time to time, the *Overseer* has *Calix* convey drugged captives to the *Colossus* for sacrifice. A thorough search of the stable loft reveals 1 x Carry Loot, yellow *Yargoth* vestments, blood stained ropes, and a set of manacles.

# Area 11 - Abandoned Blacksmiths

The old blacksmith's is currently abandoned; the last family member suddenly perished a week ago due to disease, and the property is in limbo, awaiting the *Overseer's* decision as to what to do with it. Salvageable weapons and armour have already been handed out to inhabitants, but there are enough materials to forge one object or tool such as a crowbar, spear or axe head, caltrops, crude manacles, etc.

The blacksmith's daughter, *Riann*, was gifted with an inventive mind, and left a number of insightful

charcoal drawings, schematics and formulae in a journal in her bedroom (including a partial formula for something referred to as "firepowder"). Indeed, one of her successful devices may still be found in the smithy (a sword pommel in a box, that shoots a small dart 20 ft by pressing a trigger stud; no damage itself, but might deliver poison). A PC interested in taking the Artificer class might unlock their potential with the journal (see **Aftermath**).

# Area 12 - Leatherworker

Leatherworker *Sulraa* (6 ft, 50's, tireless energy, red haired Thuel (barbarian) female, broken common), rents here with 3d6 others (mostly labourers). Most of the house are cultists, including *Sulraa*, who has personally murdered a number of people to receive her blessings (inc her unflagging endurance). *Sulraa's* money pouch is crafted from the skin of her mentor *Rinnley* (the interior bears parts of his nose and eye, a loathsome keepsake that she likes to caress from time to time). A search of her locked valuables trunk reveals a hooded, yellow robe with coin icons (*Yargoth* vestments).



# Area 13 - Beekeeper

Tybalt the beekeeper (thin, large lips, receding hairline, often wearing his heavy work robes and hooded mesh veil). An early cultist, Tybalt's bee colony has greatly prospered and his honey is prized in Crow's Keep.



Eight months earlier, *Tybalt's* prophetic dreams led him to a monstrous *Skull Mask*, buried at the base of a dead tree. Wearing the mask turns the user into a frenzied half man, half wasp horror, with enormous compound eyes and buzzing wings. "Yargoth" has conveyed to *Tybalt* that if he murders at least one of the PCs, his dreams of making *Einid* his wife (Area 7) will come true. If the party split up, the beekeeper will seize his chance if he thinks he can get away with it.

Wasp Monstrosity, AC 13, HD 4+1, Stinger 2d4 + poison (Luck (Con) save or paralysed for 2d6 rounds) and Claw 1d4+1, 19: target is severely stung, roll 1d6 on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table, S19 D15 C12 I5 P13 W16 Ch7, L7, 30 ft or 60 ft flying. If there are no enemies to fight, but the duration has not yet expired, the wearer must make a Will check to resist attacking an ally and end the transformation.

The mask is hidden in an empty wax pot. If worn, the user immediately feels angry and aggressive. If attuned (takes several weeks), the wearer may spend an action to transform into the *Wasp Monstrosity* (duration 2d6 rounds, usable once every 2d6 months). Activating the mask automatically requires a roll on the *Dark & Dangerous Magic* table. A PC interested in taking the Barbarian class (but without an appropriate background or other event), might find this ancient relic unlocks their inner rage (see **Aftermath**).

# Area 14 - Hunters' Hall

2d6+2 hunters live here, some with families (statistics as *Outlander*, but with longbows), and 2d6 hounds. Half of the hunters are new cultists (might be turned, with the right persuasion). A search of the premises garners 1 x Carry Loot but no yellow robes (they are stored in Area 2 of the Colossus).

Hound, AC 12, HD 1+2, Bite 1d4+1, 19: target is knocked prone, S13 D14 C15 I2 P12 W10 Ch6,

L4, 60 ft. Advantage when tracking and on attack rolls when flanking.

# Area 15 - Graveyard

Many recent burial mounds and cremation urns mark this large graveyard. Perusing the headstones reveals epitaphs such as "All are equal before Baal", "Here lies Wendolyn Cinders; Hunter of Monsters and Men" and "Vengeance is a pit, justice a door".

PCs wanting to rob the graves will find 1 x Carry Loot and a *cold iron* longsword buried about the various plots. One recent corpse however is swollen with foul gas and *Flesh Grubs*. If disturbed, the corpse ruptures, showering the PC with the flesh burrowing grubs (*Luck* (Con) check or the PC dies in 1d4 rounds when the grubs reach their heart). Only fire or acid can kill the grubs, but requires an Int check to apply correctly, and causes 1d4 damage to the subject in the process.

# **Aftermath**

Without *Womek* to hold the cult together, the last sect members turn on each before being ousted and hung by the remaining outlanders. In this case, *Therg's End* is almost certainly is abandoned, and the site razed by barbarian, ogre and skorn forces.

If Womek lives, the outpost thrives and expands, rising to 90% cultists. The sect spreads to the closest city, swiftly recruiting followers from the poor and merchant quarters. With time and increasing popular support, the cultists leverage the Church of Argona into recognizing Yargoth as a lost saint of The Starmaiden, legitimizing their place in Midlander theology. The truth behind "Yargoth" is left to GM determination.

As far as the surviving PCs are concerned, they gain 1st level in a class of the player's choice. Players and/or GMs preferring a clear connection between the PC's actions and their chosen class

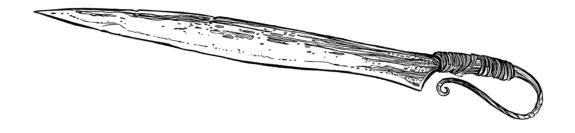


might consider the following (in addition to the PC's background):

- Artificer Disabling/repurposing any traps, detecting/opening any secret doors, "MacGuyvering" any other object to assist the party (eg Molotov cocktails in Outpost Area 8), studying Riann's schematics journal (Outpost Area 11).
- Barbarian Fighting enemies, handling real weapons, showing fury or rage especially during combat, decrying sorcery, feats of athleticism, pathfinding, tracking, hunting, wilderness survival, wearing the Skull Mask (Outpost Area 13).
- Bard Fighting enemies, handling real weapons, inspiring or entertaining the party/NPCs (including Colossus Area 5), wearing armour, learning/spreading new culture, tales or lore.
- Cultist Fighting enemies, helping injured allies, handling real weapons, wearing armour, recalling or learning any spiritual lore (eg Colossus Area 2, 4, 6), praying to the gods, or studying the *Nova Scriptora* Area 10).

- Fighter Fighting enemies, handling real weapons, showing leadership, feats of athleticism, wearing armour.
- Magic User Tainted by Vorgrist's purple cloud, cursed by the magic idol (Colossus Area 2), being affected by a Dark & Dangerous magic effect, studying the Nova Scriptora or Vorgrist's spellbook.
- Monk Lopai, the elderly easterner in Colossus Area 5, is willing to teach one PC his dying order's secret fighting techniques. Whether Lopai passes away of natural causes shortly thereafter is left to the GM to determine.
- Ranger Fighting enemies, sneaking around, spotting dangers/secret doors, spotting clues, pathfinding, tracking, hunting, wilderness survival, sneaking or assisting the injured bear.
- Rogue Fighting enemies, sneaking around, spotting, disarming, or repurposing traps/secret doors, spotting clues, looting, stealing, opening locks, being deceptive, climbing things.

**Special Thanks to Randy M** who created all of the incredible art in this adventure! See more of Randy's work at: <a href="http://www.thebayofspirits.ca/">http://www.thebayofspirits.ca/</a>



# CARNIFEXUM





# Carnifexum

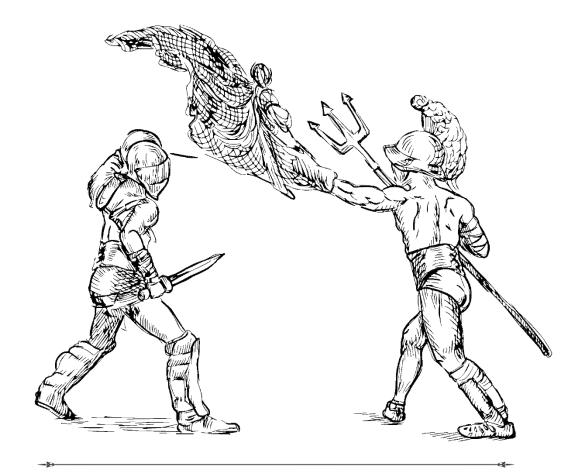
Carnifexum, the grand celebration of Nydissian blood sport, is due to commence in a few weeks' time. Contenders from across the realm will descend on the southern city of *Melek*, hoping to win fame, fortune and glory.

Carnifexum is the pinnacle of Nydissian spectacle; two weeks of gladiatorial blood sport, chariot races, wild beasts, witch burnings and grand theatre - a public display of such magnitude it is marshalled only once between decades (if not longer).

As it happens, the Great Games are due to return, or at the GM's option have been brought forward to mark an important event (eg: military victory, important marriage, child born to the Empress, etc).

On this occasion the games are to be held in *Melek, City of Shackles,* ruled over by the newly appointed *Imperator Setirus.* The streets of *Melek* are stone paved, marked with drains, and often accompanied by footpaths. Buildings are predominately stone, decorated with arches, pillars, statues and obelisks. The larger villas display icons of the golden eye, the formal sigil of the *Lucentum*, the ruling power behind the Nydissian Empire. Dedicated to logic and reason, *lucents* eschew "fragile" emotions such as compassion and empathy, focusing above all on the "greater good" of the imperium (which often means trampling the rights of the individual).

Disciples of the *Lucentum* are agnostic or atheist, and worship no gods. Magic is considered a clear and present danger that cannot be ignored; casters and magic items are hunted by inquisitors of the *Ordo Malefactos*.





Magicians are generally killed on sight, or taken in chains to await the *Lucentum's* judgment. Enchanted objects are confiscated on behalf the Empire and "safely secured".

The PCs might become involved in this adventure as (i) indentured gladiators, (ii) tourists in the right place at the right time, (iii) voluntary competitors, or (iv) out of family rivalry concerning *Grandfather Rebus*' will.

# Family Rivalry

Grandfather Rebus, one of the PC's blood relatives, passed away some time ago. An intrepid explorer, *Rebus* made his fortune in the Southern Empire and through his will left a spacious villa (or perhaps tavern, or public baths, worth many thousands of gold aurums) to one of his family members... whomever is able to get the furthest in the next Carnifexum as a gladiatorial competitor!



Assuming the PC wishes to compete, there is only one family member that poses any real competition, a female cousin named *Setoya*;

fierce and determined, fighting in the borderlands for years, Setoya has forged a name for herself as a dangerous mercenary.

Setoya, AC 15 (heavy armour), HD 6 (42 hp), 2. Swords 1d8+2, 19: disarm, S15 D14 C14 I9 P9 W15 Ch13 L8, Mv 30 ft. Setoya has Major Exploit Protection, *Causes Injuries* on criticals and has advantage on underhanded tactics such as tripping, kicking sand in eyes, employing poison, etc.

# The Great Games

Carnifexum takes place in three primary locations within *Melek's* fortified walls. The gladiator combat occurs in the *Ogorien Fighting Pits* (a huge colosseum like structure), the chariot race runs throughout the city streets, and the theatre shows and wild beasts are held in the *Grand Amphitheatre*.

The players might involve themselves in any of the three primary events (gladiator combat, chariot race [entry fee 300 gp], or wild beasts show), or simply explore the city at large.

During the games the population swells with both spectators and traders, making it easier to find items of rare worth, including black market items (generally shifts item rarity down one grade).

If the party wanders the city at large, the GM might wish to roll on the following table every eight hours.

# Street Encounters

1d20	MELEK ENCOUNTERS
1	2d4 legionaries throwing dice down a side alley. One has a particularly large grin and declares "Hah! The fates are with me brothers!"
2	A gang of 4d4 slavers decide to waylay the party, attacking them in a side street (as guard, but with 1d4 doses of the highly rare <i>Black Lotus</i> poison ( <i>Luck</i> (Con)



	save or unconscious for 1d3 hours). If the party are
	incapacitated, they awake in
	chains as indentured gladiators.
	Lusicrix, an elderly female with
	wispy hair, is selling ornate togas
	at a side stall. She is an expert
	seamstress, and thief, happy to
3	sell her "special range" to the
	right buyer (garments with secret
	compartments, silent foot
	coverings, etc).
	Oppressive heat and humidity
	has forced most people indoors.
4.	PCs engaged in pit fights or races
4	
	today must make a <i>Luck</i> (Con) check or suffer 1d2 Con loss.
	6d10 slaves are in open revolt
	against their masters, aided by 1d6 masked men who are
5	
3	distributing knives and clubs.
	Some of the 4d6 guards have
	dropped their whips, and are
	readying spears and swords.
	A middle aged merchant named
	Astartes is selling books and
	maps from a covered stall. He is
6	also an excellent forger and
	produces false party invitations,
	letters of introduction, identity
	documents and so on for discreet
	clientele.
	A skilled hypnotist, <i>Arrix the</i>
	Mysterious, is performing a show
	for an appreciative crowd. In
_	addition to his mundane skills,
<b>'</b>	Arrix has recently learnt to cast
	Gaze of Beguilement once per
	day. Nearby, a member of the
	Ordo Malefactos watches with a
	suspicious stare.
	A small monkey has escaped her
	enclosure and springs from
	behind a barrel, wriggling into an
0	adventurer's backpack to hide. A
8	handsome but furious travelling
	performer appears moments
	later at the end of the street with
	a small net, obviously searching
	for something.

	Two horses, carriages or chariots
	are racing down the street, young
9	nobles from rival families
	( <i>Dusertes</i> and <i>Prifex</i> ) at the reins.
	A religious zealot is preaching
	from atop a wooden stool,
	_
	inviting passers-by to prepare for
10	the end of days, repent, and
10	embrace the Old Ways (contrary
	to the secular credo of the
	Lucentum). A grim faced
	legionary brandishes a stout club
	and stalks toward the zealot.
	A diminutive tax collector,
	Dominus Cruxus, bearing the
	Imperator's seal, makes a bee
11	line for the travellers and asks to
	see their weapons & armour
	licences.
	A large, white tabby cat meows at
	one of the travellers, moving
	close to brush against his or her
	legs if given the chance. Both of
	= =
	the cat's ears have been cropped.
12	If befriended, the cat becomes
12	extremely loyal and has excellent
	hearing, eyesight and instincts for
	danger. He is happy to nap
	during the day and stay up at
	night, keeping watch over his
	human.
	1d4 teenagers are painting
	symbols of a twin headed serpent
	(a symbol of the Old Gods) on a
12	building wall. Down a side ally,
13	the travellers can see a squad of
	armed legionaries approaching.
	Both parties are unaware of the
	other.
	An elderly farrier, <i>Ugalos</i> , is
	mending horse shoes in a half
14	barn. His wife has passed, he has
	no children, and he wishes to
	pass on his lucky shoe to a
	deserving stranger. If the
	travellers impress him, he gifts it
	to them. The shoe is indeed
	fortuitous, and restores 1 <i>Luck</i> at
	a time of the owners choosing
	_
	once per adventure.



	A 1 1 C 1 1 1 1 .
15	A band of organised pick pockets target the street or square the party are moving through. A Perc (Detection) check vs Dex 14 is required to avoid losing a small random item/pouch.
16	Dominus Carrex (young noble, goatee, fine clothing) staggers in a cluttered ally and collapses. A pool of blood quickly forms.
17	A plague of mimes descends on the street. Their performances range from poor to painful.
18	Alchemist <i>Octavius Scaevola</i> (" <i>Scaev</i> ") is hawking fire pots stacked up by the half dozen. Mid way through his sales pitch, a legion patrol appears at the end of the street. Scaev quickly scoops his pots into a sack and replaces them with undergarments instead, giving any potential customers a knowing nod.
19	A long haired Midlander bard with a handlebar moustache, <i>Ander Excelsior</i> , offers to make a ballad about the party's exploits (for a reasonable fee).
20	Inquisitor Gaius (Monk 7) is striding down the street in a sleeveless toga, flanked by 3d4 veteran legionaries (Fighter 3-4). Any obvious "adventurer" types may draw his attention, particularly if he suspects they might possess any magical items.

# **Gladiator Bouts**

The gladiatorial games take place in the *Ogorien Fighting Pits*, a colossal, stone arched arena allowing thousands of spectators in the tiered galleries and overhead rope walkways that crisscross the fighting grounds. The central sands may be configured in a number of different ways, including a series of "pits", segmented by mechanical stone walls that rise out of the floor.

A PC involved in the gladiator games (either as a free warrior or slave) must fight a series of duels in

a knockout tournament. A duel ends when either combatant reduces their opponent to zero hp or otherwise incapacitates them. At the GM's option, if more than one PC wishes to duel, the party members might fight together in pairs vs an equal or similar number of opponents.

At the conclusion of any combat, there is an even chance the crowd cheers for the defeated's death (crowd indicates thumbs down) or mercy (crowd indicates thumbs up). Particularly flamboyant or otherwise entertaining gladiators might sway this chance at the GM's discretion.



PC gladiators are required to fight a total of seven bouts of combat, one battle every 48 hours, with the final occurring on the last day of the games. PCs may wear any armour, but must use the weapons allocated to them each bout - roll 1d10: (i) trident & net, (ii) twin shortswords, (iii) spear & shield, (iv) axe & dagger (v) great hammer, (vi)



mace & shield, (vii) whip & dagger, (viii) flail, (ix) staff (x) polearm.

The first four battles are randomly determined; roll 1d6 (reroll any repeats):

1. Semper, Unblooded Slave; olive skinned, whip scars, obviously nervous and unskilled.

AC 10 (no armour), HD 1d4 hp, Great Axe 1d12, 19: daze, S11 D10 C10 I10 P10 W10 Ch10, L3, Mv 30 ft. The unblooded slave must make a morale check when wounded to determine whether he surrenders, hoping for mercy from the crowd.

2. Gordaal, Hopeful Mercenary; a tall, lanky northerner. Left hander.

AC 14 (chain & shield), HD 2, Spear 1d6+2, 19: tripped, S14 D10 C12 I10 P10 W10 Ch10, L5, Mv 30 ft. The hopeful mercenary may negate one attack with his shield.

3. Ortu, Veteran Slave; a bald southerner with tribal markings.

AC 13 (hardened leathers & shoulder plate), HD 3, Spiked mace 1d8+2, 19: prone, S14 D13 C12 I10 P10 W12 Ch10, L6, Mv 30 ft. The veteran slave fights with a flourish if he can, to better entertain the crowd.

 Double Trouble. The PC must face off against two steely eyed, female Nydissian twins with ornate breastplates (Veltrix & Simba).

AC 16 (breastplates and leather skirts), HD 3, Scimitars 1d8+1, 19: disarm, S13 D15 C12 I10 P10 W14 Ch10, L6, Mv 30 ft. The twins never check for morale, and each may attempt one Rescue benefiting the other (breaking the usual PC only Rescue rules).

5. Tomen, Disgraced Knight; helmet, breastplate & greaves, braided ponytail tied with black ribbon.

AC 16 (heavy armour), HD 5, Greatsword 1d12+2 19: daze, S15 D13 C14 I10 P13 W12 Ch13, L8, Mv 30 ft. Tomen has advantage on damage rolls and crits on 19-20 attack rolls.

6. *Khron, barbarian of the Skull Drinkers tribe;* chainmail arms, helmet, genuine contender for champion.

AC 14 (helmet & chain arms), HD 9 (56 hp), 2 Axes 1d8+3 19: cause injury, *Luck* save resists, S17 D15 C17 I12 P11 W16 Ch11, L10, Mv 30 ft. Khron may rage like a 9<sup>th</sup> level Barb, and crits on 19-20 attack rolls.

The final three duels are as follows (in order):

5<sup>th</sup> battle; Cousin Setoya.

In the fifth combat, the PC must face off against their mercenary cousin, *Setoya*. For her part, *Setoya* holds nothing back, ruthless in her attempt to seize victory.

 6<sup>th</sup> battle: "Twister" Slade, master thief of the Red Hooks guild; 5 ft 8", bundle of muscle, incredible acrobat.

AC 15 (ornate leathers), HD 8, 2 x Daggers 1d6+2, 19: Twister gains a bonus attack, S15 D18 C10 I13 P15 W11 Ch11, L9, Mv 30 ft. The wily thief has Major Exploit Protection, Backstab, Skirmisher and Finisher abilities like a 8th level Rogue, and may choose from the following tricks four times per combat: *Choking Dust, Hidden Blade, Flash Powder, Unseen Whip. Amazing Acrobat*: once per combat Twister may make a Dex check to negate an attack.

• Final battle: *Lofvirr*, towering 7 ft northmen and ex-champion gladiator, has come out of retirement to reclaim his title.



AC 18 (horned helmet, breastplate and greaves), HD 9 (70 hp), 2 maces 1d8+3 19: prone or push 10 ft, *Luck* save resists, S17 D17 C14 I13 P9 W11 Ch10, L10, Mv 30 ft. Lofviir has the Fighter Adaptable ability, with the Dual Weapons style. He may change styles four times per combat. The ex-champion may negate an attack with each mace as if they were shields, and perform one Major Exploit per combat (an ability normally restricted to PCs only; PC targets may make a *Luck* save to resist).

As might be expected, the final duel opens to great fanfare, including music, dancers and primitive fireworks, and includes *Imperator Setirus* (Melek's ruler) in the audience.

Defeating *Lofviir* in combat earns the PC the title of *Victorem* (see below).



# Chariot Race

The great chariot race is held on Day 7, mid way through the games, and involves a circuitous route through the city streets. Each chariot has two horses and two riders. One of the riders must steer the vehicle whilst the other may employ one weapon (chose from: bow with 5 arrows, 3 javelins, or a net [may be thrown 30 ft, no damage, allows

user to grab/trip the target at range, or possibly jam chariot wheels at GM discretion).

The race may be resolved as a Chase, with modifications as follows:

- (a) Each chariot driver makes an Int, Cha or Dex (Animal Lore) check to coax their horses faster. The best check increases their lead against the rest of the pack, or closes the gap on the leader, by 2d6 ft.
- (b) There are 1d4+4 other chariots in the race (other players might like to control some of them to assist the GM). The NPC riders are as *Guard* (Dex 15).
- (c) The race lasts 2d4+5 legs, the leader at the end of the final leg is the victor.
- (d) If a Chase Event occurs, there is an even chance the event affects the PCs or the leader (or one of the pack if the PCs are leading).
- (e) Event hazards and obstructions might include: a child or animal running onto the street, a spectator shooting a crossbow at the PCs to skew gambling odds, large pothole, stacked barrels forming an impromptu wall, spectators showering the racers with garbage/ale mugs/flowers, chariot collision, etc.

The winner of the chariot races earns the title of *Victorem* (see below), or alternatively there might be a few preliminary heats that lead to a final race.

# **Great Beasts**

On various days throughout the games, wild beasts are on display in the grand Amphitheatre, including rare *polar bears, dire wolves, western panthers, giant serpents, winged snakes, feathered maws, hammer snails*, etc.



During the second week, courageous warriors are sought to fight the beasts, either as athletic displays to first blood (as the owners do not want their expensive beasts killed), or brutal death matches (drawing the greatest crowds and massive gambling stakes; the owners are richly rewarded). If PCs wish to get involved in fighting the great beasts (either as volunteers or slaves), roll 1d8:

- 1. Polar Bear (as Owlbear)
- 2. Feathered Maw (Midlands)
- 3. Dire Wolf
- 4. Winged Snake (Midlands)
- 5. Giant Serpent
- 6. Giant Wasp
- 7. Hammer Snail
- 8. Mammoth

Defeating the relevant beast in single combat (or perhaps even taming it by some miracle of animal handling), earns the title of *Victorem* (see later).

# Theatre & Other Celebrations

The Great Games are marked by a number of free or discounted plays (primarily comedies and tragedies), musicals, poetry readings and dances. Additionally, up to 1d6 witches/warlocks are publicly burnt at the stake by the *Ordo Malefactos*, and 2d6 other high profile serious criminals beheaded, lashed or otherwise dealt with by the *Lucentum*.

The executions draw large, jeering crowds, overseen by highly trained legionaries. Any attempt to intervene is met with overwhelming, deadly force.

# Victorem

Champions of the gladiator battles, chariot race and great beasts earn the title of *Victorem* and awarded golden urns marked with the *Lucentum's* sigil (a flaming eye), worth  $1d4 \times 500$  gp. Victorems garner lifelong fame, opening many doors in certain circles, and significant political influence. Champions retain their titles for approximately 10 years, or until the next *Carnifexum*. They might also, from time to time, draw challengers or attract henchmen.

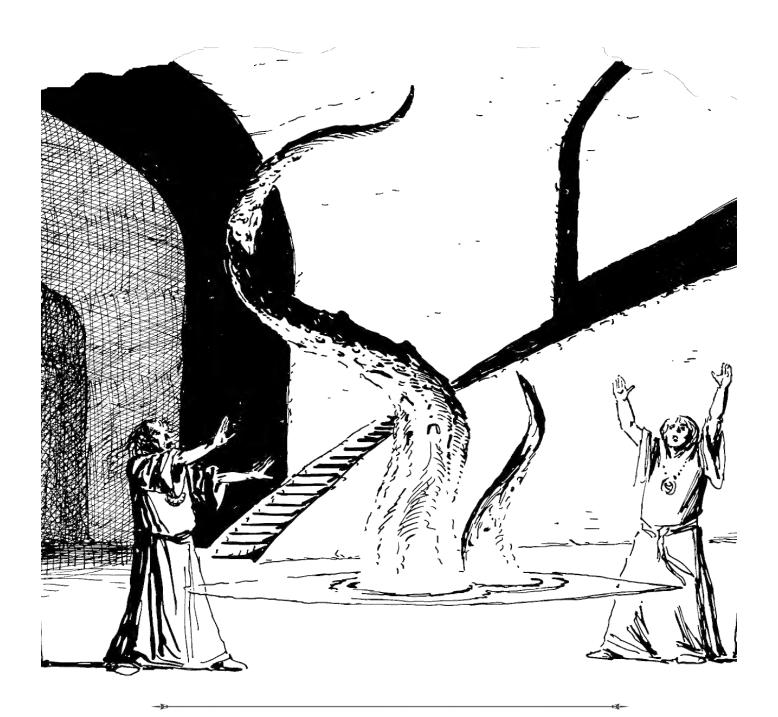


# **Aftermath**

If the party manages to earn a champion title, the PC becomes famous overnight, unable to walk *Melek* streets without fans approaching them to ask enthusiastic questions or congratulate them. Significant political and business opportunities are likely, as various power brokers seek to leverage the *Victorem's* goodwill with city residents (free and slave).

If *Setoya* is bested in the gladiator bouts, the PC earns *Grandfather Rebus*'villa/baths/tavern; worth many thousands of gold coins. If *Setoya* was killed, there will be fallout with other family members, some of whom may seek a blood debt or other vengeance.

# CULTISTS IN CROW'S KEEP



# Cultists in Crow's Keep

Word on the street is that *Lord Conlon*, the patriarch of an old and respected family of *Crow's Keep*, is looking to recruit some discrete investigators, with a handsome reward on offer.

# Crow's Keep

Crow's Keep is the capital of Midlander society, situated on a high plinth of rock overlooking the Great Lake, Forest of Drelnor and the Trackless Moors. Within these fortified walls, the elderly King Uldred holds court, thwarting the schemes of rivals and fending off enemy incursions.

The city is built in familiar western medieval style, architecture reminiscent of the Middle Ages, with a moderate to warm climate. As might be expected, the most powerful noble families are here in great numbers, manoeuvring for position before *Uldred* passes. The gods, and their mortal representatives, also wield great influence, with throngs of faithful attending the great temples.

# Cult of Bok'Surrpesh

Morgaine (early twenties, athletic build, brunette with a prominent chin) is the third born daughter of the *Everton* noble family, an old, enduring and well respected highborn line in *Crow's Keep*. Greedy, impatient, and of limited business acumen, *Morgaine* resents that her elder siblings will inherit most of the family's wealth, and that as the third born, she is expected to uphold the crown's interests as a knight in the armed forces.

Two years ago, few would have put any stock in *Morgaine's* fighting ability; awkward and unbalanced, with no gift for strategy, she seemed destined for an early grave at the end of a barbarian's spear. Yet in recent times *Everton's* third daughter has achieved a miraculous turnaround; swift and deceptively strong, coupled with deadly swordplay and brazen confidence.

Many wonder at *Morgaine's* remarkable improvement, hoping that they or their squires might mimic her success, but the knight's rise is not the result of training with the captain of the *Crow's Guard*.

Sinister, more dangerous forces are at work. *Morgaine* belongs to a secret cult that uses blood magic to merge with alien entities from beyond, granting them supernatural boons. In *Morgaine's* case, the symbiosis augments her strength, speed and stamina.



As might be feared, such power comes at a steep price. The forbidden rituals are fuelled by blood magic and madness, with the youngest sacrifices procuring the greatest results.



# Conlon's Bastard

Lord Conlon's 11 yr old secret bastard son, *Merrick*, lived in the back alleys of the *Rookwood slums* until a week ago, when he was unwittingly kidnapped for sacrifice by the cult.

Despite appearances, *Lord Conlon* loved his son dearly, and is willing to pay 500 crowns (gp) to find out what happened to him. Given the need for strict discretion, involving the city watch is out of the question.



Late one night, *Lord Conlon* arranges a covert meeting with the party at the *Sewer Sack*, one of the quieter drinking holes on the outskirts of the slums (wooden two storey, cheap ale but expensive food, mostly regulars and a few pick pockets, proprietor is *Crawjack*; 5ft, exasperated, narrow eyed, robust fellow).

Conlon is in his 50's, a dark haired and pragmatic retired warrior (Fighter 2). He impresses upon the party the need for the utmost discretion, but is desperate to reunite with his son, or at least find out what happened to him.

Conlon last saw Merrick at the Argonan Orphanage on Leadlight Row. If the party manage to return Merrick to him, or exact vengeance in his name, Conlon will double their fee and owe them a favour the party can call on at some future time. His son has many similarities to his father

(olive skinned, tall, broad shouldered, dark locks, unusually green eyes), with had a pox scar on his chin.

# Argonan Orphanage

Merrick's mother passed away years earlier and the boy ended up in an orphanage run by priestesses of Argona (god of health, wealth and happiness). Priestess Lividia (5 ft 6, slim, dark hair, white cowl, necklace with the shield & star of Argona) administers the charity with a number of junior initiates and volunteers. Approximately fifty kids live in the three storey building, who benefit from two meals a day and a safe place to sleep.

Try as they might, there are far too many kids for the priestesses to keep an eye on, and many of the youngsters spend their days exploring the city. *Lividia* is aware that *Merrick* is missing, as is his female friend *Drini* (a northerner; pale, blonde, blue eyes, heavy accent), and has reported such to *Captain Larsen* of the city watch. The two went missing at the same time, and *Lividia* is not sure whether they have simply run off together.

If the party quizzes the kids, they learn the following (Charisma (Persuasion) checks might be required depending on the PC's approach/GM discretion):

- 1. *Demi* (6 yr old female, dark hair, very skinny) tells them that *Merrick & Livia* were best friends and always hung out together.
- Morgur (12 yr old male, blonde hair, scratches himself) tells the party the pair had a few favourite locations they would visit in the city, in particular Busker's Point, Westside Markets and the Abandoned Tower.
- 3. *Alise* (8 yr old female, very short, dark hair, shrewd and practical) charges 1 silver florin for her advice. She can tell the party that she was the last person to see the pair, about midday a week ago, at *South Stables*.



# **Random Encounters**

Whilst exploring the city, there is a 50% chance of a random encounter every two hours. If an encounter occurs, roll on the following table:

1d20	CROW'S KEEP ENCOUNTERS
1	Two farmers, <i>Mort</i> and <i>Jeraal</i> , are brawling over livestock, foodstuffs or cotton.
2	A gaggle of ducks, chickens or other fowl scatter across the street, causing havoc. There is a 50% chance a pick pocket, <i>Riva "Homeslice"</i> takes advantage of the diversion.
3	A merchant, <i>Egbert "Sell me own mother" Cruthers</i> , is selling an assortment of weapons on a gilded table in the street, watched over by his muscle, <i>Juke</i> (Fighter 4). For the discreet inquirer, he might also have access to more specialized gear, such as hidden sheaths, spring-blade pommels, caltrops, lockpicks and knife boots.
4	4d6 guards patrol the street, eyes wary for thieves. If it's a slow day, they might accost any foreign or dangerous looking adventurers, inquiring as to their business, the duration of their stay, boarding house, and whether they have any information they wish to share with the authorities. Impolite or cheeky responses are unlikely to be well received.
5	2d4 Knights of <i>Graxus</i> (war god) are trotting down the street in full battle armour. Bystanders quickly clear a path, fearful of being knocked aside by their 17 hand destriers.
6	A funeral procession winds slowly down the street, bearing the standards of the noble <i>Cildorn</i> family, including pall bearers, cultists of Baal (death, suffering), and sorrowful relatives.
7	3d6 thugs of rival gangs ( <i>Alley Smiths</i> and the <i>Hatchetmen</i> ) clash over turf lines, stabbing at each other with knives and axes. Lingering witnesses, or anyone who attempts to intervene,

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	is also set upon. Whatever the outcome, the surviving leader, <i>Ratnak</i> " <i>Lockjaw</i> " (Northerner), does not forget.
8	2d6 overzealous followers of <i>Argona</i> accost the travellers, berating them for their wicked ways of violence and greed. They threaten natural disasters and eternity trapped in the void if the party does not make amends.
9	A 3d6 member performing troupe has gathered a small crowd here. The troupe has knowledge of the local region. There is a 30% chance of pick pockets working the crowd.
10	A pigeon pie seller, <i>Ghirk Galak</i> , is on the corner. <i>Ghirk</i> is a little known street informant.
11	A justicar is presiding over an execution in the square. Three middle aged criminals are to be hanged. A small crowd has gathered. 3d6 guards are in attendance, along with the burly, hooded executioner. There is a 50% chance of a rescue attempt by 4d6 ne'er do wells.
12	A whipcord teenager with red hair ( <i>Bjernvin</i> , northerner) sprints towards the travellers with a pouch clutched in one hand. 200 ft behind, a portly stall keeper struggles to keep up, yelling " <i>Thief! Thief!</i> "
13	A small crowd has gathered around two nobles (Lord Armont and Lord Brand) arguing in the street, when Armont draws his sword and demands a duel. Lord Brand, elderly, appears shocked at first, but quickly casts his gaze about the crowd. "I seek a champion. You know my name. Who will fight for me."
14	A procession of 3d6 druids of <i>Soliri</i> (nature god) are making their way down the road, offering blessings of the <i>World Tree</i> to passers-by.
15	A trio of axemen are selling firewood and kindling. They haven't noticed that one of the split logs is hiding a tiny fey behind a hinged knot.

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	3d6 off duty soldiers are halfway
	through a pub crawl and quite drunk.
16	They are very angry about a recent
10	enemy skirmish, and will take it out
	on the next southerner they see.
	A man in hooded black robes bearing
	the crescent moon symbol (a priest of
	Shennog - madness, night, mystery),
	approaches the party. He whispers
17	something ("the darkest corners
	conceal the greatest secrets") before
	handing one of the adventurers a
	broken hand mirror. He then scuttles
	swiftly away.
	A beggar, Sivros, is begging for alms
	when a chamber pot is emptied from
	an upper storey and splashes onto
10	him. He curses and splutters "Skin
18	the silver wolf!", before redoubling his
	call for alms. <i>Sivros</i> has a good ear for
	the street, and has connections with
	certain thieves' guilds.
	A stray hound, dark muzzled and
	thin, with one cloudy eye, approaches
	the party. If they treat her well, the
	hound becomes a fearless ally, willing
19	to give her life for her new packmates.
	At the GM's discretion, the hound
	*
	may automatically succeed in a single
	rescue of a PC, dying in the process.
00	A town crier is ringing his bell and
20	declaring "The King is dead! The
	King is dead!"

## On the Trail

The party might follow the leads the kids at the orphanage provide, put their feelers out with other contacts to catch wind of *Merrick* and/or *Drini*, use magic, or employ some other strategy the writer hasn't thought of. Either way, a number of likely avenues of inquiry appear below, some of which provide clues to finding *Merrick*.

1. Captain Larsen. The captain has little interest in allocating resources to find Merrick. He's in the pocket of many a wealthy merchant, with their own agendas, and he's up to his eyeballs investigating a series of murders on Ripton Way (gang related). He's put the word out to his men, but can't promise anything. He is however

- very interested to know why the party want to find *Merrick*, anyway?
- 2. Busker's Point is known for its many street entertainers, located near the bustling eastern markets. Singers and musicians are most common, but poetry readers and mimes are not unheard of. There is a 50% chance of a pickpocket (Perc (Detection) vs Dex 14). One of the singers, Markos (14 yrs, long dark hair, poor but enthusiastic singer), can indicate (for a few coins) that Merrick & Drini were here a week ago, during the afternoon. They said they were heading to Thirston Alley to see Ratcatcher.
- 3. Thirston Alley is a gloomy and winding collection of motley buildings, known in certain circles as the headquarters of the Hatchetmen thieves' guild (primarily protection rackets, break and enters, and fencing loot). 4d6 thieves (Bandii) are on hand here at any time, along with their boss, Ratcatcher.

Ratcatcher (40s, albino Karok with silver buzz cut hair, missing his right hand, "cut off for thievin, innit"). Ratcatcher can confirm the pair met with him a week ago in the late afternoon. He sent them to deliver two messages (one to Tight Noose tavern, then later to Westside Markets). Ratty won't spill to just anyone, however, and has a soft spot for the two "young delinquents". If the party want the information from him peacefully, they'll have to (i) tell him who wants to know, (ii) grease his palms with a few crowns, and (iii) owe him a personal favour ("don't go leavin' town now, will ya.")

Ratcatcher, Boss Monster, AC 13, HD 5, Dagger 1d4+3, 19: Disarm, S13 D16 C9 I14 P13 W13 Ch10 L8, Mv 30 ft. Ratcatcher is a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits. He has Backstab, Skirmisher and Finisher abilities like a 5th level rogue, and may choose from the following tricks three times per combat: Choking Dust, Hidden Blade, Quick Reflexes, Smoke Bomb, Flash Powder, Unseen Whip, Glue Pot.

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- 4. Dawncliff is a (technically illegal) lookout, situated on the outside of *Crow's Keep's* north eastern walls, overlooking the huge watery expanse that is *Lake Argos*. High up on the rocky cliff, the view is spectacular, none more so than at dawn. One of Merrick's favourite hangouts, it requires a Dex (Athletics or Acrobatics) check to successfully climb (else fall 20 ft to a lower shelf) to the sitting ledge, which is wide enough to accommodate five adults. At the GM's option, patrolling city watch might also harass any characters putting their lives at risk here. Drini might be found watching the sunrise here (50% and see later), but otherwise there are no clues to be had.
- 5. Westside Markets are a bustling amalgam of traders, hawkers and peddlers, selling any manner of thing to any manner of person. If the PCs ask around, they might learn from Vermile (tall female blonde, well dressed, arms always crossed) that she sold the pair some fresh cut flowers for a silver. She overheard them talking about Dawncliff and the South Stables.
- 6. The Abandoned Tower was once the home of a secret wizard who died on account of a summoning gone wrong. The creature's rampage left the tower in a derelict state, and it is scheduled for demolition in coming months. The kids often take turns daring each other to enter its darkened halls and climb all the way to the top. None have yet made it that far. Merrick & Drini are not in the tower, but it is not completely abandoned. In the highest room is an Imp, Snevorgug, bereft of its master but bound to guard his study for another 234 years.

Snevorgug greets the PCs with "Hi los ni fin drog" (you are not the master), and "Su tada womuda" (no mortals in this place). If the Imp is defeated, the study contains 1 x 3 HD Lair Treasure and 1 x Scroll.

Snevorgug, AC 15, HD 6, Claw 1d6+1 and Bite 1d4+posion, 19: target rolls on the DDM table, S14 D16 C10 I14 P15 W14 Ch14 L8, Mv 40 ft flying. Imps are *Demons* with the usual benefits. A bite causes 1 *Luck* drain and amnesia for 1d4 hours (*Luck* (Will) save resists). Snevorgug may choose from the following spells three times per day: Shennog's Blessing, Waking Dream, Soothing Edict and Strands of Ensnarement. 50% magic resistance.



7. South Stables is run by Letonia, a dark skinned southerner with wild hair and a genuine love of animals. The stables have a number of horses, as well as several hounds lodging. Letonia is happy for the children to pet the animals and sometimes allows them to ride a friendly nag named Riggs. Merrick and Drini did come past a week ago to visit. They mentioned going to Thirston Alley, which Letonia warned them against, but they needed the money (as message runners for the guild). One of Letonia's dogs, Wicket, was a favourite of Merrick, and might be helpful for tracking his scent.



8. *Underhang* is a secret hideout for various street kids and orphans, including *Merrick & Drini*. Located beneath the middle of *Crow's Keep's* enormous entry bridge. Access is via small drains on the northern side, leading to a natural cave. *Drini* is here (see below).

# **Cult Interference**

Each time the party visits a location searching for *Merrick*, or for every 3 hours that passes, there is a cumulative 1 in 10 chance that the cult's spies hear about the party's inquiries, and take action to nip them in the bud.

The cultists organise 3d6 slavers to intercept the party, slap them in chains, and put them on the next ship leaving *Crow's Keep*. The slavers are led by *Nox* (30s, dark skinned, shaved head, large gold hoop earrings and dragon tattoos down both arms). If the slavers are defeated, they have 1 x Carry Loot. *Nox* does not know anything about any cult, but he had specific orders to target the PCs.

Slavers, AC 11, HD 1, Baton 1d6+1, 19: knocked prone, S14 D10 C10 I9 P9 W9 Ch9 L8, Mv 30 ft. The slavers carry batons and large sacks to stuff unconscious would be slaves in.

Nox, Boss Monster, AC 13, HD 5, 2 x Fists 1d6+1, 19: knocked back 10 ft, prone or disarm, S14 D16 C13 I10 P10 W16 Ch9 L8, Mv 30 ft. Nox is a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits. He has Martial Arts like a 5th level Monk, and may choose from the following techniques three times per combat: Fork the River, Formless Water, Iron Fist, Deflect Projectile, Impossible Leap.

# Finding Drini

*Drini* is hiding in the small cave colloquially known as *Underhang*, a secret safehouse the orphan kids (and other children) sometimes employ.

In this case, Drini is in hiding because she witnessed *Merrick* being assaulted, knocked unconscious, stuffed in a sack, and conveyed to the *Bald Bison* tavern about 2 am a week ago.

Drini would have been taken too, but for some drunken sailors turning the corner of the alley at the right moment. Drini managed to stealthily tail the kidnappers back to the tavern, who emerged some hours later, without Merrick. She waited all night to no avail, until set upon by two men (the same men, or others, she couldn't be sure?) later that morning as she surveilled the Bison. Barely escaping with her life, Drini fled to Underhang, and has been in hiding ever since.

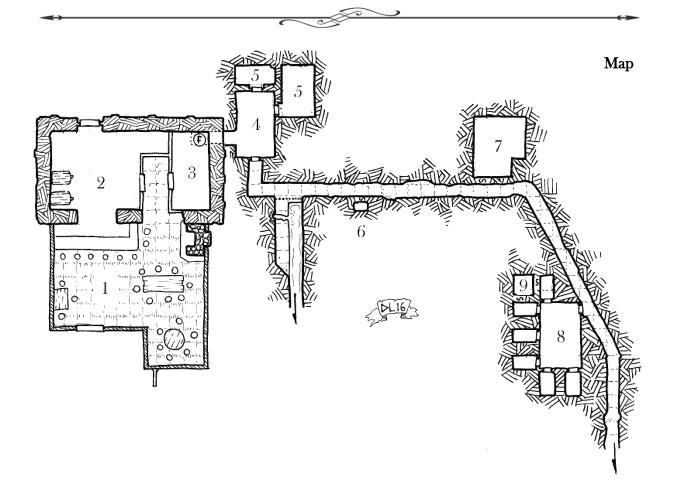
*Drini* is scared but not alone – she has 1d3 street friends (not from the Orphanage) with her in the cave when the PCs arrive. The kids immediately suspect the party are up to no good, and brandish knives. If the party can convince *Drini* that they are on her side, she will tell them her story, and pleads with them to find out what happened to *Merrick*.

Street Kids, AC 10, HD 1 (1d4 hp), Knife 1d4, 19: 1d3 street kids appear at the cave mouth to assist, S8 D13 C10 I10 P12 W11 Ch11 L3, Mv 30 ft. The street kids look after their own, gaining advantage on morale checks.

# The Bald Bison

The Bison is a wooden, single storey drinking hole, tucked away in a quiet corner a few blocks from the shipyards. Large flagstones are set into the common room floor, the plaster walls decorated with mildewed pictures of old or distant landscapes. The ale is not particularly good, nor cheap, which keeps most of the customers away, and that suits the cult just fine.





# Area 1 - Common Room

The bar is attended by 2d4 patrons whilst open, half of whom are cultists. After closing (midnight), there is a 25% chance a ritual is being performed in the secret tunnels below, involving 2d4 cult members.

Jeffrey (50s, balding, skinny fellow with yellowed teeth, sickly looking, his boon was to stave off terminal illness) owns the establishment, and is a cult member, as is his serving wench *Melindra* (brunette, portly, bright eyes, pregnant – her boon – but pregnant with what?).

Cultists, AC 11, HD 1, Knife 1d4, 19: disarm, S10 D10 C10 I9 P11 W9 Ch10 L8, Mv 30 ft. The cultists carry knives. For any group of cultists, 1d2 of them has a boon relevant to combat. Roll 1d8:

1. Unnatural Strength of 19, and Causes Injuries on 19+ attack roll.

- 2. Preternatural Toughness: 4 HD.
- 3. *Endless Defiance*: Nearby cultists never check morale.
- 4. *Gifted*: Cast one random combat related spell (1<sup>st</sup> level (60%), 2<sup>nd</sup> level (30%), 3<sup>rd</sup> level (10%)).
- 5. Otherworldly Aegis: AC increases to 18.
- 6. Thought Eater: Once per combat may force a target within 20 ft to make a Luck (Will) save or suffer a serious madness.
- 7. Time Slip: Once per combat may take 4 actions or moves (or a combination) instead of 1 of each.
- 8. *Doom Pact*: When reduced to zero hp, roll on the *Dark & Dangerous Magic* table entry 11.



If the party asks about *Merrick* and the three kidnappers from the week before, *Jeffrey* and the cultists don't remembering seeing anything of the kind. If probed carefully, the PCs might notice one of the cultists seems nervous, a bead of sweat forming along his hairline (Int (Insight) vs Cha).

## Area 2 - Back Room

The sizable back room is filled with the usual bar paraphernalia; casks, bottles, foodstuffs, plates, cutlery, etc.

The back door is locked most of the time (Dex (Traps & Locks) check to open). A thorough search of the area however might unearth a dark cowl, fallen behind one of two massive ale barrels (Perc (Detection) check or by player description). If *Drini* is present, she believes it identical to the cowls of the three kidnappers.

## Area 3 - Bedroom

This 15 ft by 30ft room is extra storage (bottle racks, casks) and a sleeping cot and small wardrobe for *Jeffrey*, who lives on site. The trapdoor in the northeast corner is covered by a rug and the cot. It is kept locked (*Jeffrey* has the key).

# Area 4 - Waiting Room

This 15 ft by 25 ft room is perfectly plain, white plaster walls and flagstone floor tiles. A hanging lantern provides light. Each of the three wooden doors is painted with what appears to be blood, in runic sigils. An Int (Arcane Lore) check great success (must be skilled) recognises the runes as archaic and highly rare eldritch symbols for watching (northern doors) and welcome (southern door).

# Area 5 - Initiates' Rooms

1d3 *Cultists* are living in these two chambers, new inductees studying forbidden scriptures day and night for a period of weeks. They are quick to investigate any loud disturbances in the complex. If the rooms are looted, 1 x Carry Loot and 2 x Trinkets & Curios are found.

# Area 6 - Trap

This section of long 5 ft wide corridor is trapped with poison gas that issues out of tiny holes in the cracks between flagstone, expanding to 20 ft (*Luck* (Con) save or unconscious for 1d6 hours). Clanging bells are also triggered, alerting cultists.

Characters studying the floor gain a Perc (Detection) check to notice hairline cracks of the trigger tiles, which activate if stepped on. Similarly, studying the southern wall might reveal a loose tile and pull ring that opens a secret door. The small cavity beyond houses a gas cylinder which can be dismantled and used as a weapon (or reset as a trap elsewhere, effects as above. Requires a Dex (Traps & Locks) check to repurpose).

# Area 7 - Merging Chamber

This 40 ft by 45 ft chamber can only be accessed by finding the secret latch in the northern wall (Perc (Detection) test), that allows part of the wall to slide aside. The interior has arcane runes carved into all surfaces, and shackled to the floor is a naked woman, *Patrice* (30s, athletic build, prominent nose, bedraggled), in a delirious state.

Patrice is not a prisoner. She is a cultist in the throes of fusing with an otherworldly entity, a painful and disorienting process that often results in disciples manifesting temporary bruises, welts, and madness. Interfering with the merging is dangerous; unshackling Patrice has a 50% chance of transforming her into a Gibbering Terror.

Gibbering Terror, AC 14, HD 8, Bite 2d8, 19: disturbing howl, enemies within 20 ft must make a Luck (Will) save or suffer a moderate madness, S16 D7 C16 I3 P10 W14 Ch1, L9, Mv 30 ft. The Terror has the usual benefits of its kind (LFG p.98).

# Area 8 - Prison Shrine

The cultists store their sacrifices here, shackled in small cells, preparing them for ritual sacrifice. The centre of the chamber which is inlaid with a glittering, white quartz pentagram. Anyone



entering the inscribed circle immediately feels on edge, breaks out in a cold sweat, gets goosebumps, etc.

When the party arrive *Morgaine* is here with 1d4+1 fellow cultists, about to commence a ritual/in the middle of performing a ritual/just finished a ritual (GM's choice, or 33% chance of each) involving *Merrick*. By this time, the 11 yr old is dehydrated and drug addled (if alive) or horribly dismembered (if dead).



Either way, the cultists can't allow the party to reveal their secret, and attempt to kill or shackle them for future sacrifice.

Morgaine, Boss Monster, AC 14, HD 7 (61 hp), Ritual Blade 1d8+4, 19: special, S17 D17 C17 I10 P10 W13 Ch10 L9, Mv 30 ft. Morgaine is a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits. She has the Fighter Adaptable ability, with the Single Weapon style. She may change styles three times per combat. On a 19+ attack roll, Morgaine triggers a roll on the DDM table.

If defeated, the cultists carry 1 x Carry Loot.

# Area 9 - Tabernacle

This secret compartment is adjacent to two cells that are used as storage for wicked torture and dissecting devices, iron rations, spare bedding and other odds and ends. The secret doors are magically locked (*Wizard Lock* at 5<sup>th</sup> level) and only open to a hymn of praise to *Bok'Surrpesh* (can be deduced via an Int (Arcane Lore) check at disadvantage).

Stored in the tabernacle is an unnamed tome of white leather, full of scrawled ramblings and dementia, but also genuine rites of alien invocation, used by the cult to call their demons. A person studying the tome for some years might be able to replicate the cult's ceremonies, but gains an incurable serious madness.

The tome is worth  $1d6 \times 500$  gp to the right buyer. Also stored in the tabernacle are the cult's tithes, amounting to  $1 \times 5$  HD Lair Treasure.

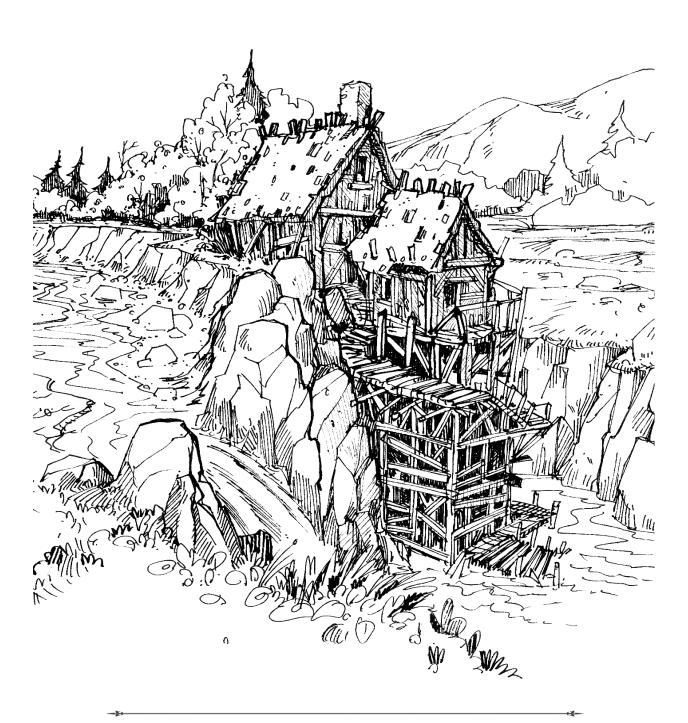
# **Aftermath**

If *Merrick* is rescued and returned to *Conlon*, he is overjoyed, and pays the party the bonus, with an additional reward (1 x Valuables) if the cultists were slain. Although *Conlon* cannot publicly extol the party's deeds, he is sure to surreptitiously send work their way, and will owe them a debt as long as he lives.

If *Morgaine* and her cult are not destroyed, they relocate elsewhere and continue their practices, with more adults and children going missing from time to time. Eventually they open an orphanage of their own, and begin experiments with merged children and the unborn.

Some merges are quite successful, at least for a time, but joining with a *Bok'Surrpesh* sentience fundamentally transforms the host; the person they were is no longer. Over time they become increasingly insular, callous and wholly uncaring towards non-cultists, considering them primitive, mewling meat sacks, good for only two things: sacrifice or merging.

# CURSE OF THE SALT QUEEN





*House Vorrox* is looking for capable warriors to scout and secure a lost electrum mine situated on the banks of the *Fennorn River*.

In the journal of a dead Shenzu explorer is reference to the *Xaolung* blade (*Sun Dragon Sword*), an enchanted scimitar of the *Wing Mai* Dynasty. The journal suggests the blade last belonged to *Aguera Zargor*, an exile said to be buried in *Fennorn's Run*.

# Fennorn's Run

Two hundred years ago, *House Zargor* of the *Karoks* (a mountain people of great wealth and long age, slavers of the last remaining dwarves) abandoned a small but productive mine of rare *electrum'* known as *Fennorn's Run*, situated along the banks of the *Fennorn River*.

The mine was forsaken because *Agueda Zargor*, noble daughter of the House, was ousted as a witch, and fled into the deep shafts to escape the pyre. Despite *Agueda's* best efforts, bounty hunters eventually cornered her, and in desperation the sorceress locked herself in magical stasis forever. Or so she believed.

12 months ago, unwitting prospectors from *Crow's Keep* reopened the mine, clearing blocked passages and breaking the hidden rune seals maintaining the stasis.

Agueda awoke, but where a striking woman once slept, now emerged a twisted figment of blasphemous sorcery; a half serpent abomination, with writhing, reptilian hair, and a gaze that transforms flesh into salt!

Filled with anguish, and in the grip of unbridled horror, the *Medusa* reaped bloody vengeance upon all nearby; every miner, scout, guardsman, horse and hound were brutally and wantonly slaughtered, or transmuted into salt and scattered to the winds.

Now the *Morduke* family, overseers of the prospecting venture, want to know what has happened to their caravan. They are willing to pay 600 crowns, or provide some rare information the party desires (the *Mordukes* are known for their trade in hard to get information and secrets), in return for securing the mine.



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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In this deposit, the alloy of gold, silver and copper exhibits a reddish-yellow hue; electrum weapons count as *silvered*, but not armour.



The PCs might become involved in this adventure by (i) being hired by *Arna Morduke* (40's, female, short brunette hair, piercing green eyes, fond of headscarves) to clear the complex as noted above, (ii) following up an old text about *Agueda the Accursed* and the *Xaolung* scimitar, which she was said to possess, or (iii) stumble across the mine in their travels.

# Wilderness Encounters

The mine is located deep in the *Drelnor Forest*, nestled between a little known branch of the *Fennorn River*.

The forest is an ancient woodland, a prodigious mix of gigantic oak, yew and willow trees, its enormous canopy thick and lustrous with age. The occasional beam of sunlight stretches to the overgrown floor, but for the most part, the trees and nettled undergrowth are dim and shrouded in half-light. The air here is cool, loud with insect calls and strong with the scent of mouldering leaves.

Travel time on foot is approximately 8 days trek, or half that by ship or boat. There is a 30% chance of a random encounter every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs roll on the appropriate table below (add 2 during the last two days of travel if on foot)

# Forest Travel (d8):

- A series of 2d4 tree snares have been concealed nearby, rigged to hoist targets 10 ft into the air (Dex (Acrobatics) check negates). A trapped character must make a *Luck* (Con) save or lose 1 Con due to muscle strain.
- 2. A hunting party of 4d6 *Skorn* (aka *Beastmen*) are laying in ambush, hoping to pepper the PCs with javelins before moving in to brain them with clubs. After

1d6 rounds of fighting, a further 2d4 reinforcements appear from a random direction.

- 3. An injured *Griffon* is curled up by a large tree, a thuel (barbarian) arrow stuck between its shoulder blades. The beast is obviously in pain, but unable to remove the arrow itself.
- 4. Bones of ancient travellers are scattered in a thick grove, devoured by some monster of the distant past. The bones have already been picked over, but careful searching (Perc check) reveals something buried (1 x Trinkets & Curios).
- 5. Some of the trees in this area are truly enormous, trunks wider than huts and taller than can be seen, the canopy blocking out the sun entirely. PCs will need their own light source to see here. Lurking in the high branches are 3d6 hungry *Giant Spiders*. There is a 50% chance of a *Broodmother* (HD 9, L10, 3d6 + poison, *Boss Monster*) dozing by her eggs. If the spiders are destroyed, web shrouded corpses conceal 1 x Carry Loot.
- 6. Amongst cluttered trees an elder obelisk may be seen. Aged, grey crumbling steps descend to a small flagstoned courtyard, long overgrown. In the centre stands a stone door of glass like obsidian, covered in moss, lichen and creepers. If the moss is scraped clear, elvish script from antiquity is revealed (long dead and forgotten dialect). The writing might be a warning, a blessing, a name, or instructions on how to open the door. There is a 50% chance of *Fey Creeper* guardians (Midlands).
- 7. Grinding and snapping noises may be heard in nearby trees (Perc (Detection)



check), along with quiet arguing. *Sugarth*, an *Ettin* (LFG p.108) is talking to itself while it sucks the marrow from a pair of dead thuels. The giant carries a sack of spoils (1 x Valuables).



- 8. 3d10 *Thuels* (*Berserkers*) of the *Stonetree* tribe are hunting in this area, and will not allow outsiders passage. Their leader, *Khugo* (female, Barb 4), might be persuaded otherwise with gems or other obvious valuables. If battle breaks out, the thuels sound their horns, drawing another 4d10 reinforcements with bows and axes. 2 x Carry Loot if defeated.
- 9. Gorgarsa, the Witch of Drelnor (Magic User 7, Midlands) is nearby. On the ground by a pile of stacked stones is the bloody corpse of a small child, its throat cut. Pierce the Veil used in this area radiates abjuration and necromancy. The witch's tracks are about half a day old (Perc (Wilderness Lore) check to follow).

10. 1d3+1 human size pillars of salt are present in a sheltered grove, recent victims of *Agueda*. The once lifelike statues have been rained upon and greatly eroded. Careful examination (Perc (Detection) check) might reveal tell tale details however (an ear, a button, etc).

# River Travel (d8):

- 1. Reroll if more than 1 day from a city, otherwise swift pirate ship the *Amarest* seeks to board (carrack, 2d10 + 40 crew, as *Bandit* LFG p.114). *Captain Hawker* (Rogue 5) will take prisoners if he thinks he can ransom or sell them, or flee is reduced to 50% crew. If the pirates are defeated, 1 x 4 HD Lair Treasure (and perhaps the *Amarest*).
- 2. 2d4 canoes, each carrying 1d4 *Thuels* (*Berserker*) armed with bows and spears, appear from around a bend or launch from overgrown shore to intercept the PC vessel.
- 3. 2d6 Argosan Stranglers (Midlands) swim beneath the water to latch onto the ship's hull. They strike at night or when an opportunity presents itself. If the party vessel is small, they attack immediately instead.
- 4. 1d4 *Giant Eagles* appear from high overhead cloud. If there is a person in a crow's nest/rigging, they swoop down, hoping to grab him/her and fly back to their nest.
- 5. A rotting 18 ft *Giant Crocodile* corpse floats by, severed in two by something truly colossal.
- 6. In the darkest part of the night, an ink black form rises from the depths; the spirit of a drowned sailor. Slowly but surely,



other spirits rise, humanoid shapes but lacking any identifying details. The accursed crew glide through the ship/vessel, as if searching for something, then depart. Passengers require a *Luck* (Will) save to avoid touching the shades, which cause 1d2 level loss until the adventure ends (striking at them with silvered or magical weapons only draws their ire). If the spirits are presented with a new map, they disappear immediately (gain 1 maximum *Luck* permanently).

- 7. The ship becomes caught on a hidden reef, tearing open the hull. Without the proper tools and supplies, there is no prospect of the ship continuing its journey. A Group *Luck* save reduces the damage to a manageable level, but doubles travel times.
- 8. An ancient wreck appears in the morning fog, the derelict remains of some ancient mariner. Searching the wreck turns up 1 x Valuables. 50% chance of 1d6 *Giant Sea Serpents* inside (as *Giant Serpent* but Swim 120 ft).

# Fennorn's Run

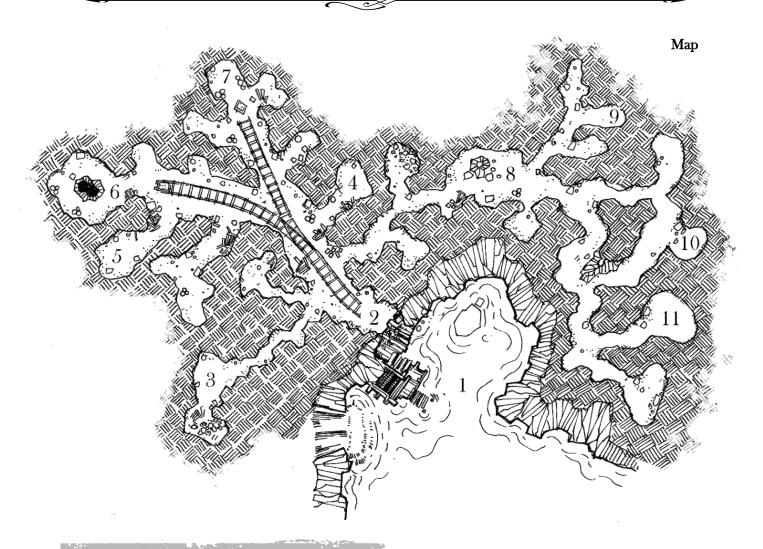
The mine is located at a branch in the *Fennorn River*, a series of connected wooden structures perched beside a 50 ft waterfall. The buildings are now old, weather beaten and greatly decayed, although there are signs of recent repair (the urgot have made some improvements over the last year, see below). Seeking to scale the outside, rather than use the climbing stairs and platforms is certainly possible, but requires a Str (Athletics) check (or fall 1d4 x 10 feet into the water). The river is fast and will swiftly carry away swimmers (Str (Athletics) check if against the current, and a Con check to avoid losing 1 Con).

# The Salt Queen

Drawn as they are to all things dark and supernatural, *Agueda's* twisted form soon called to an *urgot* tribe (mutant humans with cursed bloodlines, suffering under ancient pacts with dark forces) hiding in remote corners.

Emerging from the gloom, the accursed humans took to worshipping the medusa as their capricious goddess, offering tithes and sacrifices for her favour and protection. Over time, the *urgot* developed a taste for *Agueda's* salt, and now greedily imbibe it at every opportunity (the salt's eldritch composition somehow infuses the mutants with a manic like vigour). In this instance, the *urgot's* mutation manifests as grey skinned, hairless humanoids, mouths filled with sharp canine teeth. A dull oil is exuded through their pores, giving off a unpleasant stench (*Agueda* is immune).





Urgot, AC 11, HD 1+4, Club 1d6+1 or Bite 1d6+1, 19: as weapon, S13 D13 C16 I7 P9 W12 Ch6, L5, Mv 30 ft. A group of urgot may issue a simultaneous howl or chitter once/day, causing creatures within 20 ft to suffer a minor madness (Luck (Will) save resists). Moving within 5 ft requires a Luck (Con) save or the urgot's stench imposes disad on the target's next roll (a successful save renders the target immune to urgot stench for ½ hour).

The *urgot* did have an *Urgozer* when they first encountered Agueda, but she was one of the first to be turned to salt, and devoured by the rest of the tribe.

# **Unmarked Chambers**

If the party explores an unmarked chamber, the GM might wish to roll 2d6 to determine the contents:

,	UNMARKED CHAMBERS	
	2	Electrum ore vein worth 1d6 x 200 gp.
	3-4	Lurking monster (1d4): (i) Giant Spider, (ii) Giant Centipede, (iii) 1d4 Xornlings, (iv) Rock Grinder bursts out of a wall.
	5	Mushroom pod. If ingested, 50% chance grants adv on Perc checks due to enhanced senses, otherwise imposes disadvantage (clouded senses). The effect lasts 1d2 months.
Ī	6-8	Dry Vein. 30% chance of 2d4 Urgot.



9-10	Lurking monster (1d4): (i) Giant Serpent, (ii) 1d6 Giant Centipedes, (iii) 2d4  Xornlings, (iv) Rock Grinder bursts out of the floor or ceiling.
11	A recent victim was turned to salt here, traces of which remain on the floor (most of the salt has been eaten by urgot).
12	Agueda. The medusa is about to enter this area, or is already here, on an errand, looking for intruders, or on the way to Area 1, 5, or 10.

# Area 1 - Wooden Cabins

Entry to the mine is via a tunnel at the top of the 50 ft wooden cabins structure (or Area 6 tunnel), made up of several connected buildings and walkways. Most of the stairs have been repaired by the *urgot* but the occasional plank is rotted through, and will fall away if stepped upon (noisy, but not dangerous).

Entering the cabins via the dock will almost certainly be noticed by 1d4 *urgot* sentries. At least one of these will alert others in the complex, while the remainder stay behind to observe the PC's approach. If they get the chance, the sentries will drop heavy rocks on the PCs as they ascend (*Luck* (Dex) save or 2d6 damage). Concealed at the base of the dock are 2d4 canoes, which the *urgot* use to travel the river if they must.

Sunlight filters into the cabins well enough, but on a moonless night torches and fireplaces are used to create enough light for the *urgot* to see by. The cabins hold 3d6 *urgot* at any one time. They will come to assist any fighting on the river, nearby cliffs or tunnels. Clearing this area garners 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Trinkets & Curios. The highest most cabin conceals stone cut steps that lead into the mine proper.

# Area 2 - Entry Tunnel

A large iron grate operated by a winch on either side allows access to a 30 ft wide tunnel, excavated centuries before. The ore veins here are all dry, but flecks of electrum can be seen in the roughly hewn walls. Iron rails for (long unused) mine carts are set into the floor, which has a noticeable decline and runs northwest. The carts are operated by pushing, but will pick up speed on downhill runs. They might provide mobile cover in a firefight.

# Area 3 - Living Area

This 30 ft by 60 ft cave is used by the *urgot* as one of two living areas (the other being Area 8), decorated with furs and straw mats. 3d6 *urgot* are here at any one time, sleeping, eating, socializing or fighting. There is a 50% chance of 1d4 wolf pets also present (see Area 9). If searched, this area turns up 1 x Carry Loot.

# Area 4 - Snake Nest

This 30 ft by 20 ft chamber is home to 2d4+2 *Giant Serpents* that have been charmed by *Agueda*, and semi-domesticated by the *urgot*. The serpents will be confused about ordinary humans, and uncertain whether to attack, or allow themselves to be petted.

Giant Serpent AC 13, HD 5, Bite 2d8 + poison, 19: special, S19 D16 C13 I3 P10 W12 Ch5, L8, 30 ft. Poison causes 1d6 damage and 1d4 Str loss (Luck (Con) save resists). On 19+ the target is constricted and helpless (spend action to make opposed Str test to break free).

## Area 5 - Larder

The *urgot* larder includes barrels of briny water, salted meat cuts on bedrock shelves, and hanging carcasses.

Shackled to a rock pillar are 1d3 thuel captives (*Sudar, Gimock* and *Norwuc*), tortured to within an inch of their lives (indeed, 50% chance for each of dying before the party arrives). If freed, the emaciated prisoners will help fight if given



weapons (if the *urgot* are not killed, they do not expect they can outrun any pursuit).

#### Area 6 - Alternate Entry/Bulette Den

This 50 ft cavern has a 20 ft sinkhole in the centre, the result of a hibernating bulette 80 ft below. A tunnel also extends 100 ft upwards to the surface (difficult climb, Str (Athletics) check at disad unless using gear). The monster has not risen in weeks and the *urgot* are careful not to disturb it (although they might, if forced into a situation of extreme desperation).

Bulette, AC 18, HD 9+4, Bite 3d6, 19: the target is dragged underground and begins asphyxiating. A Str check at disadvantage is required to dig free, S22 D13 C19 I2 P13 W14 Ch3, L10, Mv 30 ft inc when burrowing. Detects movement tremors within 120 ft, Causes Injuries on critical hits.

#### Area 7 - Sleeping Quarters

The majority of the *urgot* tribe use this series of 3 chambers as their sleeping quarters. There are 3d6 *urgot* in each chamber, including 50% children. The *urgot* are always hungry, and will likely view any humans as a welcome meal.

PCs concealing themselves in *urgot* clothing (ragged cloaks, furs, etc) and rubbing themselves with the mutants' foul smelling secretion might pass themselves off as kin if they keep to half lit corners (Cha (Deception) check vs Perc (Detection) check). Each chamber conceals 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Potion hidden amongst sleeping furs, piles of old clothes, small sacks, etc.

#### Area 8 - Living Chamber

This 100 ft by 60 ft chamber is the biggest in the complex, with a number of large rock pillars towards the centre. The mutants use the area of their main living chamber, and 4d6 *urgot* are here at any one time; eating, fighting, etc. Looting this chamber reveals 1 x Carry Loot.

#### Area 9 - Wolf Den

This 20 ft by 40 ft cave houses 2d4 *Wolves* that have been semi domesticated by the *urgot*. The pack is still relatively wild however, and could easily be turned against their "masters" by a PC competent in Animal Lore.

Wolf, AC 12, HD 1+2, Bite 1d4+1, 19: target is knocked prone, S13 D14 C15 I2 P12 W10 Ch6, L4, 60 ft. Advantage when tracking and on attack rolls when flanking.

#### Area 10 - Treasure Room

This 30 ft cavern is used to store goods stolen from barbarians, skorn and other travellers, as well as items discovered in ruins across the elder forest. One small box is trapped with an obvious arcane rune (triggers a *Feeblemind* spell if opened, inside is a Scroll. Searching the room gains 1 x 5 HD Lair Treasure.

#### Area 11 - Medusa's Lair

Agueda's lair is approx 60 ft in diameter, the floor covered in scattered salt. There is a 50% chance of a recent barbarian victim; a life like salt sculpture (the salt is well set but will break if pressed forcefully).

Agueda Zargor, Medusa Boss Monster, AC 13, HD 8 (99 hp), Xaolung 1d8+2 and Snake Hair Attack 1d3 + poison, 19: the target's weapon or armour (even chance) turns to salt, S10 D15 C12 I15 P13 W15 Ch8 L9, Mv 30 ft. Agueda may activate her gaze at any time, causing onlookers to make a Luck (Con) save each round or be transmuted into salt. On their turn, PCs may choose to fight blind to avoid making a save. Snake hair poison causes 2d6 damage and 1d4 Dex loss (Luck (Con) save for half). If reduced to zero Dex, the target turns to salt.

Agueda casts spells like a 5th level Magic User, and may choose from the following spells four times per combat: Gaze of Beguilement, Mantle of



Many Faces, Hand of the Void, Bestial Communion, Solace of Argona, Waking Dream, Curse of Searing Steel, Wings of the Starless Abyss, Runic Rite of Wonderment.

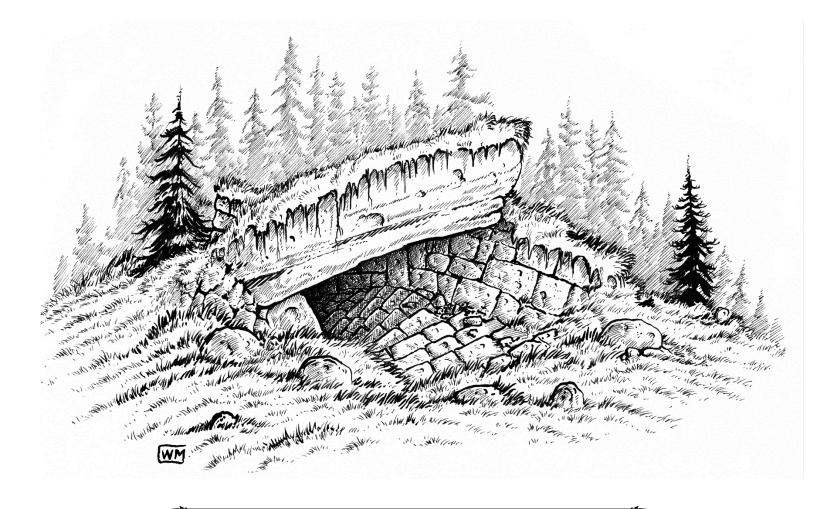
#### **Xaolung**

Agueda wields Xaolung, a 3,000 year old scimitar of the Wing Mai dynasty, infused with the spirit of its Sun Dragon namesake. The blade causes 1d8+2 damage. The first attunement grants the ability to cast Firebreath once per week (as Channel Lightning but fire). The second attunement grants Scaled Wings (as Rightful Ascension) once every 1d4 days. The third attunement grants Sudden Transmogrification once per month. Any further attunements are at the GM's discretion. Agueda has access to the first two attunements.

#### Aftermath

If the mine is secured, the *Mordukes* pay the agreed fee and spread word of the party's talents, earning them some fame amongst the merchant class and highborn.

If *Agueda* is not defeated, she gathers increasingly discontent where she is. Eventually she takes control of a ship, intending to sail to *Dol-Karok*, and learn the fate of her House. Whether she makes it that far, and/or whether such a monster can survive in such a place, is left for the GM to determine.



## DEN OF THIEVES



## Den of Thieves

*Jester*, the charismatic boss of a gang of *Port Brax* thieves down by *Dungart Way*, is seeking fierce warriors to respond to recent attacks on her crew.

Udan the Slip, guild boss of the Sumptown Rats, has declared war on their criminal rivals the Dungart Dukes. Rumour has it the dukes are looking to recruit extra muscle to bolster their forces.

#### **Dungart Dukes**

"Jester" (5½ ft blonde, left leg limp, never without a knife somewhere on her person) leader of the *Dungart Dukes*, a small but expanding cutpurse gang in *Port Brax*, needs help. Her crew of miscreants has crossed knives with the *Sumptown Rats* (the largest and most proliferate gang in the city, controlled by *Udan the Slip*, Rogue 6, inhumanly agile Dex 19) one too many times, and now *Udan* wants her dead.

In recent weeks, twelve of *Jester's* gangers have been murdered; stabbed in back alleys, strangled in steam baths, tossed off rooftops, etc – grizzly, public deaths meant to intimidate and undermine *Jester's* leadership.

And the strategy has been successful; more than half of the dukes have gone into hiding or intend to depart the port on the next ship out. Those that remain believe in *Jester's* leadership, and will fight with her (expecting to be made trusted lieutenants, should the gang survive), but all agree more swords are needed if the dukes are to endure.

For his part, *Udan* has decided enough "brother thieves" have died, and now means to target *Jester* and her top lieutenants directly. To this end, he has hired a highly secretive and successful trio of cold blooded killers – identical triplets that



masquerade as a single person - going by the name *Belor*.

At the start of the adventure, two of Jester's most trusted henchmen (*Griego* and *Morgara*) have been killed in the last four days (*Griego* thrown from a rooftop, *Morgara* cut down in a back alley). Word on the street is that both were killed by a lone warrior.

Jester is offering 1,000 gp to hire competent mercenaries with a range of skills to (i) protect her and her remaining lieutenants (*Corben, Lucia* and *Brohk*), (ii) identify and locate the assassin, and (iii) kill him with extreme prejudice.

The guild boss is convinced that *Udan's* assassin knows all of the dukes, and that the only way to get close to the hitman is via (expendable) third parties.



Jester, AC 13 (leather), HD 5, Knife 1d6+2, 19: special, S10 D16 C10 I14 P15 W15 Ch15, L8, Mv 30 ft. 2 knives, 1d3 doses of *Ghoulsheen Admixture*, caltrops. Jester causes critical hits on a 19-20 attack roll. Backstab, Skirmisher and Finisher abilities like a 5th level Rogue, may choose from the following tricks three times per combat: Blinding Powder, Hidden Blade, Quick Reflexes, Smoke Bomb, Rapid Dose.

Lieutenants, AC 12, HD 2+2, Shortsword 1d6+1 19: disarm, S13 D15 C10 I11 P13 W9 Ch10 L4, Mv 30 ft. 1d2 firepots (LFG p.102).

#### Where to Begin?

The nature of this adventure is open ended. PCs might approach their task in a number of ways, some of which are outlined below. The *Belor* assassins have a plan and intended timetable, but like all plans, it won't survive beyond first contact with the PCs.

#### **Random Encounters**

As the PCs navigate the city, there is a 30% chance of a random encounter every 12 hours (or other interval of the GM's choosing). If an encounter occurs, roll 1d20:

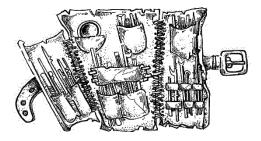
1d20	PORT BRAX ENCOUNTERS
1	A body crashes to the ground in front of the travellers with a horrendous thud! Looking up, 1d3 humanoid shadows can be seen making a quick getaway across the rooftops.
2	6d10 gangers (a mix of <i>Red Hooks</i> , <i>Sumptown Rats</i> and <i>Dockside Valkyries</i> ) have broken into a massive fisticuff, turning the street to chaos. No-one has drawn steel yet, but things are escalating quickly.
3	A blustering wind is blowing today, swaying the elderly and tipping objects off tables. Leaves and dust whirl across the ground.

	Raised voices, followed by ringing
4	steel, can be heard from around the
	corner of a narrow side alley.
5	A motley assortment of 2d6 pirates
	are swaying down the street, rum
	bottles in hand. They are all crew of
	the <i>Dreadnought</i> , an infamous and
	feared raiding galleon.
	Muffled voices can be heard from a
6	very dark, sheltered alleyway. Shining
	a torch inside reveals two men
	lowering the body of a third into a
	sewer manhole. They look to be in a
	hurry. Any onlookers receive a curt
	"Get outta here, scob" along with an
	angry gaze.
	Eddie "Two Shanks", a ganger with
	the <i>Red Hooks</i> , sidles up to one of
	the party. He introduces himself,
_	hands the character a white fishing
7	hook, and says "Message from the
	boss. He wants a word. Don't go
	leavin' town without droppin' by",
	and departs.
8	Storm clouds are rolling in fast. The
	wind has picked up dramatically, and
	great peals of thunder begin to echo
	off Lake Argos.
	3d6 <i>Dockside Valkyries</i> are lounging
	about outside the <i>Moontide Inn</i> , " <i>No</i>
9	room at the inn today" one remarks,
	giving the party a wink and a "move
	along" thumb motion.
10	1d6 priests of <i>Shennog</i> (night
	goddess) are moving slowly down the
	road, followed by 4d10 members of
	the <i>Sunless</i> with a coffin on a small
	wagon. They are humming a sombre
	dirge.
	2d4 Warriors of the Unbroken are on
	patrol, slowly moving down the road.
11	Passers by either nod at them with a
	smile, or shrink away down side
	alleys.
12	A desperate fight between 5d6
	Sumptown Rats and Red Hooks has
	broken out at this cross road. Knives
	are flashing and iron cudgels
	smashing. Locals are running for
	cover!

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	A large number of temporary market
13	stalls have been erected along this
	street. Along with clothing and spices,
	some vendors also offer a range of
	illegal goods (hidden blade sheathes,
	poisons, etc).
	Two commoners, Rabby and Wilcott,
	are arguing over a cage of chickens.
14	<i>Rabby</i> says the chickens are his and
	were stolen from him. Wilcott says he
	bought them fair and square.
	While walking the street, the sound of
15	laughing voices can be heard from a
	sewer grill nearby.
16	5d6 <i>Red Hooks</i> make a beeline for
	the party. Guska (Rogue 3), the
	leader, has decided the party should
	pay a "weapons tax" for crossing their
	turf (5 gp per weapon).
	This street is a bottleneck for two
	major roads and is especially
17	crowded, with travellers having to
	squeeze past each other. There is a
	50% chance of pickpockets.
	3d6 Grey Skulls (minor thieves' guild)
	are running a high stakes dice table in
18	a sheltered alcove. The leader, <i>Addar</i>
	(Rogue 4, patchy bleached blonde
	hair) welcomes anyone with gold.
19	A street urchin, <i>Narfex</i> (Nydissian, 8
	yrs old, Dex 15) approaches the party
	and asks them to lean in close. If they
	do, he whispers that a man in beggar's
	clothes is following them. He then
	looks at them expectantly (hoping for
	a coin).
_	Highlord Ipsgrave (city ruler) is in this
	square with 4d10 city watch (Fighter 1-
	2) and 2d4 <i>Unbroken</i> (Fighter 3-4). A
20	small crowd has gathered. Ipsgrave is
	opening a new gallows, building
	goodwill with plenty of amicable chit
	chat, hand shaking and baby kissing.



### Gathering Information

If the PCs wish to seek out information about the assassin, there are at least three ways of going about it:

- 1. Tavern Rumour Mill. The PCs visit various watering holes, primarily but not exclusively in the murder districts (labourer and residential quarters), piecing together information from tidbits and second hand accounts. One or more Cha (Information Gathering) checks, and 2d6 gp, may be required for each attempt at the GM's discretion.
- 2. Inquiries with Contacts. Certain contacts might be canvassed for relevant information (eg: members or associates of the Sumptown Rats (or their rivals, the Red Hooks and Dockside Valkyries), city watch, beggars and other street folk with their ear to the ground, etc. One or more Cha (Persuasion) or Str (Intimidate) checks, and/or 1d6 gp, might be required for each attempt.
- 3. *Inquiries with Eye Witnesses*. If the PCs visit the vicinity of the murders to speak with potential eye witnesses, they may make checks similar to (2) above.

If the information gathering process is a success, the party learns one useful piece of information (or two on a great success). Roll 1d4:

- 1. The murderer is a clean shaven, olive skinned Midlander/Argosan (or other culture fitting the GM's world), with light brown hair.
- The murderer is approx 6 ft tall, medium build, with a scar on his forehead (*Belor 2* & 3 have replicated the scar that *Belor 1* suffered years earlier).



- 3. The murderer fought with twin swords, and wore leather armour with steel shoulder pauldrons.
- 4. The murderer defeated his mark with little trouble. The victim grew increasingly unco-ordinated as the fight progressed.

If the party searches for physical clues at either of the lieutenants' murder sites (in an alley off *Warbrin Way*, and thrown off the roof of the *Gilded Goat* tavern), some useful details might be revealed. Dried blood of the victim, as well as the murderer, is present at one scene.

If the blood is tested (Int (Apothecary) test with the proper gear and 2d6 hours), the character learns that one blood splatter was poisoned (the victim's; *Elderberry Toxin*, LFG p.33), and the other blood (Belor 3) shows residual traces of an old retrovirus linked to respiratory disease (*Greybeard's Huff*, which Belor 3 suffered when young, the other triplets did not contract the disease).

#### Tipping off the Assassins

At the GM's option, each time a PC makes inquiries about the assassin, there is a 30% chance word gets back to the *Belors* (who have informants, including members of the *Rats*, keeping an ear to the ground about potential reprisals from the dukes). On a terrible failure, the chance increases to 60%. Roll 1d6:

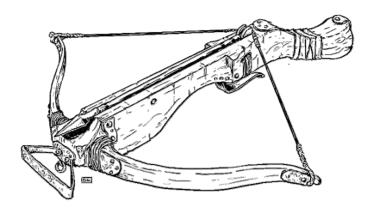
1. Attacked. 4d6 Sumptown Rats are sent to kill or injure the PCs, led by Miscra (shaved head Varnori female with thievery brands, 4 HD, 1d2 doses of Ghoulsheen Admixture).

Sumptown Rat, AC 12, HD 1, Shortsword 1d6 19: disarm, S10 D13 C10 I11 P13 W9 Ch10 L4, Mv 30 ft. Sumptown Rats have a 40% chance of carrying 1d2 firepots.





- 2. Followed. Belor 3 locates and shadows the party for half a day (or night), observing their activities and attempting to gauge their threat level before reporting back to his brothers. Note Belor 3 is an expert infiltrator and gains adv on hiding related checks (see p.84). If discovered, he flees.
- 3. Poisoned. A cook, bar wench, etc on Udan's payroll and working at the inn where the PCs are staying, attempts to poison one of the PCs (Golden Scorpion toxin in food/drink; ingested, 1d4 hours, reduces target to zero hp and causes 1d4 Str loss. (Luck (Con) save to negate hp loss). The toxin admixture manifests as stroke like symptoms. An apothecary examining the victim might determine the real cause (blood test, 2d6 hours, Int (Apothecary) test at disad unless familiar with the remote Suurat Jungle scorpion or rare poisons).



- 4. Warning. The cook referred to in entry 3 leaves a message in the PC's room, a scrawled parchment note (Belor 2's handwriting): "Leave the city by dawn or we'll bury you in the sewer."
- 5. Meeting. The assassins send a messenger to the party, making arrangements to meet at Morrigan's Den (Midlands, a tavern considered "neutral ground" that rivals

gangs meet at, run by *Morrigan*, a female of breathtaking beauty, Bard 6).

Belor 2 goes to meet with the party to personally attempt to persuade them to ditch their assignment with Jester. Under no circumstances will Belor attack. When it is time to leave, a stablehand appears with a swift horse for Belor to depart on (if the party pursues him and he needs to escape, you might adapt the Rooftop Rumble encounter below).

6. Pre-emptive Strike. The Belors decide the best strategy is to kill the PCs ASAP. They launch an ambush as the PCs are travelling the streets, Belor 1 from the rooftops, Belor 2 surges out of a sewer grate, and Belor 3 in disguise as an old lady. The triplets strike to kill, but will flee if clearly outclassed or if any of them are slain.

### Setting a Trap

The PCs might try to draw the assassin into a trap, perhaps by parading one or more of the lieutenants (and/or *Jester*) in public, hoping to bait him into attacking. The various dukes are reluctant to play bait however, and understand that being herded together increases the risk of attack. They will take some convincing to co-operate with such a plan (Cha (Persuasion) check at disad vs Will).

If this strategy is adopted, *Belor I* attempts to kill one or more of the targets at whatever public venue the PCs lure him to (per timeline p.83).

Belor 1 may or may not suspect a setup, depending on how conspicuous the PCs are, and whether the Belors have obtained any intel on them (eg: due to the PCs making inquiries, etc). If he suspects a trap he brings back up (3d6 Sumptown Rats). Either way, Belor 1 prefers to attack the target with a heavy crossbow and poisoned bolt (1d3 doses of Purple Worm venom,



Luck (Con) save or dead), shooting from a rooftop at 300 - 400 ft range.

After taking his poisoned shots, *Belor 1* flees. The GM might transition this to the **Rooftop Rumble**.

#### Hole Up

If the PCs decide to hole with up *Jester/Lieutenants* and wait for the assassins to come to them, Jester can offer a little used safehouse as the site; an empty merchant's home on Butterwood Lane in the market quarter.

The Rats recently took ownership of the building but have rarely used it, except to stash the occasional piece of stolen property. Alternatively the PCs might arrange their own bolthole.

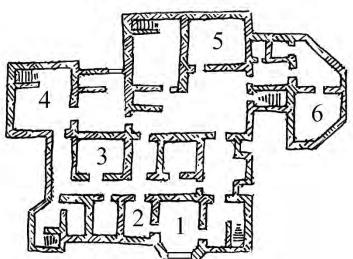
The house is half brick, half wood, similar to early Tudor houses. The front and back doors are reinforced oak, with master locks (disad on picking attempts) and may be barred (5 x Str checks at disad to break). Entry is via the front or back door, the many windows with wooden shutters, or by removing roof tiles to enter the roof cavity.

Doors and windows are not marked on the map, excepting the front and back doors. Every room or hallway with an external wall will have one or more windows.

#### Room key:

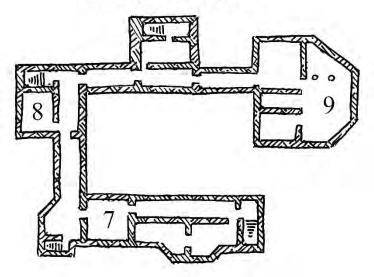
(1) Entry Hall (grand entry chamber, appointed with painting and vases on alabaster plinths).

## FIRST FIOOR



If the PCs use the Butterwood site, they are free to make changes to the interior of the house (including setting traps, etc), but are not permitted to change the exterior (which must continue to blend into the neighbouring homes, hiding in plain sight).

### SECOND FIOOR



- (2) Sitting Room (some comfortable reclining couches and tea table)
- (3) Music Room (collection of medieval instruments)
- (4) Study (walls and bookcases of books, secondary stairs in corner)
- (5) *Kitchen* (benchtops, pantry, chairs)



- (6) *Dining Room* (long table, chairs, crockery cupboard)
- (7) Games Room (card tables, darts)
- (8) Secondary Bedroom (small bed, wardrobe, desk, door may be locked)
- (9) *Master Bedroom* (large bed, walk in robe, desk, chair, expensive rug and paintings (1d6 x 300 gp), door may be locked).

If the PCs hole up here for long enough, eventually the *Belors* come for them (Day 4+), attempting to sneak in through the rooftop. They bring 3d6 Sumptown Rats with them (who remain atop nearby buildings) as backup, a fighting rearguard, or to provide a distraction.

#### Disrupting the Next Attack

The PCs might wish to follow (secretly or otherwise) one or more of *Jester's* lieutenants, or *Jester* herself, hoping to be on hand when an assassination attempt is made.

Further to the *Belors'* timetable, this strategy is eventually successful, with *Belors 1 & 3* attempting a quick kill and getaway. Subject to the target being on the street at some point, the attack comes from above, shooting poison bolts at the victim until the PCs intervene.

The exact time and location of the attack is flexible, but the default is at dusk below *Korrin's Belltower* in the residential quarter; a particularly crowded district of winding alleys. The assassins attack from the rooftop of the belltower and nearby buildings, shooting at the target and PCs, before eventually making their escape across the rooftops of the city.

The belltower is 80 ft high and scaling it requires a Str (Athletics) check (half movement, or at disad for 2/3 movement). Failing a check results in a fall from about halfway through the current movement. Alternatively, PCs might simply return fire, scale nearby buildings, throw grappling

hooks or use the tower's internal stairwell (city clerks are inside the belltower, and will protest adventurers barging in).

#### Rooftop Rumble

Assuming there is some kind of confrontation on the rooftops, the following map depicts the streets and buildings for the battle to range across.

Note many of the buildings are close enough together that a PC can attempt to leap across (Str (Athletics) or Dex (Acrobatics) check or fall, buildings are 1d3 x 10 ft high). Additionally, the map includes ladders/planks positioned across gaps, sturdy eaves, and other outcroppings to assist with movement (left by chimney sweeps, burglars, etc).

If one or both of the *Belors* are slain, the remainder flee, seeking to escape. The brothers are experts in disengaging, and if not grabbed or otherwise restrained, may make a Dex check at the end of a round to transition into a Chase scene.

For the purposes of a Chase, the following complications might ensue:

#### Large Crowds

- Street: Funeral procession, shepherd with herd of bison, packing up street stall.
- Rooftop: Chimney sweeps playing cards, meeting of star gazers, flock of bats.

#### • Dangerous Hazards

- O Street: a boisterous bar fight engulfing passers by, gang of 1d6+2 thugs, falling debris from above, starving or rabid dog pack, startled horse kick, glass from a broken window.
- Rooftop: barbed wire, collapsed chimney rumble, poison snake





 nest in drain, Sumptown Rat rearguard take pot shots at the PCs, 1d3 bear traps to discourage break & enters).

#### Obstructions

- Street: horse and cart, chain link fence, stack of barrels or crates, slippery from overflowing drain or other spill.
- Rooftop: faulty roof tiles, broken lantern oil slick, caltrops dropped by the assassins/rats derelict roof in danger of collapse, 1d4+1 private sentries on duty.

#### • Third Parties

- Street: 1d4 beggars, 1d6 city watch, an overly amorous drunkard, tired woman a with broom trying to separate two fighting cats.
- Rooftop: depressed money lender, 1d3 rats fire crossbows at the party, cranky old gent smoking his pipe ("get off my roof!").

#### The Assassins

The *Belors* are in their early 20's, identical triplets, heralding from another city where they trained as assassins during their teens, under the auspices of a secret assassins' guild. They take great pains to masquerade as a single person and conceal their individual identities. The brothers are relatively unknown in *Port Brax*, except to high ranking underworld figures such as *Udan*.

While on a mission, the triplets dress the same or wear disguises as other people. They may or may not carry the same weapons as their brothers, depending on their need at the time. On some occasions the brothers will carry identical heavy crossbows, but at other times will be armed with their favoured loadout. The brothers are loyal to themselves, their guild, and no-one else. Ruthless and methodical, they mean to engage in sufficient murder for hire to fill their coffers, then retire to a quiet life beyond the sea. If all goes well, this will be their last job.

The triplets' plan is straight forward, but like most plans, will change in response to their opponents. In this case, the Belors' strategy is as follows:

- 1. On the day the PCs are hired, another duke is slaughtered, ostensibly by a single assassin.
- 2. On Day 2, the assassins seek out the location of one or more lieutenants.
- 3. On Day 3, a lieutenant is attacked and killed, unless prevented by the PCs. If prevented by the PCs, they learn 1d4 hours later that a different lieutenant (or other duke) was killed at the same time, elsewhere in the city (descriptions suggest the same assassin that the PCs foiled, but in truth another of the triplets).
- 4. On Day 4 the assassins seek to locate *Jester* (75% chance each day, modified by actions taken by PCs to hide her, assuming they can convince her to go into hiding).
- 5. Assuming the *Belors* locate *Jester*, all three assassins come for her the same night.

### Ambushing the Party

If the *Belors* are aware that the PCs are hunting them, they might seek to lure the party into a trap by using *Belor 2* as bait, particularly if the PCs appear oblivious to the fact that there are three of them. When the trap is sprung, all three *Belors* attack, along with 3d6 *Sumptown Rats*.



#### **Belor Stats**

Belor #1, AC 13 (leather), HD 6, Heavy crossbow 4d8+2, 19: special, S15 D15 C11 I14 P14 W13 Ch9, L12, Mv 30 ft. 1d3 doses of Fireblood poison (LFG p.33), climbing gear, caltrops, hand axe, shield slung over back.

Belor #1 is an expert sniper, ignoring long range penalties and inflicting double damage dice (inc above). On a Nat 19 the target must roll on the Injuries & Setbacks table (players may choose to make a Luck save to negate). Major Exploit Protection, Backstab, Skirmisher and Finisher abilities like a 6th level Rogue, may choose from the following tricks three times per combat: Choking Dust, Cat's Grace, Blind Sense, Quick Reflexes, Smoke Bomb, Rapid Dose.

Belor #2, AC 13 (leather), HD 8+4, 2 x Greatsword 1d12+3, 19: daze, S16 D15 C11 I14 P14 W13 Ch9, L10, Mv 30 ft. Dagger, climbing gear, caltrops.

Belor #2 is a fearsome close combatant. He has Major Exploit Protection and the Fighter Adaptable ability, with the Two hander style. He may change styles four times per combat. Gains Off Turn Attacks when staggered.

Belor #3, AC 14 (leather), HD 7, 2 x Scimitars 1d8+1, 19: disarm, S12 D17 C11 I14 P14 W13 Ch15, L12, Mv 30 ft. Dagger, climbing gear, caltrops, disguise kit, 1d2 doses Whisperlog.

Belor #3 is an expert in infiltration, impersonation and disguise, gaining adv on Deception and Stealth related abilities. Belor #3 has the Bard abilities Inspire Greatness and Rally, which he may choose from up to 4 times per combat. May parry missile weapons by making a Luck (Dex) save. Major Exploit Protection.



If the brothers suspect they are walking into a trap, they arrange for 3d6 *Sumptown Rats* to accompany them as backup.

#### Aftermath

The *Belors* do not give up as long as they live. If they are driven away, they retreat to safety, bind their wounds, recruit more rats and/or other mercenaries to aid them.

If all three are killed however (3 x Carry Loot and 3 x Valuables), *Udan* decides he has expended enough energy (and funds) on the dukes, and magnanimously allows them to be (for now). Unless the PCs went out of their way to kill Rats, *Udan* considers them competent mercenaries, no more, no less, and might even offer them work in the future. If the PCs did slaughter more rats than necessary, *Udan* takes note and holds a long grudge.

# FANE OF THE FROG GOD





## Fane of the Frog God

Rumour has it in *Port Brax* that *Master Rovos*, an explorer and collector of elven artefacts, is seeking fearless mercenaries to accompany him on an expedition into the *Forest of Drelnor*.

#### **Elven Relics**

Early in the Second Age, during the fall of the last elven city of *Yûln Varsune*, an assassin named *Moloceth* rose to prominence. Notorious in certain circles for her capacity for murder, man and giant alike prayed to avoid her shadow.

In truth, whilst an accomplished impersonator and swordsman, much of *Moloceth's* success stemmed from an elven relic in her possession; the *Boots of Formlessness*, granting her unnatural powers of concealment.

After *Moloceth* was slain by marauding serpentmen, the boots were discarded in the *Fennorn River*, somewhere in the *Forest of Drelnor*. Washing up on her shores years later, the relic passed briefly among beastmen and thuel tribes before being reclaimed by the elves, who secured them in a local temple to the *Bruhga of Winter Light*.

After the elves became extinct, the forest temple was taken over by the *Myurp Croakers*; a tribe of intelligent frogmen. Located along a remote river inlet, the croakers converted the shrine into their amphibian lair, riddled with mud nests and flooded halls.

The Myurp are gangly, humanoid anurans, 5 ft tall, with elongated limbs and protruding eyes. Their smooth skin tends toward dappled grey or green, and secretes a toxic sheen. Technically omnivores, the croakers prefer to eat meat if available, and have no qualms devouring humans.

At the start of this adventure, *Master Rovos* (30s, half *Varnori*, with blonde hair, sizable chin, oblivious close talker) of *Port Brax*, a collector of elven antiquities, believes he has discovered the location of the lost temple. *Rovos* is seeking capable mercenaries to escort him to the site to investigate.



The explorer is offering 400 gp up front, plus an equal share in any liberated treasures. He will not let on that a prior team of adventurers departed two months ago and never returned. A successful Perc (Insight) vs Cha (Deception) contest might reveal his holding back. Alternatively time spent researching their potential employer may reveal his recent dealings (perhaps a Cha (Gather Information) check at his local watering hole, the *Rack & Spindle*, or questioning appropriate PC contacts (fences, sages of old civilizations, etc).





Rovos, AC 14, HD 2 (13 hp), Longsword 1d8+1 or Heavy Crossbow 2d8+1, 19: as weapon, S13 D13 C10 I13 P10 W12 Ch11, L10, Mv 30 ft. Rovos wears heavy leathers with a shoulder pauldron, arm and leg braces. He has the Fighter Adaptable ability, with the Ranged style. He may change styles twice per combat.

#### Forest Trek

*Drelnor Forest* is ancient and lush, filled with oak, yew and willow trees. The deeper one travels, the larger the tree trunks, until they are as broad as houses. The canopy above is thick and intricate, often obscuring direct sunlight, casting the forest floor in cold, dark shadows. The noise of insects and birds is constant.

The ruined temple is located at least 5 days into the woods, with a 30% chance of a random encounter every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d10:

- 1. Hooting, jeering, and human screams can be heard distantly through the trees. Some scouting reveals 4d6 *Skorn* (beastmen) encamped, torturing a pair of human barbarians over a roasting fire (distracting their sentry).
- 2. A yellow-grey *Giant Serpent* skin is found. At first it appears to be a single 9 ft bodytail section, recently shed. Further investigation however reveals an additional 12 ft length, including a fearsome 3 ft wide skull. There is a 50% chance the 11 HD monster is nearby and hungry (as *Giant Serpent* but Str 20, 2d8+poison, *Luck* 11, *Off Turn Attacks*).
- 3. A huge clearing, devoid of trees but choked with long grasses. The exposed roots of trees lurk around the perimeter, as if afraid to encroach. Sunlight or starlight shines brightly from above, and a cool breeze blows. Something glitters in the clearing's centre, but it's hard to make out, masked by the fanning grass.
- 4. Strangle cooing noises sound overhead as 1d4 *Giant Eagles* land on some of the sturdier branches in the high canopy, engaged in some manner of mating ritual. Leaves and smaller limbs fall to the forest floor. The eagles are attracted to any movement below.
- 5. A low rumbling sound forewarns of a narrow river ahead, blocking the party's path. The waters are not overly deep (up to about 5 ft), but fast flowing and treacherous (Str check to wade across, or lose 1 Con due to exhaustion). Some trees on the far shore have been painted red (blood); marking the territory of the *Red Jaw* thuels (they paint their jaws red). 2d4 barbarian sentries (*Berserker* with warhorns) patrol the area.



- 6. An odd 18 ft long, 5 ft wide and 3 ft high mound is located here, overgrown with grasses and small trees. A small amount of digging reveals large stones form a cairn beneath. An ancient inscription (in *Giant* tongue) confirms it is the grave of *Judermok* (a giantess). Looting the bones produces 1 x Valuables, but also invokes a curse: the next time the PC fumbles an attack roll, their weapon shatters into thirteen pieces (*Luck* (Will) save resists; if a magical weapon it is damaged instead).
- 7. A staggeringly enormous tree can be seen ahead, trunk as wide as a house, the highest branches dwarfing the canopy. A 5 ft wide hollow is situated on the western side, from which a faint glow emanates. A muffled singing, or perhaps praying or chanting, can be heard emanating.
- 8. Roaring, screeching and the snapping of branches can be heard before two fighting *Owlbears* burst into view.
- 9. An ancient elven dream spire stands in a cluttered grove; a curling 7 ft horn of white stone, marked with sorcerous runes. The grove is located on a leyline crossing. 3d6 *Freakish Batbeaks* guard the area, recently spawned from a twist in the Veil. The abominations cannot venture more than 1,000 ft from the spire.

Freakish Batbeaks, AC 14, HD 3, Acidic tentacle 2d4+1, 19: special, S8 D16 C10 I4 P13 W10 Ch2 L6, Mv 60 ft flying. On a 19+ attack roll, the batbeak attaches itself to the target's head and vomits larvae down their throat (*Luck* (Con) save resists). The target dies 2d4 days later when a fully grown batbeak bursts out of them. An Apothecary may perform surgery to remove the parasite (Int (Apoth) test at disadvantage, if successful the target lives, but requires 2 weeks recovery).



Freakish Batbeaks are 4 ft alien entities from another dimension; hideous amalgams of octopod, bat and netherworldly horror. Their overriding instinct is to feast upon or impregnate mortals with their vile, squirming larvae.

10. A band of 1d6 *Green Croakers* (with shortbows) riding *Giant Dragonflies* are patrolling here, determined to drive off any humans they encounter.

Giant Dragonfly, AC 15, HD 4, Stinger 1d6 + poison, 19: random limb paralysed for 2d6 rounds (no save), S14 D19 C14 I3 P10 W10 Ch4 L7, Mv 120 ft flying. The giant dragonfly's poison causes paralysis for 1d6 x 10 mins (*Luck* (Con) save resists).

#### Croakers

The Myurp occupying the temple come in three varieties according to skin colouration; *green*, *grey* and *black*.



Green Croaker, AC 14, HD 1, Knife 1d4+2, 19: special, S10 D15 C10 I10 P13 W8 Ch8 L4, Mv 30 ft inc swim/climb. On a 19+ attack roll, the green croaker chokes its victim with elongated fingers, poisoning it with toxic secretions (*Luck* (Con) save or 1d3 Con loss). A croaker may spend an action coating their knife with their natural toxin (lasts 2d6 rounds or until used).

Grey Croaker, AC 13, HD 3, Club 1d6+2, 19: special, S15 D13 C12 I10 P10 W12 Ch8 L6, Mv 30 ft inc swim/climb. Grey croakers are bulkier than their green cousins, with stronger hindlegs. On a 19+ attack roll, the grey croaker launches itself at the target, causing 2d6 extra damage, and pushing them 15 ft (no save). If the target is pushed into a wall or similar, they are also knocked prone.

Black Croaker, AC 13, HD 5, 2 x Sword 1d8+2, 19: disarm, S15 D15 C12 I13 P15 W13 Ch10 L8, Mv 30 ft inc swim/climb. Black croakers are more intelligent than their kin, and highly agile. When staggered, they emit an ribcage rattling croak, causing humans within 20 ft to be stunned (lose next action, *Luck* (Will) save resists).

#### Lost Temple

Situated in a wind sheltered valley, little remains of the above ground portion of the temple (a few crumbling structural walls, fallen blocks, etc), most of which are concealed by heavy overgrowth. Pinpointing the ruins requires an Int (Wilderness Lore) check. Once in the correct area however one structure is readily apparent; a dark green trapdoor of malachite, decorated with an ice crown motif.

The slab is free of grass/vines, and recently used (looking for tracks reveals humanoid prints). The trapdoor leads to Area 1. There is a 50% chance 1d2 *Green Croakers* on sentry duty, hiding nearby. Besides the trapdoor, there is a second entrance about 200 ft south; an old, unused tunnel constructed by the croakers in case of emergency.

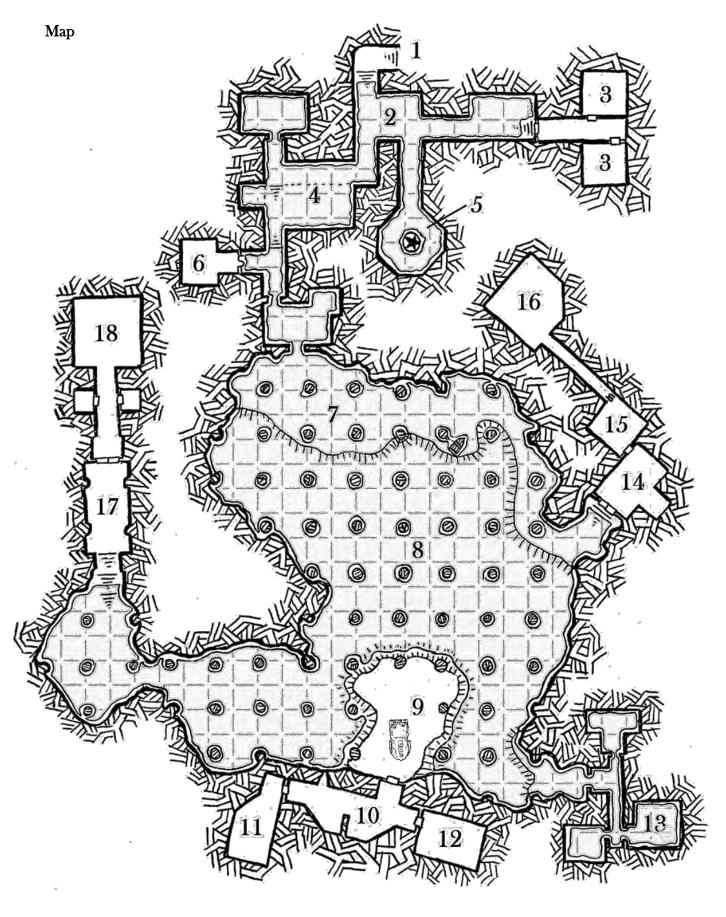
The passage is approx. 5 ft in diameter, shut with a wooden door, and concealed with leaves etc (Perc (Det) check to find, Str (Ath) check to force). The tunnel slopes downwards 90 ft before becoming submerged. After swimming underwater for 3 rounds, the passage climbs back up then emerges into the south east corner of Area 13.

The underground complex is generally dark and damp, with the sound of constant dripping and splashing. The croakers have good night vision, but are blind in complete darkness, and keep the interior lit with luminous moss, glow bugs, torches and self made lamps (using oil extracted from plants).

The temple is constructed of expertly cut sandstone, 8 ft high ceilings shored up with petrified beams of forest oak. Elven runes of foresight, protection, winter and inspiration are carved into some pieces, including petrified wooden doors.









Much of the temple is flooded with water (noted in grey on the map), due to a rising underground river (ultimately joining up with the *Fennorn*). Unless otherwise noted, the cloudy water is about waist deep, chillingly cold, and beset with pond insects such as mosquitoes (halves PC movement). The occasional freshwater fish, turtle, eel, etc will tend to make themselves known (eating surface bugs, gliding past a PC, etc).

#### **Temple Encounters**

Whilst exploring the temple, there is a 30% chance of a random encounter every 20 minutes. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d10:

- 1. 1d3 *Grey Croaker* acolytes in hooded robes from Area 12 are enroute to check on the tadpoles in Area 13, the chief in Area 17, or to exit the temple via Area 1.
- 2. 2d6 *Green Croakers*, returning from a surface hunting expedition, carrying two unconscious *Skorn* (beastmen; to be shackled in Area 16).
- 3. Emerging from the underground river in Area 8, a *Giant Lake Serpent* (a pet of the Myurp) is looking for food (as *Giant Serpent* but swim 30 ft). It will attempt to strike from ambush, and quietly drown its prey.
- 4. 3d6 *Stirges* can be heard buzzing down a nearby passage. The swarm has detected the party's heat signature and is hunting them (they ignore the cold blooded croakers, who sometimes eat them as snacks).
- 5. 1d3 frogmen *Tadpoles* from Area 13 swim around the next corner, splashing as they playfully leap out of the water.
- 6. An incredibly loud, stomach turning croaking echoes throughout the complex

for a few moments (care of the *Colossal Frog* in Area 8).

- 7. A translucent 6 ft elf with antlers flows out of a nearby wall, crosses the passage/room, then disappears through the opposite wall. The phantom might have useful information to provide if interacted with (eg temple layout or the contents of Area 6 or 18). The ghost believes it is still alive and living in the long forgotten past, somehow mistaking the party for visiting pilgrims.
- 8. A surge in the underground river causes the water levels to rise to chest height. PCs suffer -1 to hit with slashing or bludgeoning weapons.
- 9. *Yor'l*, an attractive (relatively speaking) male croaker, is hiding in a murky nook, desperately trying to avoid the attentions of *Sm'ubb* (see 10).
- 10. *Sm'ubb*, the Chief from Area 17, is wading through the halls, looking for a specific male frogman she wishes to spawn with. She is quite cranky and distracted, munching on a giant leech.

#### Area 1 - Main Entry

The trapdoor opens to reveal descending sandstone stairs, 10 ft wide, lit by flickering oil lamps. The walls are set with tiled mosaics of leafless trees, icy rivers and stormy skies.

If there were no sentries above ground, there are 1d2 *Green Croakers* here, lounging in waist high water at the base of the steps. A quiet party might take them by surprise (they are expecting a returning scouting party, not PCs), but if not, they croak loudly to alert their kin in Area 3.



#### Area 2 - Reception Hall

This 25 ft by 20 ft waiting area is filled with cloudy, waist high water and surface skimming bugs. The walls and ceiling are painted with faded murals of 7 ft naked elves with antlers, their skin the colour of autumn leaves.

#### Area 3 - Croaker Dens

These 20 ft square rooms were originally acolyte chambers, now converted into croaker dens. Prayers are still inscribed on some of the walls, reading right to left, the old elven way. Mud and straw nests cover most of the room. There are 1d6 *Green Croakers* in each area.

#### Area 4 - Deep Drop

The southern two thirds of this 35 ft by 25 ft chamber have been excavated by the croakers to make it 15 ft deep. The northern section has waist height water before the sudden drop off. If the complex has been alerted to the party, 2d6 *Green Croakers* will be hiding here in ambush. If possible they will attempt to grapple and drown the PCs.

#### Area 5 - Mirror Shrine

This 20 ft octagonal chamber has a high 15 ft roof and water 4 ft deep. In the centre is a half submerged, intact mirror, its border shaped like swirling clouds. The surface is stained and spotted with mould, but searching below reveals elven runes along the bottom (Perc check required to read them in the murk, translating as "Give of the future to bless the present").

The mirror is enchanted and immovable, a true relic of the fey, impervious to mundane damage. The frogmen sense the magic here and are fearful to enter. Cleaning the mirror, then staring deeply into one's own eyes might activate it (Will check required). If successful, the user instinctively understands a supernatural offer is being made to them: they may sacrifice part of their future to gain an immediate gift.

If accepted, the PC ages 5d6 years (an inconsequential price for an elf), and gains the following boon (roll 1d4):

- i. *Fey Joining*: Once per adventure, may increase a single physical attribute by 4 (no action, max 19, excluding *Luck*) for 2d6 rounds.
- ii. *Quicksilver*: Once per adventure, may take an extra move and action during their turn.
- iii. *Nature's Chosen*: Immune to poison and disease (magical or otherwise), as well as *Undead* related drain (attribute, level, aging, etc).
- iv. Storm Soul: may cast Channel Lightning once every 1d4 months.

The mirror activates but once every year and requires a check for a DDM effect (like any other magic use).

#### Area 6 - Secret Vault

A secret door in the western wall may be opened by pressing on the lips of a male elf depicted in a faded mosaic (black armoured, antlers growing from his head, hands outstretched over a mass of kneeling humans). The lips depress with an ominous "snick", then the wall slides aside (Perc check to notice the slight join around the lips).

The sealed 12 ft by 18 ft chamber beyond is unknown to the Croakers, and has not been opened for thousands of years. The water from the corridor pours in, swiftly rising to just below waist height.

The interior is painted with vistas of distant lands, or perhaps distant times, depicting snow clad fir trees, mountain peaks, and elves riding triceratops. In one corner of the room is a submerged chest containing 1 x 5 HD Lair Treasure (consisting of



elven coinage/trinkets) and the *Boots of Formlessness*.

The boots grant up to 3 attunements over time:

- 1. Once every 1d4 days the wearer may spend an action to cast *Globe of Silent Contemplation*.
- 2. Once every week, the wearer may spend an action to transform into shadow (as *Cradle of Formlessness*, but cannot fly, however may move along any surface).
- 3. Once every three months, the wearer may spend an action to summon a *Shade* that obeys commands for 1d6 x 10 minutes. If the wearer is knocked unconscious, the shade goes uncontrolled.

A non-elf attuned to the boots inevitably develops extreme haughtiness (as *Elf* racial trait, subsides in 1d6 months if the attunement ends).



#### Area 7 - Sacred Pool, Northern Bank

This area is a huge underground cavern (about 200 ft wide at its broadest point), with towering rock columns that reach all the way to the ceiling

50 ft above (beyond the range of ordinary torchlight). Water levels on the northern bank (extending 35 ft out) are about chest height, spotted with softly glowing algae.

The columns are approx. 5 ft wide, carved with elven prayers that have been defaced by the croakers and covered with blasphemous litanies. Blood, bile and faeces have been employed to paint images of anurans fighting, fornicating and feasting, interspersed with leering icons of *Tebu'saat*, the *Croaking God*.

An old elven skiff is located near one of the rock columns, now petrified, but sealed well enough that it still floats. The frogmen sometimes use it for sleeping and spawning, evidence of which can be found inside.

3d6 Green Croakers and 1d6 Grey Croakers are socialising in the sacred cavern, paddling, diving for fish, or spawning in lurid mating rituals unfit for human experience (the throaty croaking and stinking, frothy egg pools are especially revolting). They will be incensed at any intrusion.

### Area 8 - Sacred Pool Proper

The greater pool is more than 40 ft deep, extending approx. 160 ft north to south. The subterranean river filling the complex originates from here, flowing deep below the complex. In addition to the croakers in Area 7, a 20 ft *Colossal Frog* is hibernating on the pool floor. If combat breaks out in the cavern, the croaker's pet behemoth awakens to aid them in 2d6 rounds.

Colossal Frog AC 14, HD 13, Bite 4d6, 19: special, S20 D8 C18 I3 P9 W14 Ch5 L14, Mv 50 ft inc swimming and jumping. Major Exploit Protection, Off Turn Attacks. 10 ft reach. On a 19+ attack roll, a humanoid target is swallowed, suffering 3d6 damage on the frog's turn. A swallowed target may attack the monster's guts with a small weapon such as a dagger.



#### Area 9 - Frog God Altar

This 30 ft by 25 ft raised section is mostly unworked stone, but includes a tiled area at the back where the croakers have constructed a giant toad altar to *Tebu'saat*, illuminated by a flickering torch pole. Whatever elven idol once stood here are rubble, replaced with the frog god's image.

#### Area 10 - Ante-room

This large ante-room once housed the elven priests ceremonial gear, including robes, sticks of incense, oils, and so on. All of it has been damaged or destroyed by the croakers, but some remnants are woven into their straw/mud nests. 1d6 *Green Croakers* reside here.

#### Area 11 - Shaman Sanctum

What was once the elven priest's sanctum has been taken over by the croaker's shaman *Cr'noop*. The walls and floor are covered with hard mud, painted with symbols of Tebu'saat.

Cr'noop is a 7 ft Black Croaker, wearing a beaten gold torc (300 gp), and carrying a staff topped with a giant bird skull. He is arrogant, overbearing, and speaks common (thickly accented and interspersed with gurgling). Depending on how dangerous the party seems, he might seek to negotiate their withdrawal (or his own freedom). Cr'noop knows about the prisoners hidden in Area 16 for example, and the sealed chamber in Area 18. He does not have any genuine magical ability, but is well versed in the history and religious lore of his kind.

#### Area 12 - Frogmen Archives

This 30 ft by 20 ft room belongs to 1d4+1 *Grey Croaker* acolytes (in ragged, hooded robes) of the shaman *Cr'noop* (Area 11). Hardened mud tablets are stacked on shelves, detailing the history of the frogmen in the region (albeit in their own language). The histories are prized by the croakers, and might provide a bargaining chip for PCs.



#### Area 13 - Tadpole Nursery

These smaller chambers were once pilgrim domiciles, but are now used as infant croaker nurseries. There are 2d4 *Croaker Tadpoles* lurking about. The 3 ft tadpoles have been taught to speak common by the shaman *Cr'noop* (Area 11), and will be curious about the PCs ("what ya?", "why ugly eyes?", "uughh hair!", etc).

Croaker Tadpole, AC 10, HD 1 hp, Bite 1d3, 19: the tadpole trips the PC by swimming between their legs, S4 D15 C6 I6 P13 W4 Ch7 L3, Mv 30 ft inc swim/climb.

In the south eastern corner of Area 13 is the underwater tunnel leading to the surface (5 ft diameter). If battle is going poorly for the frogmen,



they may seek to escape this way, taking any easily carried treasures with them.

#### Area 14 - Living Chamber

What was once a library is now a converted croaker living area, scattered with nests, half eaten fish/humans/beastmen. 2d6 *Green Croakers* are here at any one time. The room is poorly ventilated and smells terrible.

The double doors allowing entry may be sealed tight with a barring beam leaning in one corner (requires 3 x great success Str checks to break down, or significant time with the right tools). The frogmen, or PCs, might hole up here for a time, depending on how matters unfold.

#### Area 15 - Storage

The old reading and meditation room is now a storage area, littered with sundry items useful to the croakers (barrels of rotting meat, bundles of straw, mud bricks, cut logs, rope, tools, etc). The northern corner is conspicuously empty of clutter and dirty footprints disappear into the "wall". Examining the area reveals a spring loaded secret door, and 40 ft corridor to Area 16.

#### Area 16 - Prison

The original purpose of this secret room is unclear, but the croakers have converted the area into a holding pen for prisoners. A human barbarian named *Drummot* (60's, heavily scarred, with *Crow Biter* tribe warpaint) and 1d3 *Skorn* are shackled to the walls, starving, beaten and dying (all on 1d3 hp).

Drummot, AC 10, HD 1, 19: as weapon, S13 D10 C13 I10 P10 W12 Ch11, L4, Mv 30 ft. Drummot is a berserker with S13, +2 to attack, and never checks for morale. He will gladly help the party kill any croakers they find.

Skorn, AC 10, HD 2, as weapon 19: the target is clubbed in the head, losing its next action (*Luck* 

(Will) save resists), S15 D10 C13 I7 P12 W8 Ch8, L5, Mv 30 ft. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage to sense danger or detect scents.

In their weakened state, it may be possible to persuade or coerce the beastmen into aiding the party.

#### Area 17 - Hall of Idols

This 40 ft by 20 ft mirrored hall is mildewed and mud stained, lined with stone idols of the Frog God in his many guises (eating, sleeping, fornicating, fighting, etc). Various nests fill the common area, including the large and brightly decorated nest of the croaker chief, *Sm'ubb*.

Sm'ubb is 6 ft tall, a particularly skinny Black Croaker with slender fingers well acquainted with choking the life out of her enemies. She speaks common, similar to Cr'noop (Area 11), and will not be pleased to find interlopers in her personal domain. Sm'ubb has survived as chief by bullying and outwitting her rivals, and will attempt to do the same with the PCs.

Sm'ubb, AC 13, HD 7, Sword 1d8+2 and Bite 1d10, 19: disarm or bites off random limb below the joint (*Luck* (Dex) save resists), S15 D15 C12 I14 P15 W16 Ch11 L8, Mv 30 ft inc swim/climb. Sm'ubb has *Major Exploit Protection*. When staggered, she emits an ear splitting croak, causing humans within 20 ft to be stunned (lose next action, *Luck* (Will) save resists).

Searching the nests recovers 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Trinkets & Curios.

#### Area 18 - Sealed Chamber

The stone double doors leading to this chamber are magically sealed, decorated with a scene of fog cloaked trees, cut through with beams of morning light.



The doors are impervious to mundane tools, and may only be opened via *Sundering Sign*, *Sever Arcarnum*, by the hand of an elf, or a person blessed by the mirror in Area 5.

The 40 ft corridor beyond has not been set foot in since the Second Age, dusty floor tiles of blue and white portraying a winding river with ice floes. The corridor is completely dark, quiet, and smells stale/musty.

If anyone other than an elf (or person blessed by the mirror) approaches the east/west doors, a hissing sound is heard (as ice binding golems in each chamber swiftly melts, issuing large clouds of steam from beneath the doors). In 2d4 rounds, the doors swing open to release twin *Sandstone Golems* upon any intruders. The golems do not communicate, and will not stop until all non-elves are driven from the temple.

Sandstone Golem, AC 14, HD 6, Fist 2d6, 19: the targets weapon is crushed (magical weapons are immune), S19 D11 C17 I- P13 W- Ch-, L8, Mv 20 ft. The statues are *Golems* with the usual benefits. They have 50% Magic Resistance, except against Stone to Flesh, Melt Crag & Ridge, Bending the Stone or Master of Earth & Stone which cause 6d8 damage (once only).

The final chamber is 30 ft square, with a 15 ft ceiling, decorated with large tapestries of elven history (battlefields, city scapes, an elven magus queen with antlers dating back to the First Age). The tapestries are faded and delicate, but have been semi preserved by magic, and worth a small fortune to the right buyer (2d4 x 300 gp).

In the centre of the room is a prayer mat and private altar to the *Bruhga of Winter Light* (2 ft diameter column, sandstone inlaid with onyx, 1,500 gp). The altar is inscribed with various prayers, including a lost elven spell:

#### Shield of Winter

2nd Level Range: Self

Duration: 2d6 hours or until expended

As *Arcane Aegis*, but the disc is made of magical ice. If the shield is used to negate a physical attack, the attacker must make a *Luck* (Con) save or be frozen (helpless) for 2d6 rounds. If the caster is subject to fire based attack, the *Shield of Winter* automatically negates the attack, then ends.

#### **Aftermath**

If *Rovos* is able to retrieve any genuine elven artefacts he considers the expedition to be a success (especially any of the items in Areas 6 and 18), and will recommend the party to others. If *Rovos* dies, word eventually gets back to *Port Brax*, tarnishing the PCs' reputation there.



# FOLDS BETWEEN WORLDS





## Folds Between Worlds

Fendrel, a well known and respected druid of Soliri, is looking to hire competent explorers to escort him into the wilds for an urgent task.

#### The World Tree Provides

Soliri is one of the Midlander's Seven Ancients, goddess of the sun, weather, nature and creation. Implored to bless harvests, encourage fertility, and to repel ferocious beasts, Soliri is commonly depicted as a female faced sun, a swarm of leaves, or a giant world tree.



The elderly druid *Fendrel* (70's, slight hunch, wispy white hair, miraculously fit and able to walk for days) is a devotee of the Sun Goddess, living behind the safety of city walls, making occasional sojourns to sacred groves for ritual blessings.

Over the last few months, the druid has noticed an alarming shift in animal behaviour in the vicinity of *Yellow Cliffs*. Bears, wolves and hunting birds are more savage, and even normally timid creatures such as hares seem to be growing more aggressive. Even more worrying, monstrous creatures such as owlbears, giant spiders and skorn are increasing in frequency.

It is clear to *Fendrel* that something unnatural is occurring, and as druid responsible for *Yellow Cliffs* grove, it is his duty to remedy the situation. The two other druids of his circle (*Murte*, 80's mostly senile, and *Janeta*, robust young female with a musical laugh, bright eyes) are not convinced there is a problem (and even if there is one, are unwilling to tackle it themselves). *Fendrel* is able to offer 400 gp, plus some free healing poultices/anti toxin brews, to escort him (*Cultist*, with staff) to the cliffs and sort out the problem.

#### A Disturbance Below

The druid hopes that the source of the fauna's aggressiveness is tied to poisoned water, or some manner of rare disease, but in his heart senses something more devious is at work.

Fendrel's instincts are correct. In the natural cave complex beneath Yellow Cliffs, a rupture in the Veil has allowed a Tentacle Spawn (name unspeakable, telepathically it presents as three metallic moons orbiting a pulsating flesh sack, coated in malodourous mucus) to enter the world from a distant dimension. Fascinated with this new realm, the creature is prolonging the rift as it explores its subterranean surroundings.

The rift's direct link to *Three Moons'* dimension is affecting surrounding life forms (animal, plant and mineral), upsetting and unhinging all creatures of sentience.

#### Shennog's Eve

Fendrel is not the only party interested in the strange disturbance. Keeper Eldenee, a priestess of Shennog (goddess of darkness, mystery and deceit) secretly prophesised the shift in the Veil, and has dispatched agents to investigate on her behalf. Unlike Fendrel, Eldenee has no interest in wildlife, but is keen to understand what has occurred, an in particular whether there is any



prospect of harnessing the power of the rift, which she refers to as "Shennog's Eye".



Eldenee's agents belong to *Rutger's Crew*, 2d4+8 well paid and heavily armed mercenaries that the priestess has successfully used on a number of prior occasions.

Rutger's Crew, AC 16 (heavy armour + shield), HD 3, Sword 1d8+2, 19: disarm, S14 D10 C13 I10 P10 W13 Ch9 L6, Mv 30 ft. Rutger's Crew are steely eyed veterans, well paid and loyal to their captain (Rutger, northerner, 7 HD, Polearm 1d10+2, trained in Leadership, Arcane Lore). They have advantage on morale checks as long as Rutger lives.

#### Cliffside Trek

The journey to *Yellow Cliffs* is three days on foot, through steep and rocky terrain, overlooking the great lake, with scattered windswept trees. There is a 40% chance of an encounter every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8:

1. A particularly aggressive band of 4d6 *thuels* (barbarians) are ranging across the

cliffs on foot. They are searching for two lost twins.

- 2. The corpses of a family of hares are strewn about this area. Their warren holes were torn open by something with large claws. The carcasses are uneaten.
- 3. A flock of 4d6 + 30 *Ravens* descends from the sky or nearby trees, intent on tasting the party's blood.

Raven, AC 11, 1 hp, Peck 1d2, 19: Luck (Con) save or suffer an eye or ear injury (Injury table, entry 1 or 4, even chance), S4 D16 C5 I3 P13 W13 Ch10 L3, Mv 120 ft flying. The tainted flock has advantage on morale checks.

- 4. A terrific *thunder storm* rolls in for hours, drenching the party and turning the ground to sucking mud. Each party member must make a Con check or lose 1 Con.
- 5. A *Ranger Patrol* (2d6 members, as bandit with bows, swords), from the nearest city. They might provide information or additional security for a time.
- 6. A party of 3d6 *Cyclopes* have ventured down from nearby mountains, sent by their tribe's shaman to investigate the rift. They are low on salted meat, and relish human flesh.
- 7. An enormous 16 ft *Giant Serpent* (10 HD) is dozing on nearby rocks, a large bulge in its centre (a dissolving wolf). If it detects the party, it is immediately hostile, but feigns docility, hoping to draw the party in close before striking.
- 8. If day, 4d10 *Skorn* have broken out into a horrific intra tribal brawl, killing each other with jagged knives, bows and clubs. If they detect the party, the survivors (3d6)



turn on them immediately, their natural bloodlust heightened by the rift.

#### **Yellow Cliffs**

Yellow Cliffs is so named for the sulphur tinged rockface overlooking the expansive Lake Argos, providing a magnificent, wind tousled view. Situated on a high plinth are six yellowed stone columns, which the druids have venerated for generations as a sacred circle. Once a year, Fendrel makes a secret sojourn here to enact rituals passed from one druid to the next.

Magic users (or others trained in Arcane Lore) might detect that a ley line passes through the stones (Int (Arcane Lore) check). Using any genuine magic here increases its effect and duration by 50%, but incurs a 3 point increase in the *Dark & Dangerous Magic* test instead of 1.

More importantly, a successful check reveals that the true power of the site is emanating from underground. The sulphurous columns extend down many hundreds of feet to Area 10. Looking over the nearby cliff's edge, a small ledge and cave can be spotted about 200 ft below.

#### Area 1 - Entryway

In order to reach the entry passage, the party will need to descend 200 ft down the rock face. Climbing the cliff requires an Athletics (Str) check without climbing gear, or is automatic with appropriate gear and enough time.

Part way through the descent however, the party is set upon by *Sleemi*, a young and impetuous harpy with a strong connection the ruptured Veil. Once the party is in the midst of the climb, Sleemi flies in close to sing her sorcerous song, tempting individual PCs to jump into her arms. Any PC that does jump falls to their death, the body scooped up by the harpy (taken back to her remote eyrie for devouring).

Harpy, AC 12, HD 3, 2 Talons 1d4, 19: Luck (Will) save or suffer a minor madness, S9 D15 C10 I10 P12 W13 Ch15 L6, Mv 60 ft flying. Whilst tainted *Sleemi* has advantage on morale checks. The harpy's song encourages a target to unbuckle their climbing gear and jump into her arms, resisted with a Luck (Will) save. Sleemi's touch imparts a Gaze of Beguilement effect, and drains 1d4 Str (once per day per target).

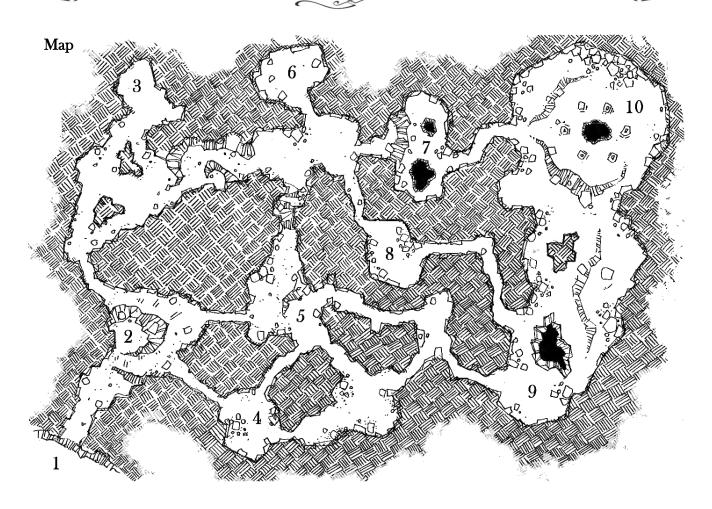
The entry cave is round in shape, approximately 5 ft in diameter at its widest point. The tunnel beyond is quiet, cool, and pitch black.

#### **Catacomb Encounters**

A number of the chambers in the winding catacombs are unmarked. At the GM's option, roll 1d8 to determine what is within in these locations, or when the party lingers in one spot for more than thirty minutes.

The natural passageways are generally unlit, dark as pitch, cold and prone to exaggerated echoes. PCs will need their own light source to navigate the tunnels.

- 1. Empty aside from some carapace worms undulating in a dimly phospherant mould (harmless).
- 2. *Rutger's Crew* appear from a nearby passage (sneaking, fleeing from something, waiting in ambush, or arguing about whether they should press on). Depending on how the party reacts, they might join forces for a time.
- 3. The rift in Area 10 widens, sending a shudder throughout the entire complex. Dust and small rocks fall from the ceiling, thin cracks appear in walls, etc.
- 4. 2d4 tainted *Rock Grinders* (Midlands) burst from a nearby wall, ceiling or floor, intent of dismembering the party.



- 5. An impossibly low, drawn out half growl, half sucking noise reverberates throughout the complex.
- 6. A patch of 2d4 *Yellow Mould* is growing on the ceiling, wall or nearby passage.
- 7. A freak gust of wind (originating from the rift) tears through the catacombs. Exposed torches or other light sources have a 75% of being extinguished. If the party is left in darkness, there is a 50% chance the *Morg-Tor* from Area 6 appears.
- 8. Three Moons (see Area 10) is approaching from a nearby passage, enroute to commune with the Morg-Tor in Area 6, or checking on the Grey Ooze in Area 2.

#### Area 2 - Grey Ooze Trap

This 30 ft diameter chamber has a raised 10 ft dais in the centre. Beside the dais are 1d4 dead and decaying barbarians, their faces locked in grimaces of terror.

A *Grey Ooze* in league with Three Moons is hibernating in one corpse. If a PC approaches within 60 ft, it awakens in 1d3 rounds, eager to feast.

Grey Ooze, AC 12, HD 6, Tunnelling Pseudopod 2d4 + special and Emotion Burst, 19: a psychic lash drains 1d4 Int (*Luck* (Will) save resists), S18 D16 C16 I4 P14 W16 Ch1, L8, Mv 40 ft inc walls, ceiling etc. Emotion Burst 120 ft range, *Luck* (Will) save or suffer a moderate madness, 40% chance recharge each hour. May project basic emotions up to 120 ft at will.



#### Area 3 - Thought Eater

Dozing in this 20 ft by 10 ft cavern is a bulbous, vaguely humanoid ooze; a rolling black mass of amorphous folds with a single, glistening eye.

Thought Eater, AC 11, HD 9, Oozing Slap 2d8, 19: the target is subject to Confusion (as the spell, Will check resists), S17 D8 C15 I4 P10 W15 Ch3, L10, Mv 30 ft. Thought Eaters are Aberrant Terrors with the usual benefits. Anyone looking at the eater is subject to its gaze attack on their turn (Luck (Will) save or suffer a pervasive madness. A PC may avert their gaze or otherwise fight blind to avoid this effect.

#### Area 4 - Ley Line Chamber

The natural stone of this 20 ft chamber has a glass like sheen to it, transmuted by the tainted ley line passing through the centre of the room. A PC studying the area may make an Int (Arcane Lore) check to sense the ley line, and on a great success understands it is tainted. Whilst living creatures linger in this space, check for a *Dark & Dangerous Magic* effect each round, increasing the chance by 1 each time. Using magic here automatically invokes a DDM effect.

#### Area 5 - Gas Pocket

This 30 ft by 25 ft junction smells strongly of sulphur. A pocket of toxic gas (heavier than air) has formed at the lowest point of the cavern (in a nook on the southern side of the ledge). Careful inspection of the nook reveals the near invisible gas (a very slight distortion can be seen via torchlight). Passing through the area stirs up the invisible fumes, requiring a Con check to avoid losing 1 Con. The gas is not flammable.

#### Area 6 - The Morg-Tor

This 20 ft diameter chamber is the sleeping den of the *Morg-Tor*, an alien entity that followed Three Moons through the rift. 10 ft tall, with six limbs, a gigantic vertical maw and prehensile tongue, the *Morg-Tor* serves the tentacle spawn as a labourer and guardian.

Morg-Tor, Boss Monster, AC 14, HD 8, 4 Claws 1d6+1 and Bite 2d4+2, 19: the target has a random limb below the joint torn/bitten off (*Luck* (Con) save resists), S19 D10 C19 I5 P10 W12 Ch5, L9, Mv 40 ft. The Morg-Tor is a Boss Monster and Aberrant Terror with the usual benefits, but Causes Injuries on criticals.

If defeated, the *Morg-Tor's* den contains the half eaten remains of many barbarian and beastmen victims (1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Trinkets & Curios).



#### Area 7 - Dual Sinkholes

This 30 ft by 15 ft cavern has two large sinkholes that disappear into the underdark. The remains of strange monstrosities litter the area (rended bulbous fleshy sacks, dismembered eyestalks, crushed chitinous claws, etc).

If the party enter this chamber, 1d6 *Void Gropers* (2 ft tall albino aberrations with three drooling faces, hoofed feet and flapping, oily tentacles; they



make baby like cooing noises as they attack) emerge from each of the sinkholes at the end of each round. After the latest round of gropers appear, there is a 25% chance they stop emerging. Blanketing the sinkholes with fire, acid or a cave in increases the chance to 75%.

Void Gropers, AC 12, HD 2, 3 Tentacles (special) and 3 Bites 1d4+1, 19: another Void Groper crawls out of the sinkhole, S9 D13 C9 I2 P12 W9 Ch3, L5, Mv 30 ft. Void Gropers are Aberrant Terrors with the usual benefits (LFG p.98). A tentacle attack imposes the Void Sloth curse (fumble chance increases by 1, up to a maximum of 5, lasts 1d6 days, Will check resists).

#### Area 8 - Dumping Cavern

This 15 ft by 20 ft cavern is situated in the centre of the catacombs, used as a dumping ground for Three Moons' victims. Piled against one wall are the decaying bodies of numerous beastmen and barbarians, they skulls broken open and brains removed. Looting the area turns up 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Valuables. There is a 50% chance of 2d4 *Plague Worms* feasting on one or more of the corpses.

Plague Worm, AC 17, HD 3, Batter 2d4+1, 19: special, S17 D10 C13 I3 P10 W10 Ch5, L6, Mv 30 ft or 5 ft burrowing. On a 19, the target suffers Worm Fungus (skin hardens and cracks painfully, causing one random limb to become unusable for 1d4 weeks, per *Injuries & Setbacks* table, entry 2 or 3).

#### Area 9 - Centipede Nest

This enormous 30 ft wide cavern has a 25 ft ceiling and extends north into Area 10. In the centre is a 10 ft wide sinkhole that disappears several hundred feet into the earth, branching out into smaller tunnels and winding passageways.

A nest of 3d12 *Giant Centipedes* lives in the hole, for the most part studiously avoiding the recent influx of aberrations. They have been sustaining themselves on smaller insects and the bodies

dumped in Area 8. A party of juicy humans however will quickly lure them out.

Giant Centipede, AC 13, HD 2, Bite 1d3 and Stinger (Luck (Con) save or suffer 1 Con loss), 19: extra strong dose of poison requiring two Luck saves instead of one, S14 D14 C10 I1 P10 W10 Ch2, L5, Mv 30 ft. An adventurer has a 25% chance of harvesting one dose of poison from a dead centipede.

#### Area 10 - The Rift

This 50 ft by 50 ft cavern has a high 30 ft ceiling, and is decorated with six sulphurous columns, each 3 ft wide, that extend up into the ceiling. In the centre of the columns is a 10 ft shaft that descends 100 ft before coalescing as the ink black rift to Three Moons' home dimension.

Around the edge of the hole are 2d6 pink, pulsating brains (*Rift Anchors*), with curling tendrils that extend around the shaft perimeter and into the depths. The *tentacle spawn* maintains the portal by feeding the rift anchors a steady diet of foreign emotions, leeched from its humanoid victims.

The portal may be closed by (i) destroying the rift anchors, (ii) slaying *Three Moons* (if the tentacle spawn is killed, the rift anchors starve within hours), or (iii) successfully casting *Sever Arcarnum* on the anchors.

Jumping into the shaft without a rope or other means of restraint, prior to the rift being closed, causes a PC to pass through the portal, requiring a *Luck* (Con) save to survive the journey. The specifics of *Three Moons'* home dimension are left to the GM to determine.

Rift Anchor, AC 10, HD 4, Tentacle 2d4 + special, 19: the target is helpless, constricted by a tentacle, spend an action to break free (Str contest), S15 D13 C6 I4 P11 W17 Ch3, L7, Mv immobile. Rift Anchors are Aberrant Terrors with the usual benefits (LFG p.98). Their tentacle attacks have a



100 ft reach, but take 1 action to detach from the rift before they can be used. A successful tentacle attack causes *Confusion* (as the spell).

Three Moons, Boss Monster, AC 13, HD 10+2 (87 hp), 2 Tentacles 1d8 + special, 19: psychic blast, target loses next action (Luck (Will) save resists), S13 D16 C14 I19 P19 W19 Ch15, L10, Mv 30 ft. Tentacle Spawn are Aberrant Terrors with the usual benefits. If both Tentacle attacks hit, the target must make a Luck (Con) save or die on the monster's next turn (brain devoured), unless the two are somehow separated. Spend an action to project a mental blast of abject horror in a 60 ft cone, 20 ft wide at the base, causing 1d4 Int loss and imposing a serious madness (*Luck* (Will) save resists, 30% recharge chance). Spend an action to produce each of the following spell effects once per day: Gaze of Beguilement, Affliction of the Eyeless Host, Monstrous Subjugation, Ineffable Force and Strange Joining.

Three Moons has a genius (if alien) intellect and will attempt to fight in a manner most advantageous to it. If a PC is rendered helpless by an anchor, the spawn will attempt to eat their brains while they are helpless. If *Three Moons* is wounded, the *Morg-Tor* in Area 6 immediately senses this, and comes to help if possible.

If battle goes poorly, *Three Moons* will attempt to flee through the rift, or into the sinkholes in Areas 7 or 9. Depending on the circumstances, it might attempt some kind of telepathic parlay with the party, or *Keeper Eldenee's* agents if they are present; offering some manner of alien technology, extra-terrestrial metal or other desirable item in exchange for a truce or retreat.

The precise details are left to the GM to determine, and might be of interest to *Captain Rutger*/contrary to *Feldren's*/PCs' interests.

#### Rift Closure

If *Three Moons* is killed, or no living anchors have tentacles attached to the rift, it closes with a deafening sucking noise (*Luck* (Con) save or suffer effective deafness for 2d6 days).

As the portal closes, any humans in the vicinity momentarily connect with *Three Moons'* world, experiencing a dark and dreadful vision (manifests telepathically as tables of tentacle spawn in a gigantic hall of emerald green stone, where compliant Midlander humans shuffle out and sink to their knees before their alien masters, prior to having their brains extracted). Whether the vision is true, and/or past, present or future, is for the GM to determine. At the GM's option, a Will check may be required to avoid a minor madness.

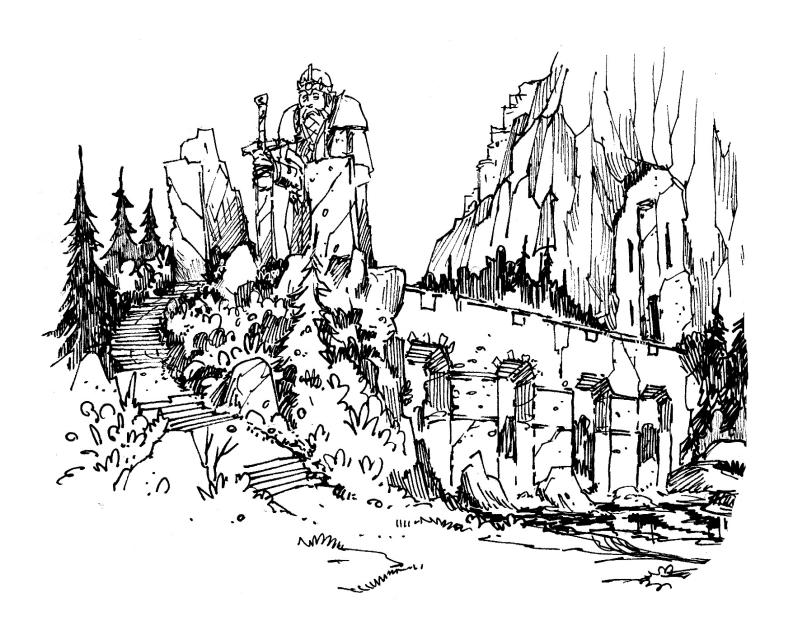
#### **Aftermath**

If *Feldren* lives and the rift is closed, his fellow druids hold the party is high esteem and offer free anti toxins, healing herbs and other support in the future. The party garners a degree of fame as world spreads, particularly amongst *Soliri's* faithful.

If the party incapacitate or otherwise frustrate *Rutger's* band, they may make an enemy of *Keeper Eldenee*, depending on whether there are any survivors.

If *Three Moons* is not killed or driven back into the rift, it continues to explore the underground catacombs. As a *tentacle spawn*, the creature is overwhelmed by wide open spaces, and cannot leave via Area 1. Given sufficient time, and assuming *Eldenee* learns about the creature, she eventually strikes a deal with it, supplying brains in return for alien technology (perhaps mind reading or suggestion effects), vastly increasing her personal power and order's political clout. Over time, the tentacle spawn draws more of its kind through the portal, excavating an outpost in the depths of the cliffs.

# HALLS OF THE DWARF LORD





## Halls of the Dwarf Lord

A young but cowardly archaeologist believes he has deduced the location of the lost *Fortress of Dûmora*; a dwarven hall of the Second Age. He wants someone to comb part of the *Viridian Woods* looking for it, and report back to him.

A number of frontier woodsmen and sentries have reported animated skeletons walking the outer perimeter of the Viridian Woods. The area is clearly cursed, but the nobles still want someone to investigate. A band of reckless, expendable, gold hungry adventurers are just the ticket.

#### Halls of Dûmora

In the Second Age, long before the last of the dwarves were made slaves to trading houses of *Dol-Karok*, the *Fortress of Dûmora* stood on the border of *Griffon Rock* and the *Viridian Forest*, a testament to *Stonelord Tolbren's* wealth and power.

Lost to antiquity, the halls sat silent for centuries until the great doors were recently breached by the *Kraagoi* cyclops tribe. The cyclops' have lived in the halls for generations, damaging or defiling most of the dwarven artefacts, but some valuables still persist in a secret vault.

During the past year, the *Barrow Wight Gorvex* has taken control of the halls, cowing the tribe with sorcery and his undead minions. The necromancer is slowly building an undead army, killing and animating any beastmen, barbarians or other humanoids he encounters. At 110 years of age, the wight is quite mad, and filled with delusions of grandeur.

The party might become involved in this adventure by (i) reading about *Dûmora's Axe* in a lost dwarven scroll, (ii) being asked to investigate sightings of skeletons in the *Viridian Woods*, (iii) being hired by a young archaeologist to survey part

of the *Viridian Woods* and report back to him, or (iv) wandering into the area while travelling the woods at large.



#### Viridian Woods

This expansive woodland surrounds the small mountain known as *Griffon Rock*. The forest is primarily pine and fir trees, with an undergrowth of moss and thick bracken. Bears, wolves and a wide variety of game are common, as are beastmen and barbarians.

Travelling to *Dûmora* is a trek of approximately three days, assuming the party takes the shortest route to the mountain. There is a 30% chance of a random encounter every 8 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8, adding 2 if the encounter is during the last day of travel.

1. A border patrol of 3d4 *Centaurs* can be heard thundering towards the party before



they appear. The adventurers are approaching centaur territory, and they are not welcome.

- 2. A *Bloodroot Treant* is masquerading as a large pine tree. The bones of two boars are entangled in its roots.
- 3. 4d6 *Skorn* (*Beastmen*) are tending to a sacred grove, lined with the skulls of exulted warriors. To observe this secret ceremony means death to outsiders.
- 4. 1d4 *Dire Bats* are hanging in the treetops or flying overhead. Upon detecting the party, they swoop in for an opportunistic meal.
- 5. An ancient *Harpy* (9 HD, *Off Turn Attacks*) named *Ebecinzyr* lives here high in a grand pine tree. She has sung her beguiling song for over a century and devoured more beastmen and barbarians than most creatures in the forest. She will be intrigued by a party in heavy armour and foreign garb, and might be inclined to talk to them, rather than eat them. The old harpy knows many secrets of the woods.
- 6. 5d4 *Giant Rats* spring from cover, intent biting chunks out of the PCs before fleeing into the undergrowth!
- 7. 2d6 *Griffons* are wheeling overhead, screeching to each other while they search for meals between the trees. A party of adventurers is exactly what they need, if they can find them.
- 8. A *Minotaur* has detected the party's scent and is waiting to ambush them. He carries a boulder to throw before charging into melee.

- 9. 1d6 *Cyclopes* from Area 7 are returning from a recent raid, carrying sheep and children in heavy nets (for eating).
- 10. 2d10 of *Gorvex's Skeletons* are walking this area, looking for humans to kill and return to their master for animating.

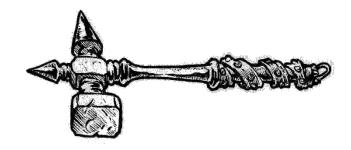
#### Crossing the River

The narrow but deep and fast flowing *Silverwash River* runs by the keep. Stoney steps lead up between two colossal granite statues, depicting ancient dwarf lords of the Second Age. The left statute is heavily damaged and missing its upper third. Faded dwarven runes can be still be read about the base of the statues, commemorating their construction 1,200 years ago.

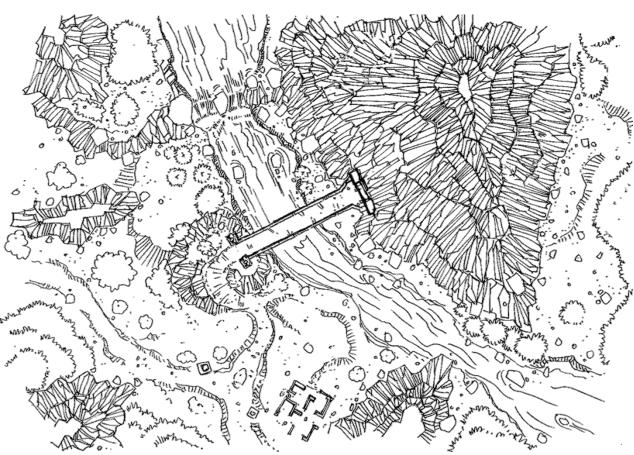
The bridge is in good repair, 20 ft wide, 120 ft long and 60 ft high. It has a 3 ft lip on either side to prevent falling off. The river is about 60 ft wide beneath the bridge, and 40 ft wide at its narrowest point further south.

In addition to the bridge, further upriver is a collection of fallen mountain rocks that have formed a makeshift ford. Crossing here requires a Dex (Acrobatics) check to navigate the slippery rocks, and a Str (Athletics) check to swim some of the submerged sections.

Swimming the river to cross at the narrowest point requires a Str (Athletics) check at disadvantage due to the powerful currents. A character that fails a swimming check is dragged down river into rapids, banged into rocks, and almost drowned, causing 2d4 damage and 1d3 Con loss.







However the party cross the river, a hazard is waiting for them. If they use the bridge, 2d4 *Griffons* sweep down from high atop the mountain to attack. If they cross via the ford or swimming, a gigantic 18 ft *River Serpent* tries to make a meal of one of them before retreating.

Griffon, AC 14, HD 4, 2 Claws 1d4+1 and Bite 2d4, 19: special, S19 D15 C16 I2 P14 W13 Ch8, L7, Mv 120 ft flying. On a natural 19-20 a humanoid target is grabbed and may be flown away with (victims may use their action to make a Str or Dex Contest to break free).

Gigantic River Serpent, AC 13, HD 10, Bite 2d6+1 + poison, 19: special, S20 D14 C16 I3 P10 W13 Ch5, L10, Mv 30 ft or 40 ft swimming. On a natural 19-20, a target is constricted and rendered helpless. A trapped victim may spend their action to make an opposed Str check to break free.

# **Dûmora Random Encounters**

Whilst exploring the fortress, there is a 30% chance of a random encounter every 20 mins. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8:

- 1. 1d4+1 *Cyclopes* (see Area 7) are making their way down the hall, drinking from frothy mugs. They are outrageously drunk, swaying and singing. They might mistake the party for skeletons, depending on how they act.
- 2. A unit of 3d4 *Skeletons* (see Area 1) have been stationed here by *Gorvex* for some reason (1d4: (i) to alert him to intruders, (ii) to bar further passage, (iii) to attack any non-cyclops, or (iv) to seize and hold any non-cyclops intruders until he comes to check on them, which frankly, could be days).



3. A freezing chill settles over the area as the spirit of a long dead dwarven housemaid suddenly emerges from one of the walls. It floats across the corridor, glancing briefly at the party (half her face has been torn off, her blouse bloody), then disappears into the opposite wall.

If a PC attempts to interact with the spirit, it either (a) (50%) shrieks, causing those within 20 ft to make a *Luck* (Will) save or suffer a moderate madness, or (b) smiles sadly before softly touching the PC on the arm (gain 1 *Luck*). The GM might change these percentages depending on the approach the party takes (if any).

- 4. *Kronlump* (from Area 7) appears from around the corner, cursing her kin; they doused her with urine and set her hair on fire. She is in a furious mood. If the party speak with her (she speaks broken common), she will gladly aid them in killing her despised clanmates. After everything is done, however, she will probably still want to eat the fattest PC.
- 5. 1d4 *Giant Centipedes* have snuck into the fortress, crawling along the ceiling to avoid skeletons and cyclopes. They have been hiding in a darkened crevice, but are growing hungry.
- 6. 3d6 *Skeletons* (see Area 1) are dragging dead barbarian and beastman bodies along the corridor, making their way to Area 12.
- 7. Bronhoc (Area 10) is swaggering down the passage with a female cyclops on each arm, whispering soft murmurings in their ears. The females don't look impressed, but he drags them along with him regardless. He will be incensed at the sight of humans in the complex, immediately

- calling for aid and brandishing a large knife from his belt.
- 8. *Gorvex* is heading to Area 4 to check on his bubbling brews, or Area 5 to check (or feed, if they are getting too loud and annoying) his zombies. He is escorted by his *Dwarven Skeletons* (see Area 13).

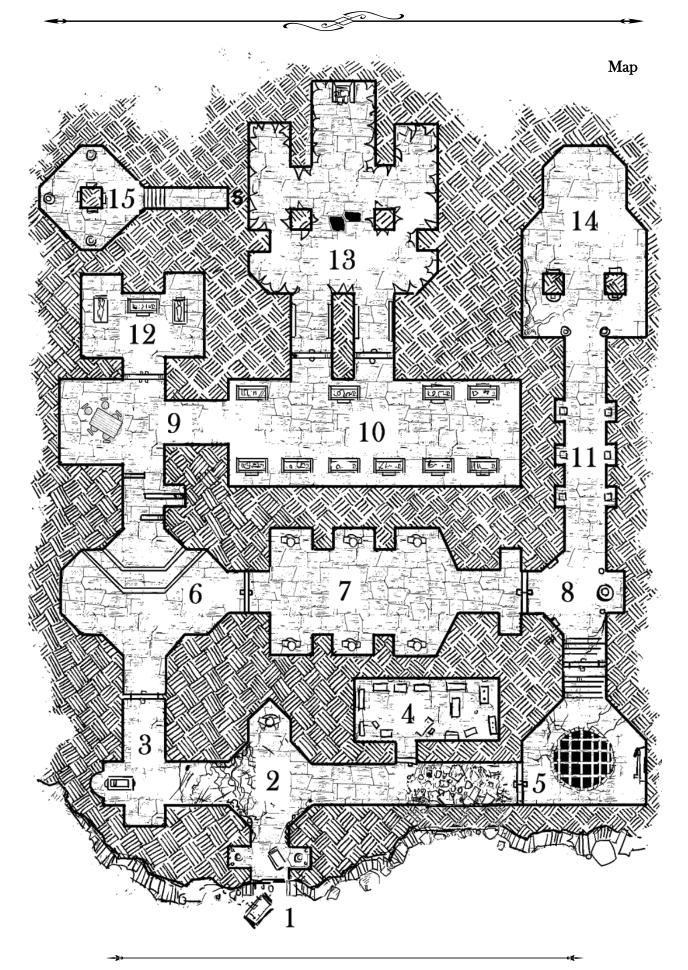
# Area 1 - Entry

The face of the fortress is carved from the mountainside, expertly cut and fashioned by the dwarven masons of old. The 10 ft stone doors that once barred entry to *Dûmora* lie on the ground, speckled with lichen. Scraping away the moss reveals the anvil and moon sigil of the dead *Tolbren* clan (Int (General Lore) check at disadvantage to recognise).

The interior of the fortress is cold and stark, the air relatively still beyond Area 3. Straight lines, geometric patterns and dwarven runes are cut into most walls and floors. The ceilings are generally 7 ft to 10 ft high. Torches and lanterns provide light for the *cyclopes* that live inside. Doors are made of granite unless noted otherwise, slowly sliding back and forth into wall recesses.

2d4 *skeletons* guard this area at all times, standing inside the small east and west alcoves. They automatically detect any living creature within 60 ft and move out to investigate any intruders. The skeletons' orders are to kill any living creatures that attack them, or move within 20 ft of the entrance.

Skeleton, AC 11, HD 1, Spear 1d6+1 & Shield, 19: other nearby bones (or a defeated skeleton) animate to aid this skeleton, S13 D13 C10 I- P13 (special) W- Ch-, L4, Mv 120 ft flying. Skeletons are Undead with the usual benefits and are impervious to piercing damage from arrows, etc. Skeletons automatically sense any living creature within 60 ft. These skeletons are all armed with shields, enabling them to negate the first hit they suffer. The skeletons are carrying 1 x Carry Loot.





# Area 2 - Welcome Hall

The northern end of this 20 ft wide, 30 ft long chamber has a 7 ft cobalt statue of a dwarven warrior brandishing a heavy axe. An Int (General Lore) check reveals the weapon is a replica of the *Axe of Dûmora* (See Area 15).

Corridors branch off to the east and west. A 10 ft wide corridor runs about 100 ft east, partially clogged with large piles of rubble fallen from the ceiling, ending in a door. About 50 east a door is set into the northern wall.

To the west, the floor is heavily cracked and pitted (but safe). About 60 ft west is a small alcove containing some kind of bronze floor plaque.

Hiding in the rubble to the east are 2d4 *Xornlings* (they caused the cave in). If they remain hidden, they follow the party by climbing along the roof, waiting for an opportunity to drop onto their backpacks and steal/eat their gold/gems/metal before slipping quietly away.

Xornling, AC 15, HD 1d4 hp, Bite 1d2 + special, 19: bites a chunk from the target's weapon, reducing the damage die by one category until repaired, S6 D17 C9 I4 P13 W12 Ch9, L3, Mv 20 ft inc climbing walls, etc. Xornlings "hear" gems and metals within 120 ft and will eat 1d10 coins, gemstones, or a chunk of a metal every few hours. Xornlings are natural chameleons and gain advantage when hiding. Bites cause 1 Str loss (*Luck* (Con) save resists). An adventurer reduced to zero Str is turned to stone.

# Area 3 - Memorial Plaque

An 8 ft bronze memorial plague is set into the floor here, marked with old dwarven runes. If none of the party speak dwarven, an Int (General Lore) check at disadvantage deciphers the gist of it. The plaque commemorates the *Battle of Ank'rmon*, a subterranean complex infested with aberrations, in which many dwarven soldiers perished and were ultimately repelled. If the plaque can somehow be removed from the floor, it is worth 500 gp.

# Area 4 - Laboratory

This 15 ft by 35 ft chamber was previously a barracks, but has been converted into a library/laboratory. Multiple small tables line the walls, cluttered with scientific glassware (some of which are bubbling away quietly), bowls, books, parchments and star charts. There is a random magical scroll or potion somewhere amongst the mess.

# Area 5 - Dungeon

Entry to this 30 ft asymmetrical chamber is via locked doors to the north and west (*Gorvex* has the keys). The room is dark and unlit, dominated by a 15 ft diameter barred pit (12 ft deep), originally used as a dungeon.

Gorvex uses this chamber as a *Brain Eating Zombie* holding pen. Locked in the pit are 4d6 *brain eating zombies*, horrific, fast moving variants of the walking dead. If an adventurer enters this room, the zombies immediately begin moaning, climbing each other to reach through the grate, thumping their fists and biting the bars.

The grate can be wound open by using a winch on the ground nearby. Releasing the zombies would be an extraordinarily bad idea for any nearby humans (or cyclopes).

Brain Eating Zombie, AC 11, HD 2+2, Bite 1d6 + 2, 19: special, S15 D10 C14 I- P12 W- Ch-L5, Mv 30 ft. On a natural 19, the target must make a *Luck* (Con) save or become infected, transforming into a brain eating zombie in 2d4 hours (*Purge the Accursed* or similar transform them back). An adventurer reduced to zero hp must be recovered from a zombie in one round or they die.

Some of the undead still wear jewellery, carry pouches, etc. Looting them returns 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Trinkets & Curios.

# Area 6 - Audience Chamber

This 45 ft by 30 ft audience chamber was once used as a waiting or receiving area for visitors. The northern section has a two stepped tiers where



dwarven guards once stood. The three sectioned door in the northern corridor has been broken by the cyclops and no longer functions.

The cyclops use this room as another living area. When the PCs enter here, roll on the *Random Encounters* table to find out what happens.

# Area 7 - Hall of the Ancestors

This irregularly shaped hall is 60 ft long, 30 ft wide and 12 ft high. Stonework and faded frescos depict the beautiful geometric patterns of the longbeards, flanked by six 7 ft dwarven statues. The statues are of various stonelords of the *Tolbren* line.

In conjunction with Area 10, the hall serves as the main living area for the cyclopes, who like the high ceilings. There are 3d6 cyclopes socialising or sleeping here at any one time. The room contains sleeping mats, wooden tables, chairs, shelves and so on.

One of the cyclopes, *Kronlump*, despises *Gorvex*, along with most of her kin who treat her very poorly. She might be persuaded to turn on her fellows with the right incentive (not the least of which includes killing *Bronhoc* (Area 10) and/or *Gorvex*). Searching the hall garners 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Valuables.

Cyclops, AC 12, HD 7+2, Giant Club 2d8+1, 19: special, S19 D12 C16 I6 P8 W10 Ch9 L9, Mv 40 ft. Cyclopes have disadvantage on ranged attacks, Cause Injuries on a natural 19-20 attack roll and have a 10 ft reach. They retain vestiges of augural ability and gain a free attack on a natural 19 or 20 attack roll.

# Area 8 - A Statue in the Dark

The western and southern stone doors to this intersection are locked (*Gorvex* has the key, or they may be opened with a Dex (Traps & Locks) check).

The 25 ft by 20 ft intersection is unlit (as are Areas 5, 11, 14), apart from whatever light filters in from

Area 7. Adventurers will need their own light source to proceed much further.



A white alabaster statue depicting a human female holding a sword stands in the eastern alcove. If inspected carefully (Perc (Detection) check), an adventurer might notice the sigil of *Renley Shogu*, a human artist from the Second Age famous for puzzles and hiding secrets within her art (Int (General Lore) check). The statue is worth 500 gp. If the statue is broken into pieces, a preserved scroll is found inside. The scroll marks the location of *Varn Karagoss* (the "Place of Ending"; a frost giant burial ground of antiquity).

# Area 9 - Antechamber

This 25 ft x 20 ft antechamber is used by the cyclopes as an eating area and larder, with a number of wooden tables, chairs and shelves spread about. A recently butchered and salted human corpse is packed onto one shelf. There is a 50% chance of 1d4 *Cyclopes* eating or socialising here (if just one, he/she is asleep).



# Area 10 - The Forges

This large 25 ft by 70 ft chamber is littered with ancient forges, stained and blackened with fire and molten steel. Large ventilation chutes run up into ceiling vents long since closed to the outside world. Smithing tools of all kinds can be found on iron benches and hanging from wall hooks.

The cyclopes use this chamber as their second main living area, similar to Area 7. There are 3d6 *Cyclops'* (see Area 7 for stats) lounging or working here (wrestling, repairing clothes, etc) at any one time.

The cyclopes leader, *Bronhoc* (45 hp) will usually be found here. This foul tempered dictator leads the clan by being the strongest and the meanest, breaking the bones of any challengers before feeding them to the *brain eating zombies* in Area 5. He dislikes *Gorvex*, and does not trust him, but is prepared to work with him until he finds a way to be rid of him. It isn't all bad, after all; the *skeletons* often bring them fresh meals.

# Area 11 - Corridor of Relics

This 50 ft by 10 ft corridor is unlit and silent. The six alcoves each display a small urn, bowl, idol, necklace or other art object on a stone pedestal. The bronze, silver and gold antiques are worth 300 gp each.

Gorvex has trapped the corridor with a small patch of *Yellow Mould* on the ceiling of the second eastern alcove (the cyclopes are not permitted here). It is easily spotted by anyone looking in the alcove.

Yellow Mould, AC 10 (automatic hit in melee), HD 3, Projectile Spore (see below), 19: the spore bursts in 10 ft radius, S6 D- C16 I2 P14 W- Ch-L6, Immobile. Projectile spores burst in a 5 ft radius, requiring a Luck (Con) save or the victim dies a horrible choking death in 1d6 rounds. An apothecary with the right herbs can delay the spore poison for 3d6 hours. Yellow mould suffers double damage from fire.

# Area 12 - Stonelord's Tomb

This 30 ft by 20 ft tomb has three large marble sarcophagi within, expertly cut and inscribed with many of the *Tolbren* clan's victories, defeats and other important milestones. Laid to rest in the three sarcophagi were *Stonelord Tolbren*, his wife, and second wife. All three have been exhumed and animated by *Gorvex*. Any personal treasures once buried with the dwarves have been relocated to Area 14.



# Area 13 - Throne Room

This very oddly shaped, approximately 50 ft by 50 ft chamber was the throne room of *Stonelord Tolbren*, where the family held court and received other clan nobles. A simple, but perfectly cut throne, formed from the mountain itself, is situated at the northern end. The walls of this



chamber are covered in the geometric patterns favoured by the *Tolbrens*.



Since taking over the fortress, *Gorvex* uses the throne room as his residence and main work place (as a *Wight*, he does not sleep). Some changes have been made to the room, adding vicious looking metal spikes to the walls and twin column. Anyone impaled into on the spikes suffers 2d6 damage and must make a *Luck* (Con) check or roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (LFG p.54). Note that *Gorvex* is immune to these non-magical/cold iron blades.

Additionally, two pits have been placed between the columns (*Luck* (Dex) save to avoid, or plummet 20 ft. The "lid" of the pit then springs back up and locks into place (Dex (Traps & Locks) check to open, or break open with a Str check at a -1 penalty at disadvantage).

The barrow wight is never without his bodyguard of 1d4+1 *Dwarven Skeletons* (as *Skeleton*, but AC 16 (heavy armour and shield), 4 HD, Battle Axe 1d8+1, and immune to magic).

After approximately 110 years of undeath and sorcery, *Gorvex* is quite insane. He is driven by a deep, inexplicable need to conquer and kill, animating the dead to grow his "army" of eternal drones. He has delusions of ridding the entire region of all living things, crafting a glorious Empire of the Unliving. There is no prospect of *Gorvex* negotiating with the party in any genuine manner, but he might parley with them as he manoeuvres into a better position to attack. Sorcery has left *Gorvex* hunchback and riddled with black spines. The cyclopes sometimes refer to him as *Churgoza* or "Spineboss".

Gorvex, Barrow Wight, Boss Monster AC 14 HD 5 (68 hp), Claw 1d6 + level drain, 19: the wight's touch imparts dark sorcery, the target rolls on the Dark & Dangerous Magic table, S17 D14 C14 I14 P16 W15 Ch8, L8, Mv 30 ft. Gorvex is Undead, and a *Boss monster*, with the usual benefits. He is immune to non-magical weapons except those of cold iron. A Claw attack causes 1 level loss until the next adventure. A target drained to zero levels rises as an obedient skeleton or zombie in 1d4 hours. Gorvex may cast up to 4 spells per day chosen from the following: Arcane Aegis, Fetid Fog of the Rotting Horde, Thunderous Invocation. Channel Lightning, Rightful Ascension, Infernal Calling of Baal.

Gorvex carries no significant valuables, but he does have the keys to several Areas. His treasure is stored in Area 14.

# Area 14 - Defiled Chapel

This 30 ft by 45 ft chapel has been destroyed by the cyclops', the altar broken and holy frescos smeared and defaced. Only the two large holy water basins attached to the two pillars remain unbroken, filled with treasures and trinkets of the current residents (*Gorvex* uses the chamber as his



treasure room). There are sacks of coins, gemstones, art pieces, etc scattered randomly about the place: 1 x 5 HD Lair Treasure).

3d4 *Ogre Skeletons* stand alongside the walls of the chapel, with orders to slay any living creature (other than cyclops') that enters the area, or attacks them.

Ogre Skeleton, AC 12, HD 4, Spiked Club 2d8, 19: other nearby bones (or a defeated skeleton) animate to aid this skeleton, S13 D13 C10 I- P13 (special) W- Ch-, L4, Mv 120 ft flying. Ogre Skeletons have 10 ft reach, are Undead with the usual benefits, and are impervious to piercing damage from arrows, etc. Skeletons automatically sense any living creature within 60 ft.

# Area 15 - Secret Vault

This hidden vault is accessed via a secret door on the western wall of Area 13 (a single tile of concentric circles, part of the geometric pattern on the wall, is slightly "out of sync" with the others (Int or Perc check to notice if the wall is studied). Pressing the tile opens the secret door with a loud grinding noise.

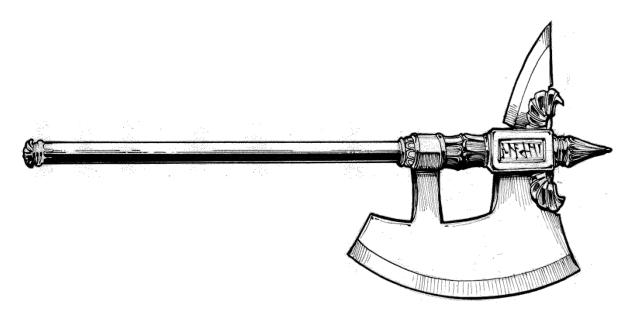
The vault consists of a large stone chest. The chest is locked and requires a Dex (Traps & Locks)

check at disadvantage to open. Additionally, the chest is warded with the equivalent of a *Rain of Stone* spell (triggered if the chest is opened). The magic has faded over time however and is weak, granting advantage on the *Luck* save.

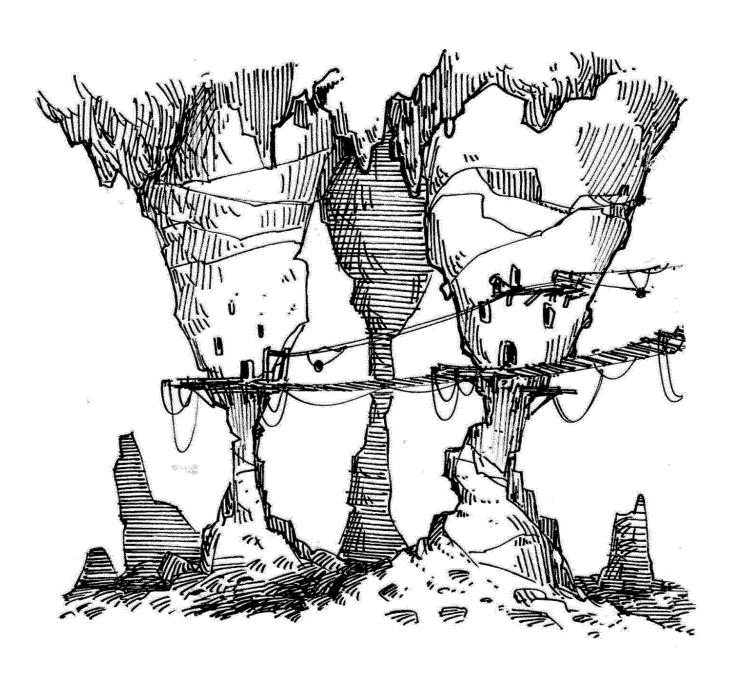
Inside the chest is 1 x Carry Loot, 2 x Valuables, and the *Axe of Dûmora*. The battle axe is magical, with a steel blade that never dulls and is inscribed with the dwarven runes of its legendary namesake (a dwarven warrior who never tired, and once cleaved a wyvern skull in twain). The first attunement grants the bearer advantage on all checks to resist fatigue, and may invoke a *Thunderous Invocation* effect once every 1d4 days. Any further attunements are at the GM's discretion.

# **Aftermath**

If Gorvex is not destroyed, it is likely that Bronhoc and his cyclopes will eventually be made into undead thralls. The barrow wight will continue to add to his skeleton/zombie ranks, wiping out local barbarian and beastmen tribes before setting his sights beyond the woods. If Gorvex and the cyclopes are slain, barbarians or beastmen are likely to claim Dûmora for their own (or perhaps the party, depending on how far they want to be from civilization).



# HANGING CITY OF NENCHAGI





# Hanging City of Nenchagi

Rare texts refer to the *Mask of Distant Suns*, a magical artifact said to imbue the wearer with psychic powers of domination. The mask was last reported in the *Hanging City of Nenchagi*.

# The Chaagi and Xochnomogu

Deep below the *Argos Plateau*, hidden from moon and sky, lies a sprawling network of natural tunnels and caverns. Known to local thuels as *Nebechek*, or long night, the barbarians shun the unlit passages as a fool's maze; a place only the mad or desperate venture into.

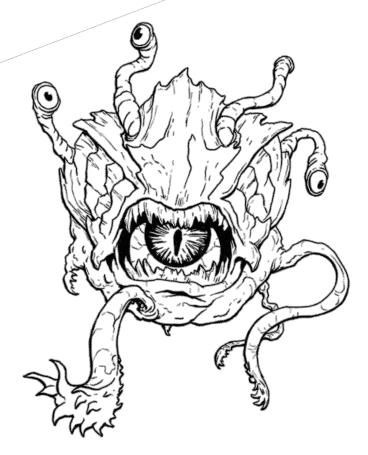
But for adventurers seeking fame and fortune, there might be good reason to delve the perfect black. Referenced in crumbling tomes, the *Mask of Distant Suns* is said to originate from a foreign dimension or star system, granting the wearer potent powers of mind control. Silver sheened, inset with otherworldly crystals, the artifact was last seen in the *Hanging City of Nenchagi*.

Centuries earlier, the Chaagi withdrew to their subterranean "city" beneath the plateau, fleeing the devastation of the *Cyclopes* wars. Unfortunately for the humans, their retreat soon became their prison, enslaved by an *Aberrant Terror* erringly conjured by the mask's magic.

Xochnomogu (or "Eternal Eye") is a 10 ft sack of floating, rubbery flesh, with a large central eye, snapping tentacles, and ray emitting stalks. More than a thousand years old, the ageless abomination became the Chaagi's "god", transforming them into cursed *Urgot*.

Alien and uncaring, *Xochnomogu* still rules *Nenchagi*, feasting on human sacrifices while it contemplates secrets unintelligible to humans. Devoid of urgency, the years mean nothing to

Xochnomogu as it bides its time in the remote underworld.



As for the Chaagi, only a few hundred remain, whittled away by decades of human offerings and isolation. Marred by gangly, elongated limbs, clawed hands, and sunken skin, the urgot are wholly devoted to their unsleeping god.

The party might become involved in this adventure by (i) finding a tome referring to the mask's last location, or (ii) being hired by a wealthy archaeologist to find, and map, the subterranean city.

# Underground Journey

Delving the winding depths of the underworld is not for the faint hearted. For the most part, the



tunnels are low (approx 5 ft high, requiring bending down), cold, and early silent, but for the party's footfalls and crackling torches.

Encased in stone for days on end, a fine powdery dust clings to the PCs, smothering them with an earthy, claustrophobic smell. Light is fundamental and in short natural supply. In the absence of luminous moss/fungi (occasionally found), the utter blackness is oppressive and impenetrable. Adventurers will need significant light provisions (torches, lanterns, oil, etc) to complete their quest.

Travel to the "city" is abstracted below. The journey takes 5 days, assuming the party doesn't get lost. Every 12 hours (or other time period determined by the GM), check for *Navigation*, *Terrain & Conditions*, and *Random encounters*.

# **Navigation**

At least one party member, the navigator, makes an Int (Wilderness Lore) check to ensure the party is heading towards the city, and doesn't become lost. If they do become lost, roll 1d12.

WHILE YOU WERE LOST		
1d12	Event	
1	Roll on the <i>Terrain &amp; Conditions</i> table.	
2	The party loses another day whilst lost. Roll again.	
3	A random encounter occurs.	
4	1d4 mules or other animals are lost, injured or fall ill (equal chance, not including ranger pets).	
5	1d2 hirelings or NPCs are lost, injured or fall ill (equal chance, not including important NPCs).	
6	A random encounter occurs.	

7	One PC loses/uses up a random mundane item or bundle of items (climbing gear, rope, torches, etc).
8	One PC suffers exhaustion, losing 1 point of Str, Dex or Con (equal chance).
9	A random encounter occurs.
10	1d4 PCs' rations/water supplies are lost or used up (parasites, etc).
11	One player regales the group with a travel montage, a tale about their background, or other worldbuilding.
12	A random encounter occurs, then roll again.

# **Terrain & Conditions**

There is a 50% chance of a change in terrain and conditions. If a change occurs, roll 1d8:

TERRAIN & CONDITIONS		
1d8	Change	
1	Warm and/or more humid (nearby hot springs, magma currents or rising crevasse thermals). Other living things will be attracted to the area, increasing the chance of random encounters by 20%.	
2	Slippery. Similar but with greater rubble and scree scattered about. Making a double move in the area requires a Dex check to avoid falling prone part way through the movement.	
3	Overall <i>similar</i> conditions, but the nearby passages are more or less frequently used by others (+/- 10% chance to random encounters, even chance).	
4	Gas. Marked by pockets of harmful gas or fungi spores. A Luck (Con) save is required to avoid 1d2 Con loss (Miner's Lung) or 1d3 Int (Scob Spore).	
5	Wet (dripping limewater, large puddles and rivulets, underground stream or	



	river, subterranean moss forest). Other
	living creatures will be attracted,
	increasing the chance of random
	encounters by 20%, plus an additional
	1d3 creatures.
	Colder. This area is surrounded by
	particularly dense rock, insulating it
6	from distant underground heat sources.
	Resting here is more difficult, imposing
	a -2 penalty on Short Rest recoveries.
	Still. These tunnels are especially still
	and quiet, lacking the barest hint of
7	subterranean breezes. The echoes are
	incredible. Advantage on any hearing
	based Perception tests.
	Luminous. This sector is high in
	luminous moss/fungi, light reflecting
	stone, crawling glow bugs, etc, allowing
8	
0	the PCs to see (dimly) up to 100 ft. PCs
	may harvest temporary light provisions
	(1d2 days' worth, spoiling after 2d4
	days; moss shrivels, glow bugs die, etc).

# Journey Encounters

Check for an encounter (30% base chance). If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8, plus 2 after the first 24 hours of travel.

1. A bubbling sound forewarns the party of the enormous 200 ft cavern (50 ft high) ahead of them. Hot, burbling mud pools litter the area, regularly spraying scalding mud into the air (a hazy steam fills the cavern).

Crossing the cavern requires a *Luck* (Dex) check to avoid being randomly scalded for 3d6 damage (taking precautions, such as moving past geysers just after they've gone off, grants advantage). Living within the pools themselves are 3d6 heat resistant *Giant Mud Crabs*, hungry for soft flesh.

Giant Mud Crab, AC 17, HD 3, 2 x Claws 1d6+1, 19: the target is grabbed and automatically suffers claw damage at the start of its turn (action and Str contest to break free), S14 D10 C12 I3 P10 W8 Ch7, L6, Mv 30 ft inc up walls. Giant mud crabs are 4 ft wide, with strong claws and grey brown/green carapaces. They are immune to fire/heat damage.

- 2. Large webs begin cluttering passages. Whilst many are old and patchy, as the party proceeds they become increasingly thick and resilient. A single particularly old *Giant Spider* lairs here, living on large worms or making forays to the surface (as *Giant Spider* but 6 HD, Bite 1d8+1 + poison, *Luck* 10. *Boss Monster* with 45 hp).
- 3. Scattered fungi, growing in size until large enough to fill passageways completely (requiring cutting through), lead to a colossal underground forest, 500 ft across. The breadth of fungi here is immense, from tiny 2 inch *Red Cap* mushrooms to immense black and gold *Yellow Curtain* treeshrooms, tendrils clinging to the 100 ft ceiling.

Cultivating the forest are alienesque fungi pods with sucking, feeler like limbs lurching about. The pods are quasi sentient and aware that a human corpse makes for a fertile spawning vessel.

Fungi Pod, AC 11, HD 4, Tendril 1d10, 19: puff of toxic spores causing 1d4 Dex loss (Luck (Con) save for half), S12 D10 C17 I3 P12 W16 Ch4, L7, Mv 30 ft inc up walls and ceilings. Fungi Pods are 4 ft tall balled masses of toadstool, bowl and branch fungi, with elongated tendrils dragging them forward. A PC reduced to zero hp must be recovered in one round, or the body is lost (infested with toxic fungi spores, which grow to maturity in 2d4 weeks).



Careful searching of the forest might reveal the exceedingly rare *Morrigan's Bloom* (Perc (Apothecary) check, if trained may harvest 2d4 doses, a powder tincture that grants the user a *Hunger for Blood* effect for 1d4 rounds, at the end of which they lose 1d2 Will).

- 4. This series of winding passages grows increasingly narrow, until the way onward is barely a foot wide. Characters in bulky armour or otherwise heavily encumbered will have to remove their gear and pull it behind them to squeeze through. The slim corridor continues in this way for several hours, making travel very uncomfortable (Con check or 1 Str loss due to severe cramps).
- 5. Whilst navigating a fissure like corridor, there is a 50% chance of 3d6 *Rock Burrowing Annelids* bursting from the walls/ceiling/floor, drawn to the party's movement vibrations. PCs fighting in cramped conditions may only use small weapons, and suffer a penalty on attack rolls (-2 or disad, depending on the weapon).

Rock Burrowing Annelid, AC 10, HD 1, Acidic body slap 1d6, 19: target's weapon or armour damaged per *Injuries & Setbacks* table, S5 D6 C10 I2 P15 W16 Ch4, L4, Mv 20 ft or burrow 5 ft. Rock burrowing annelids are 5 ft long, 6 inch thick sinuous worms, with circular sucker maws, covered in highly potent acid (strips rock, steel, flesh, etc). They subside on smaller burrowing creatures but prefer to gorge on juicy mammals when possible.

6. The arched entry to this 50 ft cavern is adorned with simple dwarven runes (Int (General Lore) check reveals themes of protection and remembrance).

Inside are a series of simple tombs and cairns, seemingly quickly erected, yet sturdy enough to bear the ages. Engravings spouting virtues of dwarven grit, fearsome temperament and impressive beardiness can be found on most of the tombs ("As fulsome in beard as in courage", "As fiery in life as she wert in death", "No stone unturned, no skorn unhewed", etc).

If searched, most of the tombs contain something of value (total 1 x Carry Loot). One tomb in particular ("Toegrum Craghammer, quick to charge, slow to retreat. Rest in pieces my young friend.") contains a blemish free steel warhammer; "Khezek-Nor" or "Rising Wrath" is magical. If attuned to, the user causes +5 damage on hammer crits. Any further attunements over time (if any) are at the GM's discretion. Such a user invariably grows a rampant beard of quarrelsome tangles (grows to 6 inches by the end of the day even if shaved off, including females).

7. As the party approaches this massive chamber, the floor becomes damp, and loud dipping noises can be heard from ahead. The massive 600 ft cavern beyond (100 ft roof) is mostly taken up with a subterranean lake. The waters are jet black and still, but for regular drops falling from a multitude of ancient stalactites overhead.

The lake is too deep (30 ft) to wade across, but can be swum (if in heavy armour/encumbered, requires a Con check to avoid 1 Con loss due to exertion).

In the middle of the lake is a patch of perfect darkness; a floating 15 ft miasma of utter black that somehow seems to absorb torchlight. Anyone touching the



water there feels a gentle pull. Anyone entering it is sucked into a *Veil* portal and instantly transported to the *Black Lake* (Midlands p.286, Area 5).

- 8. Stuck to the ceiling and walls of this area are large splotches of dark green slime, caked in a layer of fine dust. The colony of 2d6 *Green Slime* has been dormant for years. They awaken 2d4 rounds after the party approaches within 120 ft.
- 9. A 200 ft chamber lined with twisting pillars from floor to ceiling. Spread about the floor are the carcasses of plague worms, rock scorpions and one or two *Urgot* (Chaagi), covered in a hard semi opaque residue. 2d6 *Tentacle Crawlers* use the chamber as a lair, excreting their foul carcass preserving saliva over victims.

Tentacle Crawlers, AC 13, HD 3, 2 x Choke/Claw 1d6+2, 19: special, S15 D10 C12 I2 P11 W10 Ch6, L4, Mv 30 ft or burrow 5 ft. Tentacle crawlers are subterranean omnivores, and generally only hostile if their lair is attacked. On a Nat 19, one of the creature's face tendrils injects 1d3 crawler larvae (about half an inch long) into the target (using a needle like proboscis concealed in the tendril and leech like anaesthesia). If undetected (Perc (Det) check at disad, or Int (Apoth) check), the victim vomits up foot long infant crawlers (1 hp) in 1d4 days (causing 3d6 damage and a Will check to resist a minor madness).

10. A relatively small chamber contains a 3 metre vein of silver ore (worth 2d4 x 100 gp if extracted, taking some hours with the right tools). Careful study of the vein reveals that parts of it appear to have been chipped away (on a Perc (Detection) great success, it looks more like tiny bite marks). 3d4 *Xornlings* are nearby, using their chameleonic abilities to hide from the party. If the PCs have large stores of

gold or any gems, the xornlings follow them, hoping for a chance to sneak into their packs (perhaps when the party sleep, or if they discard their packs to mine the ore vein).



# The Hanging City

Once home to more than 2,000 Chaagi, the population has dwindled over the years to 3d20 + 150 residents. Much of the "city" is abandoned, the people scattered across its many levels, forming small circles of sub-tribes. No matter the clan however, all of the Chaagi worship the undying *Xochnomogu*.

Xochnomogu AC 17, HD 12, 2 x Tentacles 2d4, plus 1d4+1 eye rays, 19: central eye 40 ft long 20 ft wide cone psychic blast (*Luck* (Will) save or *Confused*), S14 D12 C14 I16 P16 W19 Ch1, L12, Mv 30 ft flying. *Xochnomogu* is an *Aberrant Terror* with the usual benefits, *Minor Exploit Protection*, *Reroll Pool* and *Off Turn Attacks* (one random eye ray). At will *Strange Joining* (does not speak). Its eye ray attacks are (i) *Viridian Ray of Unmaking*, (ii) *Monstrous Subjugation*, (iii) *Affliction of the Eyeless Host*, (iv) *Lash of* 



Unerring Pain, (v) Glimpse the True Gods (vi) Insidious Slumber, (vii) Flesh to Stone, (viii) Ineffable Force (each eye stalk projects two different coloured rays).

Urgot, AC 11, HD 1+4, Club/Claw etc 1d6+1, 19: the target is cursed and loses 1 point of Luck, S13 D13 C16 I7 P9 W12 Ch6, L5, Mv 30 ft. Moan once/day, all creatures within 20 ft suffer a minor madness (Luck (Will) save resists). The urgot see better than humans in the dark, but still require light to see in complete darkness.

The *urgot* generally go about their daily life either half naked or in coarse robes weaved of fungi plant fibres, some quite colourful. The "priests" wear bleached white robes, spotted with black eye designs, and deep hoods.

The city itself can be broadly separated into five enormous subcaverns as outlined below. Unless otherwise indicated, the caverns are mostly cloaked in darkness, with occasional luminous moss or mushroom oil torches/slow burning "lantern" bowls.

Sneaking about the caverns is entirely possible, in the sense that most spaces are unoccupied. Bright light sources give away PCs or resident *urgot* from a distance, but creeping about with phospherant moss, shuttered lanterns, or dim glow stones allows greater stealth.

# (1) Mushroom Farm

This enormous cavern is 1,000 yards wide with a 200 ft ceiling. Crude stone buildings ring the boundary of a huge mushroom plantation. The fungi are a rainbow of colours, from muted browns to golden yellows, growing to as high as 8 ft, all of them edible (although some might need distilling, cooking or other treatments in order to remove certain toxicities).

5d10+20 *Urgot* are present farming the mushrooms at any one time. Searching the stone huts is unlikely to return much other than farming tools, baskets of preserved foodstuffs, and workers clothes (greeny grey tabards with many pockets).

# (2) Worship Cavern

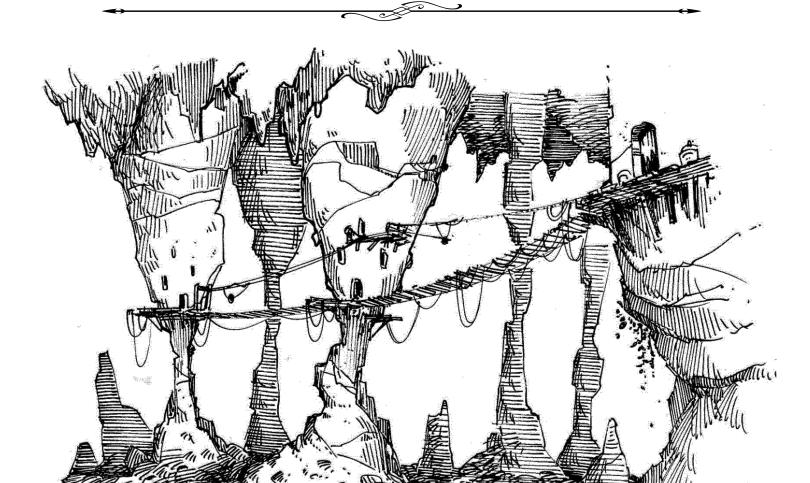
500 ft wide, entry to the worship cavern is via crude stone steps cut into the walls, descending to the cavern floor 100 ft below. Scattered stalagmites provide limited ground cover. In the centre of the room is a raised 30 ft high dais of igneous rock.

Unless already encountered or drawn away elsewhere, *Xochnomogu* is here, meditating above the *Mask of Distant Suns*. In addition to the aberrant terror, 2d6+5 Chaagi cultists are present, intoning sacred litanies to their demigod. One of them, *Ochnimyru*, is an *Urgozer*.

Ochnimyru, Urgozer, AC 11, HD 3+3, Dagger 1d4+2, 19: uncontrolled magic, roll on the Dark & Dangerous Magic table, S10 D14 C16 I14 P14 W14 Ch9, L7, Mv 30 ft. May choose from the following spells twice per combat: Insidious Shumber, Riddle of Bones, Shennog's Blessing, Lash of Unerring Pain (as 3rd level).

The Mask has four levels of attunement, granting the following effects. Whether the mask if magical, a device of high technology, or something else entirely is a matter for the GM.

- 1. The user may invoke *Strange Joining* three times per day.
- 2. The user may invoke *Soothing Edict* once every 1d4 days.
- 3. The user may invoke *Monstrous* Subjugation once every 1d4 days.



4. The user may invoke *Ineffable Force* once per week.

A character attuned to the mask has disadvantage on checks to resist madness.

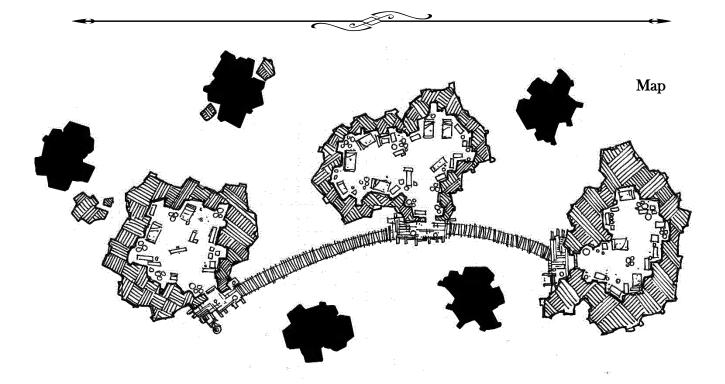
# (3) Abandoned Complex

One particularly large cavern, approximately 800 yards across, has been abandoned by the Chaagi. The interior of assorted huts and hanging caves are in a derelict state, and great fissures and cracks litter the ground. Few Chaagi live here for any extended period, except perhaps for a few exiles, including the wily *Numbusu* (3 HD, Int 14, Dex 15, advantage on stealth related checks).

The complex has been taken over by a colony of slow moving *Bore Ooze*; shiny, slick looking 2 ft undulating putrescenes of white colouration. The

bore ooze is somewhat akin to a leech, sucking the blood from victims until it turns scarlet then drops off in a sluggish torpor. Generally speaking, bore ooze are not deadly, but many are infected with *Scumpox* (foul smelling boils which pop to ooze thick white puss; causes 1d4 Dex loss over 1 week, a *Luck* (Con) check resists).

Bore Ooze AC 10, HD 1, Blood drain 1d3, 19: the ooze splits into two (full HD), S6 D6 C14 I2 P10 W15 Ch1, L4, Mv 20 ft inc walls, ceiling etc. Bore ooze are immune to weapon damage but suffer double damage from fire. They drop off a victim after causing a total of 3 damage. There is a 50% a particular Bore ooze carries Scumpox disease.



# (4) Hanging Caves

This 1,500 foot cavern has a 250 ft ceiling supported by huge rock columns, excavated by the Chaagi to form hanging caves. More than a hundred pillars include homes of approx 30 - 50 ft wide with 5 ft ceilings and open archways/windows. Many have rope and wood (hardened fungi material) bridges connecting them, forming a criss crossing network 100 ft off the ground. Mushroom oil braziers and torches are more common in this cavern than any of the others, but large swathes of darkness and shadow remain.

2d20 + 80 *Urgot* are present here when the PCs arrive (sleeping, eating, socialising, etc). Of those who are awake, approx half will be inebriated with *Mokmo*, a mind altering snuff dust that causes euphoria and *Slowness* (as *Incantation of Exhaustion*) for 1d4 hours.

Looting huts produces (roll 1d8): (i) 1 x Carry Loot (twice only), (ii) mushroom oil flask, (iii) fungi foodstuff, (iv) robes/cloaks/ceremonial garb, (v) random weapon, (vi)-(viii) nothing of consequence (just furniture, bedding, etc).

# (5) Underground River

A powerful underground river supplies the Chaagi with water, and often acts as their garbage disposal, carrying waste downstream to wherever the river leads. The river shore is never empty, with at least 3d6+20 Chaagi here gathering water in pots, washing clothes, bathing, socialising etc. Parts of the white sand river banks are stained red; from time to time sacrifices are made here, particularly exiles, whose bodies are dumped and swept away.

# **Random City Encounters**

There is a 40% chance of a random encounter every hour spent within the "city" caverns. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8:

- 1. 3d6 *Urgot* lugging sacks of mushroom harvest, their legs stained with dark soil from the knee down.
- 2. 1d4+2 *urgot* children, watching from nearby shadows. One of them lets out a squeak of fear, tipping off the group's location.



- 3. An old, drunken *urgot* with oversized eyes, sleeping off a fermented fungi binge. *Yun'nupp* is groggy if woken. He speaks only Chaagi, and will betray the party at the first opportunity.
- 4. 1d4 *Plague Worms* burrow up from the surface, hungry to feast on the party. If pressed hard, they attempt to retreat into their burrow holes. If any escape, they return 4d6 minutes later with 3d6 reinforcements.
- 5. A serious tremor rocks the complex, causing large shards of rock to drop from above. All PCs must make a *Luck* (Dex) save to avoid 4d6 damage, and a roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table.
- 6. The party stumbles upon an exceedingly rare adamantine vein, hidden behind a recently collapsed wall. If harvested (takes 1d4 hours with the right tools) it is worth 2d4 x 200 gp, enough to make a single weapon.

- 7. 3d6 *Urgot warriors* with chitin armour, shields and steel weapons, returning from a week long border patrol (as *Urgot* but AC 15, sword 1d8+2, Will 13, shield may negate one attack).
- 8. From or in a remote, shadowed area, 3d6 *Flying Lizards* (as *Vampire Bat*, but scaled and spined) dive bomb the party for their life giving blood.

# **Aftermath**

Whether or not the mask is retrieved, if *Xochnomogu* lives, its encounter with the party galvanizes it into action. It sends cultists to the surface, scouting for slaves and breeding stock.



# HIVE OF THE MUDMEN





# Hive of the Mudmen

Grand Librarian Bridonna, Disciple of Wodon, is offering good coin to investigate recent rumours of mudmen appearing along *Northgate's* borderlands.

Outlanders are reporting strange, humanoid creatures seemingly made of mud, traversing the borderlands of *Northgate*. As the months go by, the appearances grow closer and more frequent.

East of the city of *Northgate*, beneath the foothills of the *Ironhull Mountains*, are the hidden catacombs of a unique tribe of sentient humanoids; the *Mudmen*.

Mudmen are 5 ft, humanoid creatures, with earthy, sludge like flesh that oozily drips from their arms and torso. They have no legs, instead sliding across the ground (or wall, or ceiling) like a rolling wave. Mudmen possess insect like intelligence, communicating via chemical signals they exude through their skin, but are otherwise silent. Each member is an intrinsic part of a single, interconnected hive mind, exchanging information via touch, shape and pheromones.

Mudman, Drone, AC 13, HD 3+1, 2 Fists 1d6+1 or Throw Glob 1d8 (120 ft), 19: special, S16 D8 C12 I2 P9 W13 Ch7, L6, Mv 30 ft (inc up walls, ceiling, etc). On a nat 19, a random body part is trapped in heavy, solidified mud (roll 1d6: (i) head, (ii) left arm, (iii) right arm, (iv) left leg, (v) right leg, (vi) chest) and effectively petrified for 1d4 hours (action to break free, Str contest vs Str 16). Mudmen may squeeze through narrow cracks at half normal speed, suffer double damage from

fluid based attacks, and lose 1 HD per round if submerged in water. They see as well in darkness as in light.

The subterranean *Core*, a 50 ft tall, 70 ft wide mound of ancient mud in a colossal cavern, is where the mudmen spawn from, seeping into being via a kind of mitosis. The Core itself is a living entity in its own right; an overarching intellect that binds all of the *mudmen* together, supporting and directing their activities.



In this adventure, the *Core* has recently awoken after generations of hibernation, and commenced spawning. During the last few months, mudmen have begun appearing along *Northgate's* borderlands, but disappear before rangers are able to investigate further. The *Core* has detected an earth node suitable for transmogrification into a secondary core somewhere near (or beneath?)



*Northgate*, and wants to know what it will have to contend with once its drones create a sinkhole there.

The PCs might become involved in this adventure by (i) being hired by *Grand Librarian Bridonna* (disciple of *Wodon*, god of knowledge) to investigate the *mudmen*, or (ii) accidentally running across the sinkhole leading to the hive while exploring the foothills at large.

# A Hive Mother, you say?

Grand Librarian Bridonna (50's, silver haired, stern but insightful, Bard 3), of the Tower of Wodon, is offering 500 gp to investigate the recent appearance of the mudmen. She is concerned that the Anointed (a religious order controlling Northgate) are not taking the threat seriously, and has decided to organise a response of her own.

The librarian has researched the creatures, and whilst her information is patchy at best, believes the *mudmen* spawn from a controlling "hive mother"; a large subterranean monstrosity almost certainly resistant to conventional weapons. *Bridonna* has therefore commissioned three backpack sized, alchemical bombs to deal with the monster (configured with one minute mechanized timers). *Bridonna* would be content if the PCs return with some concrete information re the scale of the *mudmen* threat, but if they find the progenitor, they are to destroy it if possible (500 gp bonus). *Bridonna* is able to provide the general area the mudmen were last seen by rangers.

# Traveling the Foothills

The GM decides how long the journey is to the hive site, somewhere in the foothills of the *Ironhull Mountains*. The terrain is initially flat and

easy going, but soon develops into sloping hills with pockets of forested woods. There is a 30% chance of a random encounter every 8 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8 (+2 during the last day of travel):

- 1. 6d6 *Skorn* (*Beastmen*) are performing a cannibalistic rite, devouring their elderly and sick. The screams of the dying can be heard well before the party draws near.
- 2. A pack of 3d4 *Wolves* are prowling the area, on the hunt for some easy prey. The pack is led by two ferocious white *Dire Wolves* (a male and female).
- 3. *Cedric*, the sole survivor of a ranger patrol that ventured too far, is dozing under a stony ridge. He is bloodied and dishevelled, in a state of persistent shock, unable to process the horrors he witnessed.
- 4. The occasional red flower with crescent shaped, purplish leaves appears from time to time in the party's vicinity. An Int (Wilderness Lore) check reveals they are rare *Pepperblood* plants (one flower may be converted into a poison with 3d20 gp worth of herbalism ingredients (contact, immediate effect, causes agony in living targets imposing disad on attack rolls, lasts 1d4 rounds, *Luck* (Con) save resists).
- 5. A colossal shadow darkens the sun as a *Roc* (if day) or *Gargantuan Bat* (if night, blocking the moon, as Roc but with echolocation) swoops overhead. The monster is either on the hunt (50%) or



returning to the nest with a kill (a struggling bison).

- 6. 3d10 *Thuels* (barbarians) are scouting this area, searching for the rare *Pepperblood* plant (see entry 4). They'll settle for robbing the party of any obvious steel or other valuables before turning them loose in the wilds, however.
- 7. A swarm of flying, 3 inch mosquitos plague the party, requiring a *Luck* (Con) save to avoid contracting *Fleshsmear Rash*; infecting the skin with painful, blotchy bruises (lose 1 Cha or Con (even chance) every 48 hours, new *Luck* save every 1d6 days to shake the illness).
- 8. The skeletal remains of 1d3 unfortunate explorers are half buried in long grass, mud or rocky scree. The corpses are absent limbs, heads or large parts of their torso, clearly torn out by monstrous teeth or claws. The explorers gear (1d3 random weapons and 1d3 misc equipment), a circular shield, and 1 x Carry Loot may be scavenged from the site.
- 9. An odd, and very loud clicking noise heralds the approach of the *Bald Dread Worm* (see Area 2). It is out hunting, tracking the party via scent/echolocation.
- 10. As the party crests a steep rise, they spot a *Mudman* keeping watch on the next hill (a group *Luck* (Dex) check allows the party to duck down and remain hidden from view). If the *mudman* notices the party, it flees, heading for the sinkhole (use the

Chase rules). If caught, it silently fights to the death, never uttering a sound. It leaves chemical signals for its kin, warning them of humans approaching (will not be picked up for 1d8 hours, when the next mudman appears to take over sentry duty).

# The Sinkhole

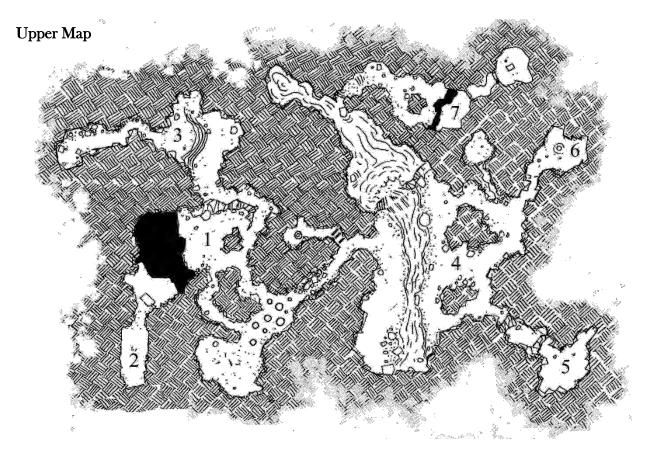
The entrance to the hive is a 30 ft diameter sinkhole situated at the lowest confluence of three steep, tree lined hills. A number of trees close to the gaping hole tilt precariously (clambering onto them requires a *Luck* (Dex) check to avoid dislodging and sliding into the hole).

The sinkhole is damp, approx 400 ft deep, and the bottom cloaked in darkness. Climbing down is somewhat dangerous, as sections of the walls are prone to sloughing away, but careful placement of pitons (Int (Athletics) check) and/or tying off to a sturdy tree will avoid falling. Free climbing the hole is spectacularly dangerous, requiring a series of Str (Athletics) checks to avoid falling to one's death. Either way, negotiating the climb is taxing, and requires a Con check to avoid losing 1 point of Str or Dex (even chance) due to exhaustion.

There is a 40% chance of 1d3 *Mudmen* climbing up the sinkhole as the party descend (they are about to set off on scouting mission). If they spot the party, one attempts to flee back down and warn its fellows. The others attack, seeking to drive off the invaders.

If the party reaches the bottom, they enter Area 1. The hive is dark but generally lit by phospherant moss (disad on sight checks), cool, and damp. The tunnels appear naturally formed, about 6 ft in





diameter, and slick with mud. Humans running through the passages require a Dex check to avoid falling prone part way through their movement.

# Random Encounters in the Hive

The following table provides some possible random encounters while the party explores the hive's winding passages and chambers. GMs might like to roll on the table (1d10) when the party lingers in one spot for too long, or when entering a chamber that is not otherwise detailed.

1. 1d4 *Mudmen* are in this area, or enter it from a side passage, carrying random pieces of equipment (weapons, armour, trinkets) with them. They are on their way to/from Area 5.

- 2. 2d4 *Mudlings* (see Area 9) are oozing their way around this chamber, practicing their chemical signals and body morphing. Their progress is being monitored by 1d3 *Mudmen*.
- 3. The hive has *Sensor Tubercles* spread about it, implanted by *mudmen* drones, with hidden tendrils connecting back to the *Core*. The tubercle here appears as a dry patch of mud that weeps a black, tar like substance.

The nodule is immobile, senses living creatures up to 60 ft (Perc 13), and can emit/receive chemical signals. If the nodule detects the party, that information is immediately known by the *Core*. If damaged, the nodule has 10 hp, and



belches toxic smelling gas causing 3d6 damage (*Luck* (Con) save for half).

- 4. Petrifying Spray Trap. This chamber or passageway is trapped with a 15 ft section of bubbling, hive-mud, that spews forth quartz like muck that hardens to stony foam near instantly (Luck (Dex) save negates, else helpless for 1d6 x 10 mins, may by broken free by causing 4d8 hp damage). The trap connects to the Core via hidden tendrils and alerts it to any intruders. If the trap is activated, 3d4 mudmen appear within 2d4 rounds.
- 5. *Mud Geyser Trap*. This section of passage or entryway is trapped with a searing hot mud geyser. The sphincter like opening of crusted mud vents steam from time to time (30% chance, automatically noticed by PCs, otherwise Perc check to spot the vent on the ceiling). Passing by has a 50% chance of setting off the geyser, causing 5d6 damage (*Luck* (Dex) save negates). The geyser fires once every 1d4 hours.
- 6. *Dead End Blockage*. This chamber or passage includes a *Sensor Tubercle* (see Entry 3). If humans are detected, it activates a cave in, preventing further passage in this direction. Digging through the mudslide is possible, but would take hours even with the right tools.
- 7. *Monster Chute*. This area includes a *Sensor Tubercle* (see Entry 3), which if activated opens a nearby chute to deposit some monsters (which the *mudmen* previously trapped, and store in a hidden

- chamber). It takes one round for the monsters to be "squeezed" out of the sphincter like opening. The creatures are invariably ravenous and very angry. Roll 1d6: (i) 1d6 *Giant Scorpions*, (ii) 2d4 *Stirges*, (iii) 3d4 *Skorn*, (iv) a *Hammersnail*, (v) 1d6 *Dire Wolves*, (vi) 2d4 *Giant Centipedes*.
- 8. Quicksand Prison. A nearby area is trapped with quicksand (appears as normal mud, but a Perc (Detection) check at disadvantage might notice the mud is extra "fluid") that sucks a PC down a 15 ft passage and into a 7 ft diameter prison cave (Luck (Str or Dex) save resists). If a PC is sucked down, the quicksand and tube hardens to stone in 1d4 rounds. If the PC is not rescued before this, he/she is likely to starve if not dug out (takes many hours).
- 9. 3d4 *Mudmen* patrolling the hive and checking scent markers. They attack the party on sight, and silently fight to the death.
- 10. 2d4 *Xornlings*, of no interest to the *mudmen*, are passing through this area, attracted to the party's precious metals. They will attempt to scuttle onto the roof and drop into PC backpacks, hoping to feast on any silver, gold, gems, etc.

# Area 1 - Entry Cavern

About 400 ft down, the sinkhole opens up into a 40 ft by 30 ft cavern, the western third of which continues to drop into the black depths. Where the sinkhole finally ends is for the GM to determine, but dropping a rock into the hole does



not generate any sound indicating the bottom. Slick mud covers the floor of this entire chamber, and criss crossing mudmen tracks cover the walls.



# Area 2 - Bald Dread Worm

A Bald Dread Worm (a pasty skinned, eyeless, 25 ft invertebrate with enormous jaws) lives in this chamber, largely ignoring the mudmen which it can't eat. The monster mostly sleeps, but will detect the scent of any nearby humans with a successful Perc check (or alternatively might be automatically woken by the party if they are loud). The worm attacks immediately, eager to feast on the party's delicious juices.

Bald Dread Worm, Boss Monster, AC 15, HD 11 (80 hp), Bite 2d10+2, 19: special, S21 D10 C19 I2 P13 W10 Ch4, L11, Mv 40 ft or burrow 5 ft. Boss Monster with Major Exploit Protection, Off Turn Attacks, Causes Injuries. On a nat 19, the target is swallowed (victim may attack the monster's guts with a small weapon such as a dagger, auto suffering 2d10 crushing and acidic damage on the monster's turn). Echolocation 240 ft.

If the worm is defeated, the detritus of unfortunate *barbarians* and *skorn* are lumped together at the back of the cave (1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Valuables).

# Area 3 - Sentries

This approx 30 ft cavern is 20 ft high with a 5 ft wide passage branching off to the west. Most of the space has been naturally formed but sections have been crudely dug out by the *mudmen* (which are able to dissolve rock/earth, given sufficient time). 2d4 *Sentry Mudmen* (larger, 6 ft, specially spawned for this purpose) wait here. They will attack any intruders and attempt to push them down the hole in Area 1.

Mudman, Sentry, AC 15, HD 5+1, 2 Fists 1d8+1 or Throw Glob 2d6 (180 ft), 19: special, S18 D11 C15 I2 P15 W13 Ch7, L8, Mv 30 ft (inc up walls, ceiling, etc). On a nat 19, target's weapon is engulfed in hardened mud and stuck to the floor (1d4 minutes to break the weapon free). Mudmen may squeeze through narrow cracks at half normal speed, suffer double damage from fluid based attacks, and lose 1 HD per round if submerged in water. They see as well in darkness as in light.

If the party defeat the mudmen, it becomes apparent that the creatures are not entirely made of "mud"; they have a skeleton of a kind (albeit an extremely flexible one), with a spine, skull and arms/hands.

# Area 4 - Mud Baths

This approx 60 ft by 50 ft cavern has a 40 ft ceiling (beyond the reach of most torches), and is filled with steam. In the middle of the chamber is a sluggish, popping river of hot mud (hot enough to make steam, but not hot enough to burn), that flows northwest before dropping down a 60 ft "mudfall" and continues on.



This area is primarily used for socialising; the *mudmen* clean themselves, bathe in the mud river, groom each other, exchange chemical signals, and eat here (they ingest certain kinds of dirt/mud/stone). There are 5d4 *mudmen* engaging in the above behaviours at any one time. If the residents here have been alerted to PCs' presence, they will assist the sentries in Area 3, and/or send a messenger to inform the *Core*. If possible the *mudmen* will try and drown the PCs in the mud river (the mudmen do not breathe in the usual sense).

If the PCs surveil the *mudmen*, they will notice they occasionally get carried upriver by the sluggish stream and disappear beneath the northwest rockface. The mud river carries them to Area 8 (Lower Map). The swim takes 15 rounds, which might require Con checks from some PCs to avoid drowning (no other way to reach the lower level).

# Area 5 - Storage Chamber

Although the *mudmen* drones have no real intellect, the *Core* exhibits a degree of creativity, cunning and growing understanding. It remembers, in millennia past, the fleshy bipeds that tried to destroy it, driving it deep below ground to escape. As a result, the mudmen intrinsically seek to exterminate blood & bone humanoids at every turn.

Whilst the core does not comprehend the nature of human equipment, it is beginning to learn, and the mudmen store various stolen artefacts in this chamber (1d6 random equipment pieces, 1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Valuables and 3 x Trinkets & Curios), which the mudmen study from time to time.

# Area 6 - Food Geyser

This 15 ft cavern is marked by a 2 ft wide hot mud geyser, that occasionally spurts out torrents of

black, glutinous muck that the *mudmen* find delectable. There is a 50% chance the geyser is active when the PCs are near, its chemical signature drawing 2d4 *mudmen* to the chamber to feast. PCs observing this might be able to bottle some of the slush and release it later as a distraction (or cover someone in it, and lead the *mudmen* on a chase), or trigger the geyser to erupt through magic, explosives (including fire pots or one of the backpack bombs provided by *Bridonna*, or other means at the GM's option).



# Area 7 - Strange Statue

This 20 ft chamber can only be reached by passing through two primitive, hardened mud doors (Str check to move aside). In the centre of the cave is a dirty and seemingly ancient 4 ft statue of fire topaz (worth  $2d4 \times 500$  gp, but extremely heavy), depicting a humanoid creature with a bulbous nose, large teeth, and a single stump like appendage instead of legs. If the mud is scraped



away from the base, barely perceivable hieroglyphs of a long dead language may be read. A PC with Arcane Lore might recognise the iconography for *Norlebsorgu* (a demon, or perhaps alien force, thought to be connected with evolution, rebirth and transmogrification). The *mudmen* were in fact once humans, then cursed *Urgot*, and finally after many millennia, devolved into the insect like *mudmen*. When *mudmen* "die" of old age, they come here and dissolve into the floor, walls, etc.

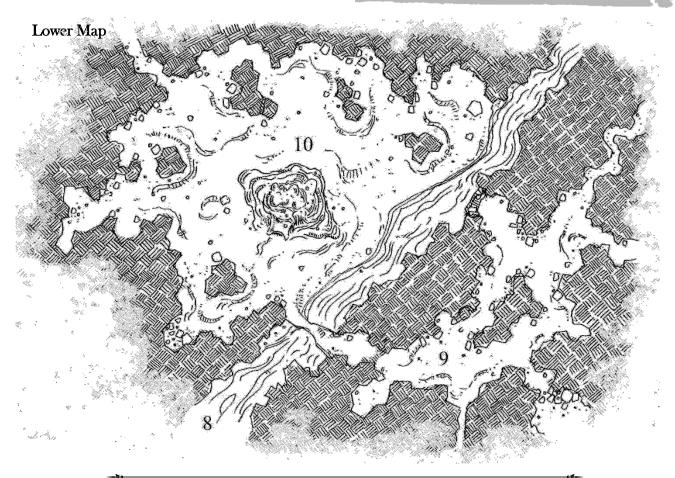
# Area 8 - River of Mud

The sluggish mud river emerges from the rockface into the large cavern of Area 10. A 20 ft long, 5 ft wide natural stone bridge spans part of the river, low enough that a PC could reach up and climb out (Str check). If a PC remains in the mud flow until the northeast corner, they are dragged under and suffocate (the river does not resurface again). A Dex (Athletics) check allows one last chance to grab onto the rockface to avoid such a fate.

# Area 9 - Mudling Cave

This approx 20 ft by 60 ft cavern has an enormous pillar of rock in the centre, dividing it into a kind of oval circuit. In the southern section are 3d6 *Mudlings*; infant 2 ft mudmen that were recently spawned, shuffling about and eating, being monitored or groomed by 1d6 *Mudmen* (located in the northern section). The newly formed monstrosities will not understand what a human is, and will simply mistake them for strange smelling *mudmen*.

Mudling, AC 11, HD 1, Bite 1d4 or Throw Glob 1d4 (90 ft), 19: special, S10 D4 C10 I2 P6 W8 C5, L4, Mv 20 ft (inc up walls, ceiling, etc). On a nat 19, the mudling's attack tears itself apart. Mudlings may squeeze through narrow cracks at half normal speed, suffer double damage from fluid based attacks, and die if submerged in water. They see as well in darkness as in light.





The various tunnels branching off from this main chamber lead to a multitude of warrens, drone caverns, steam baths, and whatever else the GM might wish. Many hundreds of mudmen live and work in these tunnels; attempting to clear the entire hive would be almost certain death. Whether the PCs might be able to block one or more tunnels by some means is left to GM discretion, but certainly one of Bridonna's backpack bombs would do the trick (one bomb per tunnel).

# Area 10 - The Core

This large 150 ft by 70 ft cavern has an 80 ft ceiling, five large 10/15 ft wide pillars supporting the ceiling, and is filled with steam emanating from the mud river. In the centre of the chamber is the *Core*; a 70 ft wide (at its base), 60 ft high, hive like mound of flexing, creaking, hardened mud with oozing cracks, connected to the various *sensor tubercles* spread about the complex via rootlike tendrils.

At the time the PCs arrive here, there are 3d4 *Carer Drones* milling about, cleaning the *Core*, feeding it via its enormous frontal tube, grooming it, etc (same stats as *mudmen*, but 2 HD, effectively blind non-combatants, making their way by touch and pheromone only, they do not leave the cavern).

The *Core* has 1d3 *Sensor Tubercles* (see entry 3 growing on it with 120 ft range, and senses chemical pheromones to a similar distance. If the PCs douse themselves in *mudmen* "flesh", and masquerade as *mudmen*, they might fool it, but a Dex Stealth check vs Perc is required at disad each round.

As soon as the *Core* detects the party, it disgorges 1d4 *Core Hiveguards* (lumbering 8 ft *mudmen* with hardened plates) from its feeding tube to attack:

Core Hiveguard, AC 18, HD 7+1, 2 Fists 2d6+1 or Throw Glob 3d6 (240 ft), 19: special, S19 D11 C18 I2 P10 W17 Ch5, L9, Mv 40 ft (inc up walls, ceiling, etc). Hiveguard have Major Exploit Protection. On a nat 19, a random body part is transmuted into a shower of mud (ie destroyed, Luck (Dex) save resists or roll 1d6: (i) head, (ii) left arm below elbow, (iii) right arm below elbow, (iv) left leg below knee, (v) right leg below knee, (vi) genitals. Hiveguard may squeeze through narrow cracks at half normal speed, suffer double damage from fluid based attacks, and lose 1 HD per round if submerged in water. They see as well in darkness as in light.

The Core, Boss Monster, AC 21, HD 20 (227 hp), Acid Mud Spray 3d10 range 240 ft, 19: the Core disgorges a Core Hiveguard, S- D- C24 I3 P10 W20 Ch10, L16, Mv Immobile. The Core is a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits. It is immune to non-magical weapons except silver and adamantine.

# Mudmen Reinforcements

As soon as the *Core* thinks it is in trouble, it summons waves of *mudmen* to aid it. Resolve this as 2d4 *mudmen* appearing from nearby tunnels/mud river at the beginning of every round until either the PCs are dead or the *Core* destroyed.

# Backpack Bombs

PCs wishing to use the backpack bombs might do so in the number of ways, for example:

- (i) Destroying at least 3 of the 5 pillars will cause a cave in (one bomb per pillar),
- (ii) Strapping at least 2 bombs to nodules on the *Core* (placing them nearby will



not sufficiently punch through the monstrosity's armour), or

(iii) Carrying at least 1 bomb into the monster's frontal feeding tube (just throwing a bomb at the maw causes the monster to instinctively close it, and the bomb bounces away). Being inside the tube automatically causes 3d10 crushing damage on the *Core's* turn, and requires an action to squeeze out (Str contest vs Str 24).

The bombs have a set timer of one minute (approx 10 rounds; the time required for the chemical reaction). At the GM's option, a PC might be able to hotwire the device to explode in 30 secs (5 rounds) or later up to 4 mins (Int check, at disad, requiring specialised tools that an artificer or inventor might carry).

If the bombs explode as noted above, the *Core* is automatically destroyed, along with all of the mudmen (they turn catatonic, then dissolve into piles of mud and bone over 1d4 hours). PCs within 10 ft of an exploding bomb are reduced to

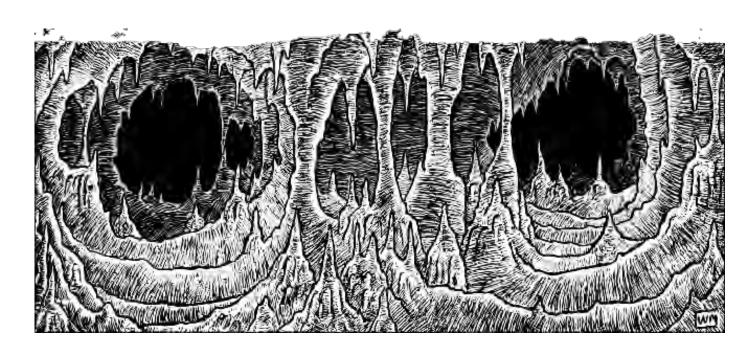
zero hp. PCs caught in a cave-in must make a *Luck* (Dex) save at disadvantage to escape, otherwise they are reduced to zero hp.

Naturally, the *Core* does not want to be destroyed, and will take steps to defend itself. Although it is beginning to learn about human technology, it is far from understanding it, and will not appreciate the danger it is in if bombs are attached to it, etc.

However, its *Carer Drones* recognise the bombs as foreign, and will spend an action to pull them off, and take them to the river to dispose of them (ie PCs will need to keep the carer drones away from the bombs).

# Aftermath

If the PCs manage to get some useful information about the size of the hive to *Librarian Bridonna*, she is happy and pays them as agreed, keeping them in mind for future work. If the party manages to destroy the *Core*, she is thrilled, pays the bonus, and spreads word of their competence to other important NPCs. If the *Core* is not destroyed, a sinkhole eventually appears in one of *Northgate's* quarters, and *mudmen* invade the city.



# LAST OF THE LONGBEARDS





# Last of the Longbeards

House Invero of Dol-Karok is seeking explorers to locate some misplaced property in the Lost Roads. They are offering a very handsome finder's fee.

# Dol-Karok

Dol-Karok, the Mountain Fortress, is the subterranean city of the albino Karoks, an old, wealthy and decadent human culture that has persisted since the Second Age.

The city is located within a colossal cavern, connected to many smaller chambers, tunnels and grottos like branching veins. Pyramids and ziggurats of the Great Houses and other landmarks rise above the smaller flat roofed buildings of the lower castes, the streets straight and expertly carved, with perfectly fashioned tiles and breathtaking bas reliefs.

Trade occupies every waking moment in the mountain fortress, with ambassadors from far and wide bargaining for precious metals, gems and other rare goods the mountain folk control.

The last of the dwarves languish here, numbering in their hundreds, toiling endlessly in the mines beneath the whips of their albino masters. Overcome by a combination of racial gold lust and indoctrinated despair, the branded *servitors* (as they are known) bear no resemblance to the grand longbeards of yesteryear.

Yet not all servitors are resigned to their fate. Two years ago, a band of fifty dwarves escaped into the tunnels of the *Lost Roads. House Invero* has finally managed to locate their slaves' hidey hole, and wants someone expendable to retrieve their "property" so that the House can make an example of them.





Like all the great houses, *Invero* has its fingers in many pies, but their speciality is servants and slaves, reflected in their shackle sigil. The newest member of the *Circle of Five* (the ruling council of the city), *Invero* is in the middle of fending off a hostile takeover by a trio of smaller houses, and securing the lost slaves would go a long way to restoring face since the escape two years earlier.

Mithri Invero (elderly, silver hair with a hunch back and walking cane) is offering 200 gp for each live slave, or 50 gp for their heads. He can provide a guide (Horgak, a dark skinned barbarian tracker in the house's employ, Ranger 2) to the dwarves last known location (as of a week ago). If the Mithri fears the party might not take up the work because of "slavery" issues, he will increase the bounty up to double, but no more. If the party still aren't interested, so be it.

# The Lost Roads

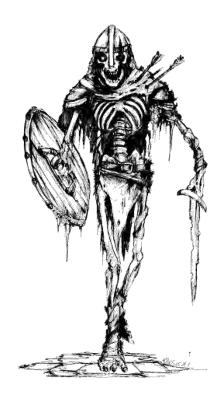
The *Lost Roads* are a winding complex of tangled, unpatrolled and primeval tunnels that extend beyond the edges of Dol-Karok's garrisoned borders. Few explorers brave these shafts, as most do not return, but those that do report veins of iron ore ripe for the taking.

Unfortunately, they also report plague worms, acidic oozes, choking spore fungi and worse besides. Legend suggests the *Lost Roads* eventually make their way to the northern side of the ranges, and the *White Drifts* beyond. But if that be so, no human has made the journey in centuries.

The passages and caverns of the *Lost Roads* are completely dark, breezeless and stifling to those unused to confined spaces. After 3 days of navigating the tunnels, a Will check is required by foreign PCs to avoid gaining a moderate madness: "The stink of the mountain stifles me; its grit and dust, the cloying air heavy on my lungs. It is hard to breathe, is it not? By the gods, I cannot linger much longer in the smothering black. I must out, I tell you, and soon!"

The journey to the servitor's hiding place, an ancient temple of a dead civilization, is at least five days trek into the mountain. There is a 40% chance of a random encounter every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d10:

- 1. A *Gelatinous Cube* fills a section of this 10 ft wide tunnel, distorting the air with a slight opaqueness (Perc (Detection) check to notice). It has been a long time since the hibernating cube fed. Its body is devoid of bones or other tell tale remains of past victims.
- 2. A small ore deposit of *mithral* (70%) or *adamantine* (30%) can be seen in the ceiling here if the light catches it correctly (Perc (Detection) check). With time and the right tools, the vein may be extracted; enough to fashion a breastplate, shield or similar.



3. 3d10 *Skeletons* guard a large cavern, an ancient leyline site "blessed" by a long dead druid.



4. 2d4 five ft *Fungoids* are living in a winding corridor, hiding amongst a miniature forest of mundane fungi.

Fungoid, AC 10, HD 5, 2d6, 19: special, S15 D5 C14 I1 P10 W8 Ch4, L8, Mv 20 ft and may climb walls, ceiling etc. As an action, may spew sticky strands over a single target within 10 ft, preventing them from moving away (target may spend an action to make an opposed Str check to break free). On a natural 19, the toadstool blasts the target with toxic spores, causing 1 HD loss every 24 hours for 1d3 days. An apothecary with the right healing herbs may be able to neutralise the poison.

- 5. Bergrim (Ranger 3, blonde beard, scarred, with a powerful build) is one of Invero's escaped servitors, fairly deranged (paranoid: he believes a sorcerer is searching for him to cut out his heart) and had a falling out with his kin. Bergrim makes his own way in the tunnels, sneaking about and subsisting on monstrous worms and other "dark delicacies". Craziness aside, Bergrim is a careful and resourceful subterranean ranger. He is extremely lonely, and might prove a useful guide for a time.
- 6. 1d6 *Plague Worms* (see Area 15) are burrowing through the tunnels nearby, tracking the party with tremor sense.
- 7. The skeleton of a long dead giant scorpion is here, brittle with age. Its skull is caved in by means of blunt trauma. Two human skeletons are also present, armour broken and torn. One lies slumped again the wall, a hammer by its side (still in excellent condition, random permanent magical item).
- 8. A truly enormous 12 ft *Giant Centipede* (but 7 HD, *Luck* 9, 2d6+1 damage, poison causes 1d3 Dex loss, *Off Turn Attacks*), is curled up into a ball in a

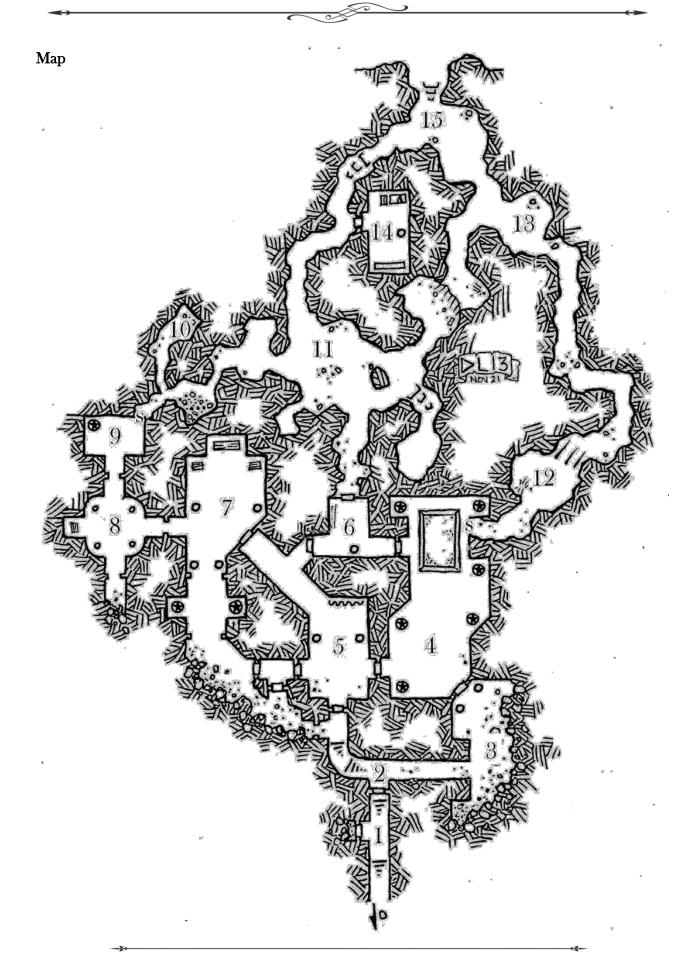
corner, covered in dust. It has been hibernating for some months.



- 9. The ceiling or floor of this tunnel is dangerously fragile, care of a *Bulette's* recent burrowing. A Group *Luck* (Dex) save is required to avoid a partial roof collapse or 20 ft pitfall, causing 2d6 damage.
- 10. A *Grey Ooze* begins tracking the party from behind, attempting to lure a PC away with its telepathic abilities.

# Temple of Nogerzu

The *Nogerzu* were a race of goatmen, proficient in stonework and bronze metallurgy. Their main civilization thrived in the high mountains, but explorers also scouted new southern lands. The temple served as a stop over while journeying the deep roads, and as a marker of the goatmen's southernmost boundary.





Wiped out early in the Second Age, the *Nogerzu* temple still remains, hidden a few days journey beyond the borders of *Dol-Karok*.



There are two entrances to the temple. One to the south (formal entry, Area 1) and one to the north (back entry, Area 15). The party's guide, *Horgak* is aware of the front entrance, and suspects there may be a back entrance, but is uncertain (he ventured nearby Area 15, tracking *Bergrim* (random encounter 5 above), but fled from the *Plague Worms*). *Horgak* can lead the party through some winding tunnels that connect to Area 15 however if they wish (takes two extra hours of travel).

If the party asks *Horgak* how he knows the dwarves are within, he explains he followed two different servitors to the front entrance. He did not venture into the entry way itself however, as he could hear multiple voices coming from within (which he surmised were guards, after a few attempts). By then he felt he had accomplished his mission, and reported back to the Mithri.

Generally speaking, the interior of the temple is crudely worked stone, with large flagstones set into the floor. Ink based murals are faded but still readable, depicting scenes of goatmen dancing, hunting or mating. Great mountains and bonfires feature prominently. Pictures of men are rare, but when they appear relate to scenes of war and feasting. Doors are unlocked, ancient wood, brittle and easily broken (automatic for Str 12+, otherwise advantage).

The dwarves keep the temple lit with cultivated *gloomspore*, which gives off an eerie green luminescence. Occasionally lanterns and torches are also used, periodically restocked via sympathetic contacts within *Dol-Karok*.

# **Temple Encounters**

Whilst exploring the unnumbered sections of the temple complex, there is a 30% chance of an encounter every 15 mins. Roll 1d6 or select from the following:

- 1. 1d3 *Dwarves* turn the corner, dragging ore to or from Area 5 in large sacks. At the sight of the PCs, they drop the sacks and reach for their hammers/picks.
- 2. An infant *Bulette*, befriended and adopted by the dwarves, comes burrowing out of the wall, uncertain what to make of the PCs (as *Bulette* but 4 HD, 2d6 damage, S19).
- 3. *Shuzar*, the partner of *Gimric*, is on patrol in the halls with 1d3 other dwarves (as *Dwarf* but 2 HD and S16). He and his crew will attempt to capture the PCs and take them to *Gimric*.
- 4. This area is very poorly lit, most of the *gloomspore* has been recently consumed by a *Green Slime* that spawned from cracks in the ceiling.



- 5. A gentle tremor rocks the tunnel, releasing a cloud of noxious gas. The PCs must make a *Luck* (Con) check or lose 1 Con. The gas dissipates in 1d4 rounds.
- Gimric (Area 4) is travelling the corridors, certain that he has picked up the scent of some curious precious metals. The scent leads him to the PCs.

# Cavern Encounters

Whilst exploring the unnumbered sections of the caverns, there is a 50% chance of an encounter every 30 mins. Roll 1d6 or select from the following:

- 1. 1d3 *Plague Worms* from Area 15 are exploring here, curious about the ground vibrations the party are causing.
- 2. 1d10 *Stirges* have grown restless and are out hunting without the rest of the swarm in Area 12.
- 3. A single *Tentacle Spawn* has ventured up from the deep tunnels and is exploring this near surface region (it bypassed the *Plague Worms* using its mental blast).
- 4. A growing tremor culminates in a sudden explosion of rock, heralding the arrival of a colossal *Purple Worm!* The behemoth thrashes its way across the corridor, massive jaws snapping, before burrowing through the opposite wall and beyond. 1d3 PCs must make a *Luck* (Dex) save or be swallowed by the monster as it passes. The beast's tunnel collapses behind it as it departs.
- 5. A *Giant Spidercrab* is exploring this area, scuttling across the ceiling, hiding in large, shadowed recesses (as *Giant Spider* but with 2 Claw (1d6+2) attacks as well as the usual Bite).

6. A *Speckled Ooze* is hiding behind some rubble, waiting to ambush a meal.

Speckled Ooze, AC 13, HD 7, Pseudopod 4d4 + special, 19: the ooze puffs out a toxic cloud, 15 ft radius, causing 1d6 Int or Will loss (50/50 chance, Luck (Con) save resists), S18 D14 C17 I2 P14 W15 Ch1, L9, Mv 5 ft burrow or 30 ft (inc walls, ceiling, etc). On a hit, victims suffer 1d8 damage due to painful flesh melting for the next 1d4 rounds (alcohol negates).

# Area 1 - Front Entrance

A 10 ft wide, 50 ft long arched tunnel with iconography of dancing goatmen marks the front entryway to the temple. The doorway to the west cannot be opened, the chamber beyond collapsed centuries earlier. Two dwarves are on sentry duty here at all times (30% chance both asleep, in a drunken stupor or amorous tryst).

Dwarf, AC 15 (heavy chain), HD 1, Axe 1d8+1 (two handed), 19: as weapon, S11 D9 C13 I10 P10 W10 Ch10, L4, Mv 30 ft. Advantage on checks vs magic or poison. The sentries each carry warhorns and a single fire pot.

If the sentries detect the party, they do not attempt to fight, but rather rush to Area 5 for reinforcements. If trapped they will blow their warhorns.

# Area 2 - Trap

The dwarves have trapped this corridor junction with an extremely large and heavy dropstone. A pressured plate in the floor sets it off. All the dwarves know about the trap and fastidiously avoid it. Examining the floor might reveal hairline cracks outlining the plate (Perc (Detection) check), otherwise moving through here has a 50% chance of setting off the trap (*Luck* (Dex) save or reduced to zero hp).

# Area 3 - Travellers' Quarters

This 20 ft by 60 ft hall has partially collapsed, with tonnes of rubble filling the eastern side, which



originally housed guest quarters for goatmen explorers (or other allied humanoids). The western wall depicts various war scenes with the goatmen triumphant, burning their enemies in great, smoking conflagrations.

#### Area 4 - Living Quarters

This 100 ft by 40 ft hall is decorated with crudely carved goatmen statues in various poses; holding weapons aloft, frolicking, gazing skywards and so on. At the northern end is a 30 ft by 20 ft pit, 4 ft deep, that the *Nogerzu* once used as a mating pit.

The dwarves are aware of the secret door in the north eastern corner (triggered by pressing a section of the wall inwards), but also know about the stirges and will only use it if desperate.

Presently 4d4+3 dwarves live here, with sleeping bags, weapons and heavily patched clothes scattered about. These are the bulk of the surviving servitors, branded with House Invero shackle icons on their forearms.

The dwarves are led by *Ginnic* (50's, thick beard with a silver clasp, steely eyed stare), a traditionally stoic, determined and utterly humourless steward of his people. *Ginnic* and the dwarves take their freedom very seriously, and returning to servitude is almost unthinkable.

However, if battle is joined, and the outcome seems adverse, *Gimric* and 1d4 others will seek a truce and offer to return with the PCs if they let the remainder go (an almost certain death sentence, but a price *Gimric* and his lieutenants are willing to pay if the others go free).

Gimric, Boss Monster, AC 15 (heavy chain), HD 5 (45 hp), Great axe 1d12+2, 19: as weapon, S17 D13 C17 I13 P10 W15 Ch14, L8, Mv 30 ft. Gimric is a Boss Monster with the usual benefits. Advantage on checks vs magic or poison.



If defeated, 1 x Carry Loot may be scavenged from this chamber. In addition, *Gimric's* axed is forged of *cold iron*.

#### Area 5 - Storage Hall

This 50 ft by 30 ft waiting hall has a 15 ft ceiling and two large pillars decorated with the painted skulls of the goatmen's enemies. A bronze wall hanging on the northern side depicts a raging bonfire with smoke like, horned spirits rising upwards (400 gp, but bulky).

The dwarves currently use this hall as storage and a secondary living space, cluttering it up with various small piles of metal ore (mostly iron, mined from the tunnels, 1d6 x 10 gp worth), a collection of recently forged tools (picks, axe heads, armour pieces) and some circular rock stools (very heavy) that must be tilted onto one edge to move (by rolling). At any one time there are 2d4 dwarves in here, tidying piles or gossiping.



#### Area 6 - Forge and work room

This 20 ft by 30 ft chamber is being used by the dwarves as a workroom, and includes a crude forge, a deep well, several craft tools and a large stone bench with an iron top. Flues and vents from the forge protrude through the northern wall into Area 11. 1d4+1 dwarves are here at any one time, forging or crafting tools or weapons. The door to Area 11 has been reinforced with iron banding (Str check at disadvantage to break down, requires 3 successful attempts). 1d4 random weapons may be scavenged.

#### Area 7 - Worship Chamber

This 100 ft by 40 ft room remains the original worship hall, with five wall pillars decorated with bronze glyphs. At the northern end is a massive, 18 ft stone idol in the likeness of a monstrous goatman skull. Steps carved into the floor lead to a concealed, red stained altar at the base. A disturbing grey green smoke wafts upwards from the idol, quickly dispersing into the air.



The worship chamber is protected by unholy blessings that have endured for thousands of years.

The rising smoke is obviously eldritch in nature (it appears seemingly from nowhere, and vanishes after a few brief moments). The dwarves consider this room cursed (rightly so) and do not enter here. A thick layer of dust has settled over everything.

Non-goatmen moving into this chamber feel a definite chill run through their body. Progressing beyond the last two pillars requires a Will check to resist dropping prostrate before the idol, unable to approach further. Entering the altar's inner sanctum unleashes the curse; the trespasser is overwhelmed by urges to kill all non-goatmen (lasts 1 hour, *Luck* (Will) save resists). There is no treasure in this room (see Area 8).

#### Area 8 - Tribute Vault

This square 30 ft chamber has four pillars carved in the likeness of blazing bonfires in the corners. In the centre of the room is an 8 ft bronze statue of a monstrous goat with six horns standing on its hind legs. The statue is a *Goat Golem* that protects the treasure vault in the western alcove. Nongoatmen entering the chamber are attacked.

Goat Golem, AC 15, HD 8+3, Horns 2d6+1, 19: target is thrown 20 ft and stunned (*Luck* (Con) save resists), S19 D14 C19 I- P12 W- Ch-, L9, Mv 40 ft. The *goat golem* has 60% *Magic Resistance*, except vs *Speak with Animals* which charms it for 1d10 minutes. The *goat golem* has *Off Turn Attacks* and *Major Exploit Protection*.

In the stone vault (unlocked) is 1 x 6 HD Lair Treasure.

#### Area 9 - Priest's Vestibule

This 30 ft by 20 ft chamber has a statue of a goatman in a skull motif tabard, with a cowl pulled up over her head, a stern and searching gaze on her bovine face. A number of stone chests hold the rotting remains of priestly vestments, and yellowed tomes that crumble to dust if opened. One book however does not crumble; a weighty 2 ft tome encased in bronze flecked with bone.





An Int (Arcane) check recognises it as the *Bronze Fusicarnum*, an artefact of the First Age, said to house the soul of a ferocious demigod. A PC must attune to the book to read its spidery scrawl. Doing so allows the user to transform into the *Brutox* once per month, an 8 ft naked behemoth of hunchbacked rage, as noted below. Each round the user may end the transformation by making a Will check, otherwise the duration is up to 1 minute. Invoking the tome's power requires an automatic roll on the *Dark & Dangerous Magic* table.

The Brutox, AC 13, HD same hp as PC, 2 x Fists 2d6+1, 19: special, stats as PC but S19 I5 Ch4, Mv 40 ft. On its turn, the Brutox must attempt to attack the closest enemy in melee, or if there are

no enemies left to fight, the closest ally. The *Brutox* causes critical hits on a natural 19+ attack roll

Numerous metal bracelets, head bands and similar adornments may also be scavenged, worth 1 x Carry Loot.

#### Area 10 - Elemental Nook

This 10 ft by 15 ft cave conceals a *Small Earth Elemental*, which is slowly gathering strength from the nearby stone. It is in a hibernation like state, but will awaken if it detects any humans within 60 ft (Perc check). The elemental has naturally formed, and is not inherently hostile, but will sense any precious metals the party have and wish to absorb them.

Small Earth Elemental, AC 19, HD 5, Fist 2d6, 19: the target is knocked prone and momentarily stunned, losing its next action (*Luck* (Con) save resists), S19 D10 C22 I3 P10 W16 Ch3, L16, Mv 40 ft inc burrowing. Earth elementals may pass through earth like water or burrow and leave a tunnel. Immune to mundane weapons, except those of *cold iron*, which affect it normally.

#### Area 11 - Fungi Field

This 80 ft by 50 ft cavern has high 30 ft ceilings, the walls and floor littered with mushrooms, some as large as a man. The dwarves harvest the fungi and eat it as a major part of their diet. Some of the mushrooms are poisonous if not prepared in the proper manner, causing nausea (Con check or -3 penalty on physical activities for 24 hours). The highly rare *Striped Moonshroom* is growing here, enough to make 1d6 doses of poison by a skilled apothecary (contact or ingestion, *Luck* (Con) save or blind for 1d4 hours).

#### Area 12 - Stirge Nest

A swarm of 3d10 *Stirges* nest in the ceiling here, fluttering and buzzing to each other. The swarm flies through the caverns seeking out worms, Dol-Karok patrols or other denizens to feed upon. They are always hungry.



Stirge, AC 12, HD 1d4 hp, Sting 1d3 + blood drain, 19: blood disease, 1d4 Str loss over 1d6 hours (*Luck* (Con) save resists), S4 D16 C6 I2 P10 W5 Ch4, L3, Mv 60 ft flying.

#### Area 13 - Detritus pile

A large and mouldering pile of plague worm detritus is lumped here, incorporating the last remnants of many a Dol-Karok patrol or other lost roads venturer. Sifting through the pile reveals 1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Valuables and 1 x Trinket & Curios. There is a 50% chance of 1d2 *Plague Worms* making a deposit here at any time.

#### Area 14 - Isolated Retreat

This 20 ft by 40 ft room was excavated as a retreat for the *Nogerzu* holy men, a place to meditate and conduct rituals away from the main temple. The door to this room is well preserved and subject to a *None Shall Pass* spell (bars entry to nongoatmen, 3<sup>rd</sup> level).

The interior is greatly decayed, a wooden cot and bookshelf broken and collapsed, with a few metal trinkets in the debris (1 x Trinkets & Curios). In a crumbling chest is a runestone carved of bone (as random Potion).

#### Area 15 - Plague Worm Den

This roughly 40 ft cavern is the den for a brood of 2d6 *Plague Worms*, who retire here to sleep for days before venturing into the wider caverns for food. When the dwarves first arrived, they fought a great battle with the worms, with many dying on each side. Since then, the worms have stayed in the northern tunnels, seeking easier prey.

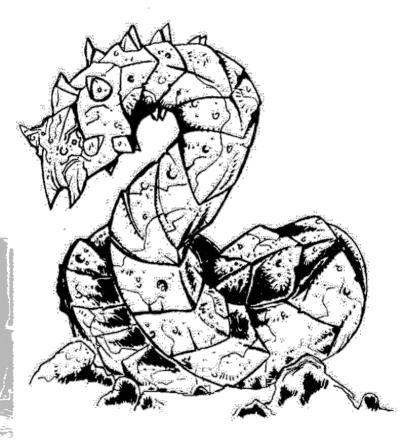
Plague Worm, AC 17, HD 3, 2d4+1, 19: special, S17 D10 C13 I3 P10 W10 Ch5, L6, Mv 30 ft or 5 ft burrowing. Plague worms are slick, 8 ft chitinous worms that burrow through rock and soil. On a natural 19, the worm smears contaminated mucus on the target, infecting it with Worm Fungus (skin hardens and cracks painfully, causing one random limb to become unusable for 1d4 weeks (per Injuries & Setbacks table, entry 2 or 3). An

apothecary with the right healing herbs might reduce this time by half.

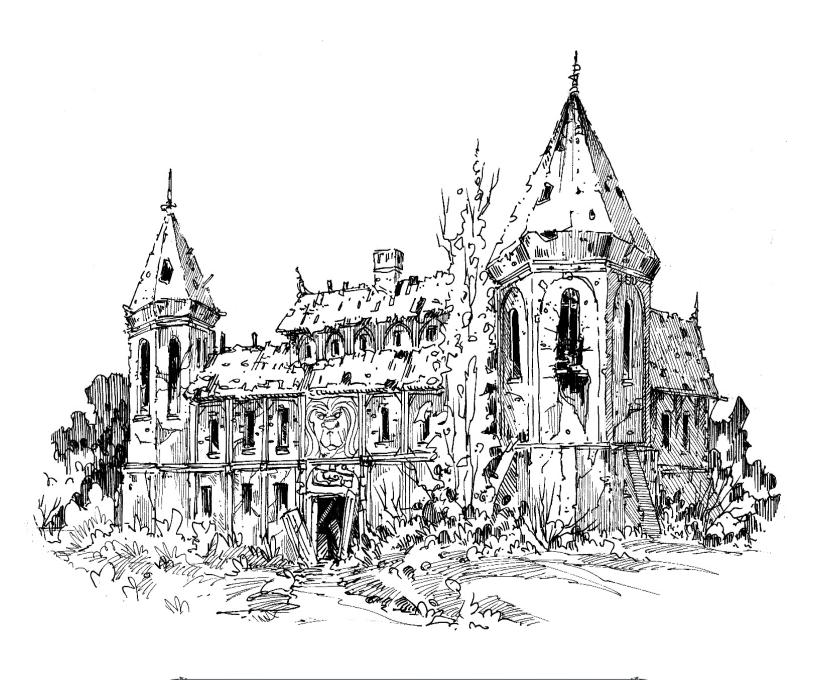
#### Aftermath

If the party retrieve at least some of the servitors (alive or dead), *Mithri Invero* is content and pays the agreed fee. If most are returned alive, he is very happy, paying a bonus (GM discretion) and recommending the party for future endeavours to important Mithri of other houses, gilding the party's reputation.

If the party fail to return any servitors (alive or dead), or worse, ally with them to ensure their escape elsewhere, *Invero* either blacklists them (fail to return any) or sends assassins after them (if they positively assisted the dwarves).



# RED MOON HARVEST





### Red Moon Harvest

Frontier farmers are going missing on the southern borderlands of *Crow's Keep*, but not in the usual way. Homes are left abandoned, open and unsecured, with unfinished meals still lying on tables. The tracks of the missing are also curious; trailing off into the *Trackless Moors* alone, with no sign of bloodshed or struggle. The guard want to know why, and are willing to pay good coin to find out.

Rumour has it a ranger recently discovered a crumbling manor about two days trek into the *Trackless Moors*. Flickering torchlight within drew her attention, but as she approached, beastmen appeared from the entrance, and barbarians fired upon her from high windows. The prospect that halfmen and barbarians might have formed an alliance is unheard of, and extremely worrisome if true.

Beyond the borderlands, on the outskirts of lost territories of the fortress city of *Crow's Keep*, stands an old and crumbling manor.

Once home to the prestigious *Magnus* family, the house fell into ruin after beastmen raiders seized the region, eating the last of the *Magnus*' and eliminating humans from the area. Sacked by the halfmen, the manor stood empty for decades, falling into disrepair.

Recently a number of frontier farmers have gone missing, their patrolled lands seemingly abandoned, but without any sign of bloodshed or struggle. Naturally, the local patrol captain wants this mystery solved, but would prefer not to risk her own men if she doesn't have to.

In fact, truly exceptional events are in train, far beyond the mundane scenarios that the captain imagines. The farmers have been kidnapped by alien entities known as *N'tarc*; cosmic organ harvesters that trawl the multiverse, seeking access

to new dimensions and fresh, compatible flesh donors.

The adventurers might become involved in this adventure by (i) hearing rumours about the lost mansion of an old noble family, (ii) being hired by the patrol captain to solve the farmer mystery, or (iii) running across the ruined manor on an unrelated expedition beyond the borderlands.



#### The N'tarc

The N'tarc, or *Flesh Harvesters* are approx 8 ft tall aberrants with bulbous, pufferfish like heads and beaked, toothy maws. They float with unnatural locomotion, folding space to jerkily slip from one place to another, long mucus covered tentacles caressing the ground as they pass.



N'tarc bend space and time in ways humans cannot understand, and in their home dimension age as slowly as the elves. In the material world however, they decay rapidly and die within a few short decades. Their objective is therefore highly time sensitive; none of the harvesters wishes to remain here longer than necessary.

The aberrant species is on the verge of extinction. The last remnants are unable to reproduce, but they stretch their lifespans by replacing failing organs with those of compatible races, one of which is humans. Driven by this fundamental imperative, a small band of *n'tarc* have returned to the Midlands to discreetly harvest some farmers.

N'tarc, AC 13, HD 5, Bite 2d6 + age 1d10 years, 19: special, S13 D13 C9 I15 P15 W14 Ch5, L8, Mv 30 ft flying. N'tarc may invoke a Temporal Warp up to 120 ft, causing a single target to age 3d10 years (Luck (Con) save for half). This ability has a 25% chance of recharging at the start of the N'tarc's turn. On a natural 19, the target loses their next turn, trapped in a déjà vu state (repeating their last action over and over). N'tarc may invoke the following spell like abilities once/day: Strange Joining, Bound by the Black Spiral, Globe of Silent Contemplation, Monstrous Subjugation (lasts 2d6 days, and subjects also become friendly to other victims of this power), Delusions of Dark Recall, Ineffable Force.

#### **Missing Farmers**

It's a simple matter for the party to learn which farmers have gone missing in recent weeks, and where their farms lie. Investigating their homes reveals that some were left unlocked, with meals left uneaten, and so on (the *n'tarcs* used their *Monstrous Subjugation* power to lure the humans away before incapacitating them).

A Perc (Detection) check locates human tracks leading beyond patrolled fields into the *Trackless Moors*. A great success also notices some other odd tracks seeming to accompany them (tops of ferns and scrub brushed ever so lightly with a clear

mucus, and curious, wriggling marks in loose earth near places where the humans stopped to empty their bladders).

#### The Trackless Moors

To reach the manor, the party must first locate it in the *Trackless Moors* by following the humans' trail.

The moors are an immense region of scrub and wetlands, fed by run off from nearby hills and lakes. Heather, bracken and crowberry cover most of the grounds, interspersed with pockets of willow, birch and ash trees. Over the centuries, a thick layer of peat has built up, enabling bogs and fens to form. Fungi of a wide range of toxicity can be found throughout.

Beastmen and the barbarian clans tend to avoid the moors, preferring nearby forests and foothills, but small nomadic clans (particularly outcasts) are not unheard of. Parasites such as mosquitoes and leeches are present in large numbers, and unlucky travellers might also encounter their giant sized cousins. Of all the fens creatures however, none are more terrifying than the moor trolls. Hideous 10 ft humanoids with elongated arms and crusty, noduled skin, these fetid carnivores sometimes hibernate in shallow pools until something warm and juicy awakens them.

Reaching the mansion is a 2 day trek through the fens, with a 40% chance of a random encounter every 8 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll on the table below (adding 2 during the last day of travel):

- 1. 2d12 *Giant Centipedes* are sifting through the muck, looking for something to eat. They will spread out and attempt to overwhelm the party with numbers. They are afraid of fire.
- 2. 3d4 Wolves (70%) or 2d4 Dire Wolves (30%) are on the hunt, and have caught the party's scent. Their gathering howls can be heard an hour before they appear. Normal wolves might be deterred by fire



- and steel, but the dire wolves are fiercely hungry and will not give up easily.
- 3. 4d6 *Beastmen* (50%) or 2d6 *Urgot* (50%) are camped in this area with 1d3 sentries on duty. They are tracking a bear for its pelt, but will not hesitate to skin the party instead.
- 4. A massive brown bear is scavenging for food and will attack the party if goaded. She is being hunted by those in entry 3 above. Alternatively the party might encounter 3 & 4 at the same time.

Brown Bear, AC 11, HD 4+2, 2 Claws 1d6+1 and Bite 2d4, 19: bear hug, S19 D8 C15 I3 P12 W15 Ch7, L 7, Mv 40 ft. If hit with both claw attacks, the target is caught in a crushing hug, requiring a roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Con) save resists).

5. The weather turns gloomy and a thick fog rolls in, reducing visibility to 90 ft. Strange howls can be heard on the wind, but they are distant. For now.

- 6. In a flash, a small flying creature (not a bird) wizzes overhead. A Perc (Detection) test notices the direction it went before it disappears. On a great success, the observer can tell it is a small humanoid with wings (a flying *Sprite*). The *sprite* toys with the party over the next few hours, playing hide and seek with them. If befriended, the pixie warns the party of *Runk* in (7) below and the *trolls* in (8).
- 7. An *Ogre* outcast named *Runk* is camped on a small wooded rise, a smoke trail curling into the sky. *Runk* is in a foul mood, and devilishly hungry. There is a 50% chance he is downwind of the party, and comes to investigate.
- 8. 1d12 *Moor Trolls* are lurking in 1 ft deep pools, hibernating. They awaken in 1d4 rounds if the party moves within 60 ft (possibly attacking with surprise as they lurch upwards).
- 9. One of the missing farmer's rotting corpses is here. The body's eyes and one lung have been savagely torn out (eaten





- by one of the *N'tarc*, which transmutes the cells to repair its own sight and breathing organs). There is a small amount of glistening, clear mucus still on the body (most of it has already broken down).
- 10. 1d3 *N'tarc* are hiding in a nearby copse of willow trees, spying on the party. If one of the PCs becomes isolated, they will attempt *Monstrous Subjugation* to kidnap them. If not, they soon move off, seeking easier prey.

#### Ruined Manor

The old *Magnus* manor house sits on a low hill in one of the moor's drier regions. Once a proud and imposing outpost on the borderlands, what remains is a silent ruin; dark stone walls worn and crumbling, evidenced by numerous piles of collapsed brick, fields and gardens completely overgrown with shrubs and weeds.

Scouting the area reveals the tracks of several humanoids, leading to the front door (a great success on the Perc (Detection) test also spots some mucus droplets).

Sunlight penetrates the outer rooms during the day, but at night the interior is mostly unlit, barring lantern light from Areas 4 and 11. Inside are wooden floorboards, tiles and masonry walls and ceilings with exposed beams. GMs will note that many of the interior rooms are not numbered on the map. For unnumbered rooms, roll 1d20 and consult the following table below to determine their nature:

- 1-5 Spare or empty room (possibly in "mid renovation" when the manor was sacked); nothing of interest.
- 6. A small *bedroom* or *sitting room*, decorated in feminine style, most of the furniture broken or otherwise defiled. 50% chance of 1 x Trinkets & Curios.

- 7. A servant *kitchen, kitchenette or pantry*, most of the foodstuffs stolen or long rotten. 50% chance of a flask of flammable cooking alcohol or oil.
- 8. Bathroom, water closet, privy, steam bath, etc. Bloodstained and defiled, 90% chance of a skeleton with 1 x Carry Loot.
- 9. Loungeroom, decorated with broken couches and what were once luxurious chairs. 50% chance of a solitary *Giant Spider*, newly arrived and hidden in the high rafters.
- 10. *Music room* containing a variety of wind, string and drum instruments, most of which have been broken. 50% chance of locating an intact, rare oak flute, worth 1d6 x 50 gp.
- 11. *Reading room* with a small desk and some sitting chairs, most of them badly burnt, along with walls and floor. The ceiling is badly smoke stained. 50% chance of a headless skeleton still wearing an ivory ring (2d6 x 10gp).
- 12. Servants dining room with a largely undamaged table. Whatever chairs were once in here have been removed. 1d4+1 charmed barbarians or beastmen (50/50 chance) are here, drinking, boasting and/or wrestling.
- 13. *Guest room* with one more single beds, a clothes chest and small table, all of which have chopped into pieces by some kind of axe. There is a 30% chance of 1 x Trinkets & Curios in the debris.
- 14. Wine cellar or small brewery room, containing empty racks or broken barrels with no remaining fluids. The barrels are still highly flammable despite the passage of time.



- 15. *Map room* with an assortment of desks and tables, and many ruined maps and scrolls. Most of the reading material has been burnt or torn up, but there is a 50% chance of a valuable, historic map of the far eastern realm of *Shenzu*, in a tube fallen beneath a damaged table (1d6 x 100 gp to a collector).
- 16. Chapel to Argona (Goddess of health, wealth, happiness & hope) decorated with bright tiles and scripture extracts ruminating on crops, exploration and protection. A shattered idol depicting the starmaiden lays in pieces, along with a broken altar. A secret compartment beneath the idol base is locked (the key long lost). Inside is a pouch containing 1 x Valuables.
- 17. This room (originally a spare room) is piled with skeletons of dead humans, many of which still wear rotting clothes and other finery. 1d4 of the larger skeletons wear damaged chainmail, and there is one suit of half plate. Rings, necklaces, bracers and other jewellery items have already been scavenged. There is a 90% chance of a 3d4 *Giant Rats* sniffing about the pile.
- 18. *Storeroom* containing broken crates, chests and wooden troughs, the content of which were plundered long ago, but for some coal and bags of salt. There is a 50% chance of 2d4 *Xornlings* hidden amongst the coal.
- 19. Aviary containing a series of large and small bird cages, empty but for timeworn feathers and a few small falcon skeletons. One of the cages is *silvered*, and might be remade into a weapon with the proper forging techniques (750 gp).

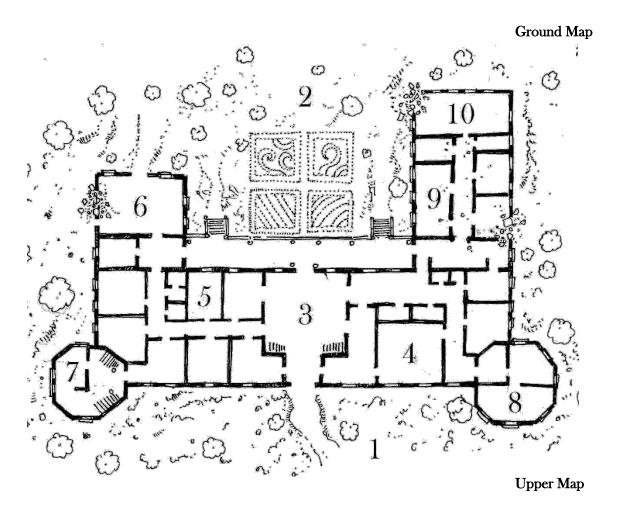
20. Exercise room (used for callisthenics, dancing, martial techniques) containing some rudimentary weights, wooden weapons and dancing shoes. The wooden weapons are charred and burnt and the shoes broken. The weights are heavy and would crush a man's skull if dropped from above.

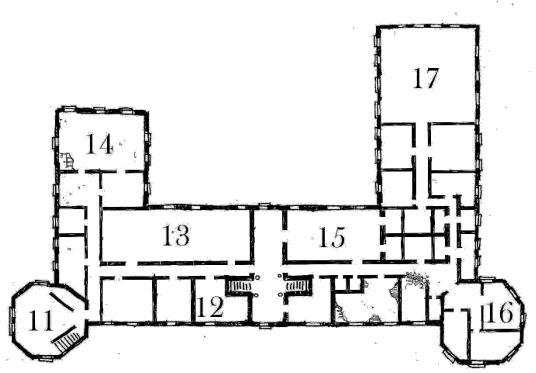
#### **Random Encounters**

Whilst the party are exploring the manor, there is a 30% chance of a random encounter every 15 minutes. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d6:

- 1. 1d4+1 *Barbarians* turn the corner ahead, chicken legs and bread rolls in their hands.
- 2. 1d4 *Beastmen* can be heard fighting in a room or hallway nearby, hooting, yelling and throwing things.
- 3. The *Troll* from Area 9 appears, sniffing the air. It has caught the party's scent and has come to investigate.
- 4. The newly arrived *Giant Spider* in unnumbered room Entry 9 above is moving about on the ceiling and freezes as the party come into view.
- 5. A loud, discordant ringing noise echoes through the manor for a moment, setting everyone's teeth on edge (a farmer was just transported through the portal in Area 17).
- 6. An *n'tarc* appears from around the corner, it's vision focused elsewhere in time as it surveys the house. It is automatically surprised by the party.

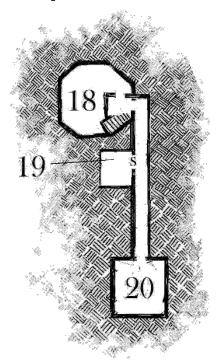








#### **Basement Map**



#### Area 1 - Entry

Entry to the manor might be via several means: the overgrown path leads to the front door which was broken down decades ago. Alternatively, there are wall breaches large enough to squeeze through to the north, east and west, or the back door (also broken down) might be utilised. Explorers keen to enter by unconventional means might also scale the building (Str (Athletics) check) and enter via a window or ceiling hole (of which there are several, or tiles might simply be pulled up to make a new hole).

#### Area 2 - Back Gardens

The rear gardens include large willow trees and what were once sculpted hedges, well overgrown into a huge tangle of wild plant life. A pack of 3d4 *Wolves* (including 25% cubs) have made their den beneath the shrubbery, and will defend it against encroachers, growling menacingly.

Wolf, AC 12, HD 1+2, Bite 1d4+1, 19: target is knocked prone, S13 D14 C15 I2 P12 W10 Ch6, L4, 60 ft. Advantage when tracking and on attack rolls when flanking.

The back door accessible via the long balcony, and the single door to Area 6, are both broken down, allowing for easy access to the interior.

#### Area 3 - Welcome Hall

This 20 ft welcome hall still displays broken picture frames, toppled wooden plinths and mouldy carpet. Parts of the greenery from outside has made its way into the foyer, curling about sections of the stairways that lead up to Area 12.

Humanoid boot tracks lead in all directions from this room, and there are several smears of clear n'tarc mucus. A number of charmed humanoids (barbarians, beastmen, farmers) have passed through recently.

#### Area 4 - Guardroom

This 15 ft room was once a small sitting room, and contains old stools, motheaten chairs and a reading desk. 1d4+3 charmed *Skorn* wait here, sentinels for their new alien friends. They will attempt to scare the party away with a show of strength (loud hooting, lifting something heavy or breaking a chair) before resorting to actual violence. They understand that their friends do not wish to be disturbed by outsiders, but not much more than that.

Skorn (Beastmen), AC 11, HD 1, Club 1d6+1, 19: the target is clubbed in the head, losing its next action (Luck (Will) save resists), S15 D10 C13 I7 P12 W8 Ch8, L4, Mv 30 ft. Advantage on checks to sense danger or detecting scents.

#### Area 5 - Secondary Pantry

This 12 ft by 8 ft room was once a storage room or secondary pantry, and still has a number of old barrels and empty crates within. Most of the barrels are broken, or contain salt, but one tucked away at the back contains potent whiskey. If the brew can be conveyed to a dealer, it is worth 1d4 x 100 gp.

A nest of small poisonous *vipers* are hidden amongst the largest crates. Disturbing them risks a



frightened bite (*Luck* (Dex) save or suffer 1 point of damage, and 1d2 Str loss). The small *vipers* will try to hide between the barrels and resist being drawn out into the open (where they are easily dispatched).

#### Area 6 - Bear Den

This 20 ft by 15 ft room was once part of the servants quarters, particularly the gardeners. Old bunks and beds remain, some still intact, their sheets threadbare. A few metal tools (shovels, shears) can be found scattered about under debris.

An intimidating *Brown Bear* has made its home in this room, curling up atop some mounded sheets. The beast has been charmed by the *n'tarc*, and will aggressively repel any intruders.

Brown Bear, AC 11, HD 4+2, 2 Claws 1d6+1 and Bite 2d4, 19: bear hug, S19 D8 C15 I3 P12 W15 Ch7, L 7, Mv 40 ft. If hit with both claw attacks, the target is caught in a crushing hug, requiring a roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Con) save resists).

If this room is thoroughly searched, 1 x Carry Loot and a flask of anti-toxin may be found.

#### Area 7 - Lower Barracks

This 18 ft diameter tower was once a small barracks, and is fitted with a broken weapons rack and some benches, most of which have been smashed. Stone stairs lead up to Area 11, and down to the Area 18 basement.

This chamber was thoroughly looted by *beastmen* decades ago, but a fixed iron safe proved impervious to their primitive weapons. The safe remains locked (a Dex (Traps & Locks) test opens it), containing employment contracts, personal papers of a long dead captain, 1 x Potion and 1 x Carry Loot.



#### Area 8 - Laboratory

This 18 ft windowless chamber was once an enclosed laboratory. The iron door that permits entry is still locked. A Dex (Locks & Traps) check at a -2 penalty opens the lock.

The laboratory within consists of tables, glassware, drips, an iron stove/forge, flues, an anvil and fine metal working tools. Spread on the main table is a clockwork device that looks like a thick silvery (mithral) armband. If a nodule on the band is pressed however (no action), a small buckler shield fans out from one side (treat as a *mithral* shield). The *mithral* shieldband is worth 2,500 gp to the right collector.

#### Area 9 - Kitchen

This 10 ft by 20 ft galley style kitchen contains an iron stove, fire place, broken benches and shelves. No food remains, but two human half skeletons are stuffed into the open oven. As search of the charred remains finds a small golden ring with a dove motif  $(1d10 \times 10 \text{ gp})$ .

There is a 75% chance of a charmed *Moor Troll* in this room, pulling out bones in the stove and gnawing on them.

Troll, AC 13, HD 7, 2 Claws 1d4+1 and Bite 1d8+1, 19: a pet/henchmen of the target is eaten by the troll (or has a limb torn off), S19 D12 C17 I6 P7 W8 Ch7, L9, Mv 30 ft. *Trolls* regenerate all damage at the start of their next turn, or in 1d6 rounds if reduced to zero hit points. Damage from fire or acid is not regenerated. A troll reduced to zero hit points and completely burnt or buried does not regenerate. 10 ft reach.

#### Area 10 - Dining Room

At the rear of the mansion is a 25 ft by 12 ft dining room, complete with a largely intact feasting table, and a series of broken chairs. Faded paintings and torn tapestries are hung on the walls. The north western corner of the room has a large hole in it, the floor cluttered with rock and scree.



The *n'tarc* did not travel to the Midlands entirely alone; they brought some guardian creatures to accompany them, including the 3d4 *Skitter Eyes* protecting Area 10.



Skitter Eye, AC 13, HD 1 hp, 2 x Claws 1 + poison, 19: special, S5 D14 C7 I4 P17 W15 Ch3, L4, Mv 30 ft. On a natural 19 attack roll, the target is momentarily hypnotised by the pulsating eye, losing its next action (*Luck* (Will) save resists). The skitter's poison causes 1d3 Will loss (*Luck* (Con) save for half).

Skitter Eyes are 5 inch blood red mutants from another planet, the bizarre merging of a furtive, yellowed eyeball and six spindly, insectoid legs. They skitter across the floor, walls and ceiling with surprising celerity, leaping up to 10 ft to attack their prey. A skitter's foot claw injects a numbing poison; targets reduced to zero Will are rendered unconscious. Skitters have animal like intelligence, and if raised as a hatchling may be trained as site guardians or concealable bodyguards.

If the aliens are defeated and the room searched, a two inch yellow fibrous cocoon is located beneath the large table. 1d4 half inch scarlet *skitter* eggs are inside (males only). They are due to hatch in 3d4 weeks. If sold, a collector of rare insects might pay up to 500 gp per egg/hatchling.

#### Area 11 - Upper Barracks

The top level of the barracks is 15 ft in diameter, with a single stone staircase winding up from Area 7. Benches, a small table and broken armament shelves make up the room. 2d4 charmed barbarians stand watch here, and will fire their bows at encroachers, seeking to drive them away.

Barbarians, AC 13, HD 1, Spear 1d6+1 or Long Bow 1d8, 19: as weapon, S12 D10 C13 I10 P10 W12 Ch11, L4, Mv 30 ft. 10% of the barbarians are berserkers with S13, +2 bonus to attack, Spear 1d6+2, and never check for morale.

If defeated the barbarians have 1 x Carry Loot, and an intact *silvered* dagger with a wolf motif (200 gp) can be found behind the shelves.

#### Area 12 - Stairs

This approximately 12 ft by 12 ft room is essentially an oversized landing for the western stairs (an equivalent room mirrors the eastern stairs). The walls are panelled wood and dark black stains mark the floor from some desperate battle decades before. A Perc (Detection) check notices small mucus droplets on the floor, leading into the northern hallway, then trailing off towards the east wing.

If the barbarians in Area 11 are aware of the PCs, they take up barricading positions here, firing their bows and dropping large stones from above (*Luck* (Dex) save to avoid 3d6 damage).

#### Area 13 - Grand Hall

This 35 ft by 15 ft hall is richly appointed with leafy frescos, elaborate cornicing and moth eaten (but once luxurious) dark blue curtains. A lavish fireplace adorns the western wall, set with a life size alabaster statue of a man holding a book and staff (a tribute to a long dead historian and reputed wizard).

The walls, ceiling and floorboards are badly damaged; indeed a large 5 ft hole occupies the central floor. The room otherwise appears empty.





In fact, the statue at the western end conceals a secret compartment: the "book" slides out from the statue to reveal a small nook, hiding a magic talisman (1 x Permanent Magic Item). The talisman is an heirloom of the *Magnus* family, rarely invoked due to the dangers of sorcery, secreted here before the house fell to the beastmen.

The talisman has a guardian however; *Mimette*, the ghost of a female hand servant who coveted it for herself. Butchered by the feral halfmen, the spirit has lingered here for decades, unable to leave the talisman but equally unable also to allow another to claim it. The *n'tarc* are aware of the ghost and their charmed allies have been warned not to enter.

Mimette will reveal herself to the party if they enter the room, materialising as a translucent, comely female servant, with pretty hair and a terrible bloody gash across her left shoulder. Over the years, *Mimette* has grown quite mad, and will mutter to herself constantly (PCs might catch phrases such as "at last, the fleshy ones return", "they'll help me, they must", "they want me, yes, I can tell", etc), but will not talk to them directly.

Mimette gestures for the PCs to inspect the statue, hoping they will locate the hidden compartment. The spirit is not able to mimic fine movements, but will do its best to pantomime pulling on the book. If the PCs acquiesce, the secret compartment is found. If not, something snaps inside the ghost and she goes into a wild rage, attacking maniacally.

If the talisman is retrieved, *Mimette* hovers over it, eyes agape and tearing. She reaches out ... only to have her hand recoil from it painfully. There is a 50% chance she then dissipates, released from her decades long curse (PC holding the talisman restores 1 *Luck*). If not, *Mimette* adopts a grimace of unbridled rage and she attacks mercilessly, until



the PCs are dead or she is destroyed. The spectre is not able to leave the confines of the hall however, so she is easily escaped if need be.

Mimette, Spectre, AC 15, HD 7, Touch 1d8 + level drain, 19: the spectre and target vanish to a nightmare realm of dark sorcery to finish their duel. If the spectre is destroyed, the target reappears, S- D15 C- I10 P13 W15 Ch8, L9, Mv 30 ft in any direction. Incorporeal Undead, passes through solid objects like water. A spectre's icy touch drains one level until the end of the adventure (a Luck (Will) save resists). An adventurer reduced to zero levels dies, and rises as a subservient wraith in 1d4 days.

#### Area 14 - Library

This roughly 15 ft x 25 ft chamber was once a library, its many bookshelves and reading desk broken, shattered or burnt. Most of the tomes and maps are ash, all but one: an archaic map from the prior age, written in a dead language. If translated, the map ostensibly reveals directions to *Yusu Kherra*, sunken city of the underlake.

One of the *n'tarc's* alien guardians has made this room their rest chamber; an 8 ft, gaunt, milk white furless hound with a flat skull, needle like teeth and an undulating tail. There is a 50% chance the alien hound is slumbering when the party arrives, otherwise it smells them coming and hides behind some shelving pieces to ambush them.

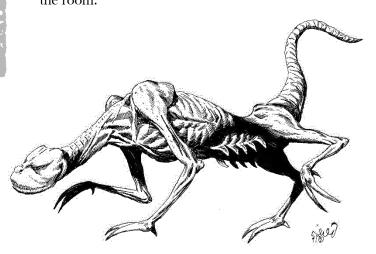
Furless Hound, AC 12, HD 6 (40 hp), Bite 2d6, 19: the hound goes into a frenzy, making an attack against all creatures in range, S19 D12 C16 I4 P13 W13 Ch5, L8, Mv 40 ft. The hound makes Off Turn Attacks. Its body is incredibly resilient against non-magical weapons, reducing damage by 3 points. When Staggered, the hound swells in muscle mass and grows 2 ft larger, increasing its AC to 14 and causing 3d6 damage with its Bite.

#### Area 15 - Greenhouse

This 15 ft by 30 ft chamber is a greenhouse with a glass ceiling, allowing inordinate amounts of

sunlight into the room. Two small storage sheds are set into the eastern wall. Whatever once grew in here however is long dead, shrivelled and desiccated plant husks lay in dozens of large clay pots and troughs. The plant remains are extremely fragile and crumble if touched.

Not everything in the room is dead, however. A hibernating *Crimson Mould* is hidden inside a servant corpse lying in northern storage shed. The mould awakens 1d4 rounds after the party enter the room.



Crimson Mould, AC 10 (auto hit in melee), HD 4, Projectile Spore (special), 19: the spore is extra strong, bursting in a 10 ft radius, S7 D-C16 I2 P10 W-Ch-, L7, Mv Immobile.

Crimson mould is immobile but attacks by way of projectile spores up to 60 ft that burst in a 10 ft diameter. The spores are sticky and extremely acidic, causing 1d4 damage and requiring a roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Con) negates the injury roll). Crimson mould spreads by spawning inside corpses.

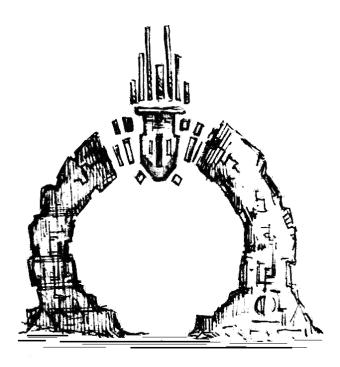
If the greenhouse is searched, a number of rare dried herbs can be found in the southern storage shed (worth 1d6 x 50 gp), and 1d4 doses of *Slug Brain* poison (ingestion, *Luck* (Con) save or *Malediction of Lunacy* effect for 2d4 rounds).



#### Area 16 - Main Bedroom

The 18 ft upper eastern tower was the bedroom of *Lord* and *Lady Magnus*, decorated with an ornate poster bed, a fine desk and wardrobe, valuable paintings and trinkets. The entire room is in ruin; furniture smashed or burnt, paintings torn and baubles broken, bent or ground into dust.

A single *n'tarc* is meditating in the tower room when the party arrive, its consciousness elsewhere in space and time, sensing somehow the terrible history of the house, and the atrocities that occurred here. The alien is in a highly distracted state and will not notice the party unless they provide some obvious impetus. If the *n'tarc* is snapped out of its reverie, it is automatically surprised and reacts hostilely.



#### Area 17 - Alien Portal

The original purpose of this 30 ft by 30 ft chamber has been erased by the aliens, who have cleared it and covered most surfaces in viscous, glistening mucus. At the back of the room is a 10 ft, cut stone runed archway, the apex of which is somehow suspended in the air, spinning freely.

2d4 *n'tarc* are present, milling back and forth around the portal in some unfathomable ritual. The space between the arch wavers like a heat haze, and a Perc (Detection) test might somehow discern a shimmering red moon in black starlit space. A discordant droning emanates from the portal, causing one's hairs to prickle up.

As long as the *n'tarc* portal stands, the aberrants have a connection back to their home dimension, which allows them to remain manifest in the Midlands (and send the occasional farmer back through it).

Damaging the portal beyond repair requires 3d10+40 hp damage (the structure is immune to piercing based damage, such as arrows, and reduces all other non-magical damage by 3 points). If the portal is destroyed, the *n'tarc* are instantly sucked back into the void, never to return. Any humans in the room must make a *Luck* save to avoid being sucked in with them (instantly killing PCs, or at the GM's discretion, leading to strange adventures in another reality).

If the *n'tarc* are defeated, some scattered pieces of the portal remain. One particular segment of grey alien rock is lined with pulsing red veins, and may be attuned to (whether this is magic, psionics or some form of high technology, is up to the GM).

The keystone fragment allows the user to make a *Luck* (Will) check to shape the future, choosing a single event to occur in the immediate present from an expansive range of alternate time lines (GM discretion, eg an enemy being decapitated by a sword blow might be possible, or winning a card game (no doubt for a small fortune), but not a tower being struck by a meteor out of the blue, or a shower of diamonds from the sky).

Once activated, the event automatically occurs within the next minute (user chooses when), and the fragment vanishes into the void with a painful echo. Using the keystone imposes a permanent minor madness which cannot be removed by



mortal magic ("The Red Moon invaders are already hiding among us. They must be rooted out and destroyed.").

#### Area 18 - Torture Chamber

Stone steps from Area 11 descend from the barracks to the dungeon level. This section of the tower is 15 ft in diameter, with two iron crow's cages hanging either side of the eastern archway. The western archway leads to the torture room, containing a broken rack and tables, with metallic implements bent or discarded on the red stained floor.

A single *Ntarc* is within this chamber, silently hovering, jerkily moving about touching the various implements. It is in a highly distracted state, its senses focused elsewhere in time, and is easily surprised.

If the creature is brought out of its contemplative state, it seeks to escape up the stairs to warn its kin in Area 17.

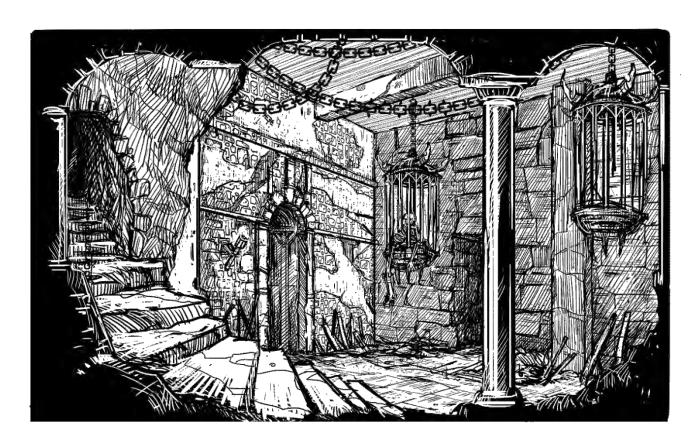
#### Area 19 - Secret Vault

The secret door to this 8 ft square room can be located by searching the corridor and making a Perc (Detection) check, or by pressing on the hidden pressure plate located at the base of the wall beside the door. With a crisp *snick*, the wall slides aside to reveal the treasure vault. Inside the vault, various coffers contain 1 x 6 HD Lair Treasure and 2 x Valuables.

One of the coffers is rigged with a poison gas trap, triggered by opening it without first twisting the metal handle 90 degrees. Barely perceptible marks around the handle provide a clue to the trap (Perc (Detection) check at disadvantage, and/or a Dex (Traps & Locks) check to disarm, or by player description). If the trap is set off, a cloud of noxious gas fills the room, causing 3d6 damage and 1d4 Str loss (*Luck* (Con) save for half).

#### Area 20 - Dungeon

This 12 ft by 12 ft bare stone dungeon is dark, cold, and locked with a barred gate (a Dex (Traps





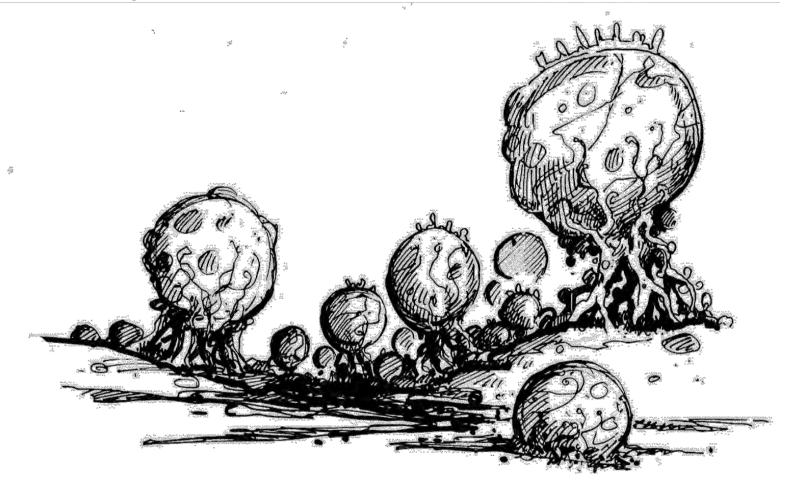
& Locks) check opens it). Most of the missing farmers are inside, absent any poor souls sent through the portal and corpses the party might have found. The survivors are dehydrated and in the process of starving. 1d3 of them are missing limbs, eyes, ears or other organs, and are delirious or dying. The farmers are exhausted but clearly overjoyed at the prospect of rescue. Up to 1d3 of them are strong enough to fight alongside the party if there are weapons to spare.

#### **Aftermath**

If the *n'tarc* are defeated, they are not seen again in the Midlands for generations, instead choosing to harvest from other, less hostile worlds. If the *n'tarc* are not defeated, more farmers go missing over the next few months, and more *n'tarc* arrive to assist in the harvesting process. Ultimately however they wish to remain secretive, and will disappear as quietly as they came once their harvest quota is achieved.

At the GM's discretion, one *n'tarc* (and perhaps some aberrant bodyguards) might be exiled here, and left to die. What strange revenge it might unleash on the region is left for the GM to determine.

If the *n'tarc* are defeated without destroying the portal, it remains open. Whether it naturally closes over time, allows other aliens, aberrants or other dark and dangerous creatures through is up to the GM. If the party wish to venture through the portal, the GM decides where it takes them, and whether the environment is consistent with human life.



# ROOFTOP RUMBLE



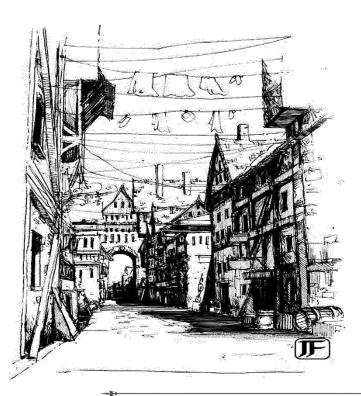


## Rooftop Rumble

It's a cold night in *Northgate*, lit by a full moon when the party suddenly hear a horrible, gurgling death wail from the baron's keep. Looking up, they spot notorious assassin, *Skanta Claws*, fleeing across the rooftops! If the party can catch him, he'll fetch a fat bounty.

Baron Krampus fears for his safety and has hired the adventurers as extra body guards. One cold night, as the party is about to relieve the current shift, they hear a horrible death wail from the baron's chambers. One of the guards bursts open the door to reveal Krampus' headless body sprawled on his bed. The window sash is up, the roof all of a clatter. It's abundantly clear that something's the matter!

Baron Krampus was a naughty boy this year and the infamous assassin, Skanta Claws, has come for him. The mini adventure begins with Krampus dead in his keep and Skanta making his escape across the moonlit rooftops, trying to reach his getaway skiff Jingle Coins across town.



The scenario starts as a Chase scene, across the rooftops and streets, using a customised version of the *Low Fantasy Gaming RPG* chase rules as outlined below. Assuming the party catch up to *Skanta*, a merry show down with his little helpers ensues.

#### Setup

- The chase has two sides: *Skanta Claws* and the party.
- The GM determines the starting gap between the two sides (alternatively 6d10+60 ft).
- The chase is broken down into 3d6 legs (rolled secretly). The timescale for each leg is flexible, from ten seconds to a few minutes.
- If the party reduce the gap to zero before the end of the last leg, *Skanta* is caught and tries to fight his way out. Otherwise *Skanta* escapes. The GM might also rule that *Skanta* escapes if he opens a wide enough gap (eg: 200 ft).

#### Resolving the Chase

- (1) At the start of each leg, both sides choose one character to lead them. No character may lead a second leg until all allies have lead a first leg, and so on.
- (2) The two leaders make opposed Con (Athletics) checks. The winning side widens or closes the gap by 1d10 ft per 10 ft movement rate of the leader (rounding up). Eg: a 25 ft movement rate = 3d10 ft.
- (3) The player controlling the leader rolls on the *Chase Event Table*. There is a 50% chance the result applies to the leader and/or party, otherwise it affects the opposing side.
- (4) Repeat until the chase ends.



1d20	CHASE EVENT
1	Large Crowd A large group of creatures impedes the progress of the characters in a non-violent manner (eg: Street - a funeral procession, farmer herding cows, Rooftop - gaggle of chimney sweets, group of star gazers, flock of bats). One or more characters may (amongst other things) attempt to persuade or intimidate the group to assist them (GM discretion). If the crowd is not managed or bypassed, the opposing side rolls to widen or close the gap.
2	Dangerous Hazard The GM improvises a physical threat of some kind (eg: Street - a boisterous bar fight engulfing passers by, gang of 1d6 thugs, Rooftop - poison snake nest in drain, mad inventor crash lands defective flying machine). 1d4 characters must make a Luck (Dex) save or suffer 2d6+level damage.
3	Obstruction The GM improvises a physical obstruction of some kind (eg: Street: a horse & cart, chain link fence, Rooftop - faulty roof tiles, massive 25 ft jump to next building). If the characters cannot bypass or resolve the obstruction, the opposing side rolls to widen or close the gap.
4	Snap Opportunity Randomly nominate 1d4 characters from both sides. Those participants may take an action to assist themselves or act against the opposing side, provided they declare their action within a 5 second count down! The GM adjudicates what kinds of actions are possible in the circumstances, but might include making ranged attacks, casting spells, attempting to lasso a quarry, dropping caltrops, etc.
5	<ul> <li>Random Setback Roll 1d6: <ul> <li>1 - Drop something: The character accidentally drops something valuable. Depending on the item, the GM might require a check to notice the loss.</li> <li>2 - Fatigue: The character is overcome by unexpected fatigue and suffers 1 Con loss. If an NPC, the character drops out of the chase.</li> <li>3 - Head Strike: The character is struck on the head by an object. The character must make a Con check or be stunned and drop out of the chase.</li> <li>4 - Fall: The character trips and falls, suffering a setback improvised by the GM (eg: falls down stairs, injured knee, damaged object, etc).</li> <li>5 - Hostile Third Party: The character is beset upon by a hostile random encounter (angry drunkard, thug, determined harlot, vicious dog, etc). The character must make a Dex check or drop out of the chase and deal with the random encounter.</li> <li>6 - Lost: The character is somehow separated from any others. The character must make an Int check or become lost (momentarily or otherwise) and drop out of the chase.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6	Third Party A single or small number of creatures impede the characters' progress in a non-violent manner (eg: Street - 1d4 beggars, a drunk woodsman, Rooftop - depressed moneylender, 1d4 playful baby owls). One or more characters may (amongst other things) attempt to persuade or intimidate the creatures to assist them (GM discretion). If the creature(s) is not managed or bypassed, the opposing side rolls to widen or close the gap.
7	Dangerous Hazard The GM improvises a physical threat of some kind (eg: Street - falling debris from an upper storey window, starving dog pack, Rooftop - collapsed chinney/rubble causing tripping hazard, barbed wire strung across the rooftop edge). 1d4 characters must make a



	Luck (Dex) save or suffer 1d6 + level damage. There is a 50% chance that a random piece of equipment is lost, damaged or destroyed (not including permanent magical items).
8	Obstruction The GM improvises a physical obstruction of some kind (eg: Street - stacks of crates, slippery sewerage from open drain, Rooftop - caltrops <sup>2</sup> , large barrels lined along the edge). If the characters cannot bypass or resolve the obstruction, the opposing side rolls to widen or close the gap.
9	Snap Opportunity Randomly nominate 1d4 characters. Those participants may take an action to assist their side or act against the opposing side, provided they declare their action within a 5 second count down! The GM adjudicates what kinds of actions are possible in the circumstances, but might include making ranged attacks, casting spells, attempting to lasso a quarry, dropping caltrops, etc.
10	Cross Paths A random chaser gets lucky with a shortcut and catches up to <i>Skanta</i> for a moment before he breaks away. Each character may make a single melee attack against the other, or take some other action, before being separated again.
11	Hidey Hole Skanta locates a viable hiding place and may make a Dex (Stealth) check opposed by the party's group Perc (Detection) check. The GM might impose modifiers on the checks depending on distances and other circumstances. If Skanta succeeds he escapes. If not he is caught. Either way the chase ends.
12	Snap Opportunity Randomly nominate 1d4 characters. Those participants may take an action to assist their side or act against the opposing side, provided they declare their action within a 5 second count down! The GM adjudicates what kinds of actions are possible in the circumstances, but might include making ranged attacks, casting spells, attempting to lasso a quarry, dropping caltrops, etc.
13	Major Obstruction The GM improvises a major physical obstruction of some kind (eg: Street - busy night markets/packing up, city watch blockade responding to an unrelated incident, Rooftop - derelict rooftop in danger of collapsing, 1d4+1 private guards on sentry duty). If the characters cannot bypass or resolve the major obstruction, the opposing side rolls to widen or close the gap.
14	Dangerous Hazard The GM improvises a physical threat of some kind (eg: Street - startled horse kick, shower of glass from a broken tavern window, Rooftop - a band of Skanta's Little Helpers waiting in ambush swoop in to stab the party, bear traps are strewn across the area to discourage thieves). 1d4 characters must make a Luck (Dex) save or suffer 3d4+level damage.
15	Burst of Speed The characters are inspired to dig deep and put on a final burst of speed. The characters roll to widen or close the gap.
16	<ul> <li>Random Setback Roll 1d6: <ul> <li>1 - Drop something: The character accidentally drops something valuable. Depending on the item, the GM might require a check to notice the loss.</li> <li>2 - Fatigue: The character is overcome by unexpected fatigue and suffers 1 Con loss. If an NPC, the character drops out of the chase.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Dropped by Skanta or his helpers.

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	<ul> <li>3 - Head Strike: The character is struck on the head by an object. The character must make a Con check or be stunned and drop out of the chase.</li> <li>4 - Fall: The character trips and falls, suffering a setback improvised by the GM (eg: falls down stairs, injured knee, damaged object, etc).</li> <li>5 - Hostile Third Party: The character is beset upon by a hostile random encounter (angry drunkard, thug, determined harlot, vicious dog, etc). The character must make a Dex check or drop out of the chase and deal with the random encounter.</li> <li>6 - Lost: The character is somehow separated from any others. The character must make an Int check or become lost (momentarily or otherwise) and drop out of the chase.</li> </ul>
17	Snap Opportunity Randomly nominate 1d4 characters from both sides. Those participants may take an action to assist themselves or act against the opposing side, provided they declare their action within a 5 second count down! The GM adjudicates what kinds of actions are possible in the circumstances, but might include making ranged attacks, casting spells, attempting to lasso a quarry, dropping caltrops, etc.
18	Major Obstruction The GM improvises a physical obstruction of some kind (eg: Street - end of this alley has been freshly bricked up, plague of mimes accost all bystanders, Rooftop - unrelated thieves have just set fire to this thatched roof and are making their escape, freak gust of wind blows dust and grit into the leader's eyes, momentarily blinding him/her). If the characters cannot bypass or resolve the obstruction, the opposing side rolls to widen or close the gap.
19	Major Dangerous Hazard The GM improvises a physical threat of some kind (eg: Street - explosion from adjacent alchemist tower, poison knives(s) from an assassin³ hired to kill/intimidate the party, Rooftop - secret cultists mid ceremony attack any intruders, Skanta's Little Helpers ambush the party with a barrage of poison arrows). All characters must make a Luck save or suffer 2d6+level damage and 1d2 Dex or Str loss.
20	All in!  The whole party and up to the same number of characters from the opposing side, may take an action to assist themselves or act against their opponents, provided each player declares their action within a 5 second count down! The GM adjudicates what kinds of actions are possible in the circumstances, but might include making ranged attacks, casting spells, attempting to lasso a quarry, dropping caltrops, etc.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Delph, the Red Nosed Lundfrend. Blonde, pale, 6 ½ feet of scary ass muscle. Delph is ex-military, burnt out and pissed off. He was dishonourably discharged after an unfortunate dancing routine cost him his nose (of which only a red smear remains). Surprisingly skilled unarmed combatant and chemist.



#### Street Fight

If the party catch up to *Skanta*, he throws down his sack, and fights with his claw, whip and throwing spikes (as dagger). His knuckles are tattooed with the *Varnori* words *styrgg* (naughty) and *trevlug* (nice).

Skanta is a 6 ½ ft Varnori, 50's with ruddy skin and a silver beard. He is lively and quick, belying his age and corpulent build. Skanta has a cheeky twinkle in his eye, and irrepressibly hails any street walkers he sees with the declaration "Ho Ho Ho", "Vixen!" and so on.

Skanta Claws, Boss Monster, AC 14, HD 13 (99 hp), Claw 1d6+4 and Whip 1d4+3+ target tripped, pulled or disarmed (*Luck* (Str) save resists), 19: with a wink of his eye and a twist of his head, 1d8 Skanta's Little Helpers appear from nearby rooftops or alleyways to aid him, S15 D16 C17 I14 P15 W18 Ch14, L13, Mv 30. Skanta is a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits.

Skanta has Backstab, Skirmisher and Finisher abilities like an 12<sup>th</sup> level Rogue, and may choose from the following tricks five times per combat: Choking Dust, Hidden Blade, Quick Reflexes, Smoke Bomb, Cat's Grace, Flash Powder, Rapid Dose, Unseen Whip, Blind Sense, Glue Pot.

Skanta is a veteran climber and roof ninja and has advantage on climbing and parkour related tests. When bloodied, 2d6 Skanta's Little Helpers appear to aid him from nearby rooftops, alleyway, etc. Skanta's sack contains the grisly head of Krampus, plus 1 x 6 HD Lair Treasure and a Cradle of Formlessness Potion which he only uses as a desperate last resort.

Skanta's Little Helpers (Sprites/Pixies), AC 12, HD 1 hp, Knife/Arrow 1d2 + poison, 19: target cursed and loses 1 Luck, S3 D17 C5 I12 P13 W15 C5, L3, My fly 30 ft.



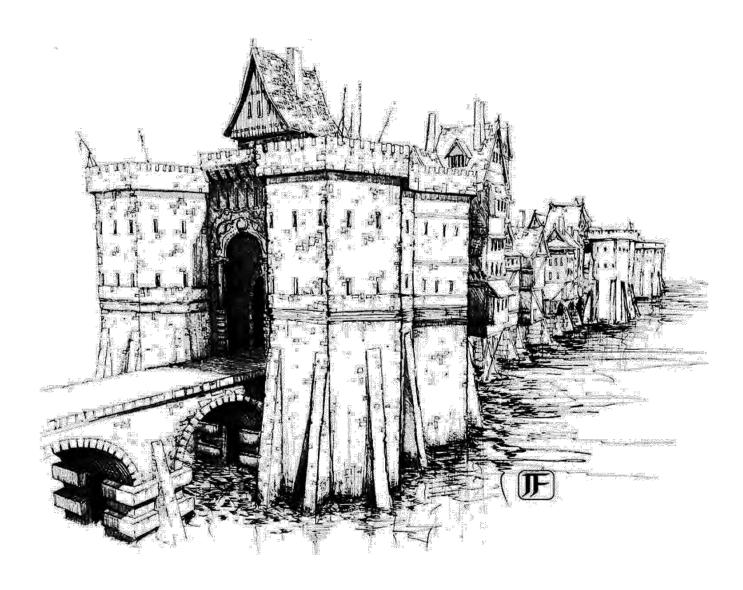


Skanta's pixies are six inch Amazonian warrior women he won in a card game with an obnoxious druid. They attack with cute little knives and wee bows. Their poison is unique; a potent charm effect that convinces targets that Skanta (and helpers) are benevolent, gift giving philanthropists (Luck (Con) save resists), who deserve to be aided in their endeavours.

#### Aftermath

If *Skanta* is defeated, *Krampus'* estate gifts the party a generous bounty, and the family's thanks, opening the door to a favour in the future.

If *Skanta* escapes, gods knows where he might turn up next. Rumour and speculation are rife in the weeks that follow, but the best reports suggest the jolly assassin's skiff was last seen bearing north.



# RUINS OF ASHABAT



### Ruins of Ashabat

The *Cerulean Stone*, an enchanted gem of antiquity, is said to be lost in the ruins of *Ashabat*, somewhere in the *Sunstone Ranges*.

The *Crone of Sumptown* is looking for a band of capable explorers to bring her the head of *Vog*, an *ogre* living in the ruins of *Ashabat*.

In the Second Age, an enduring human culture known as the *Morghura* occupied the eastern ranges of the *Sunstone* mountains, vying with human, ogre and dwarven rivals. Faithful worshippers of the moon and stars, the *Morghura* built *Ashabat* atop a high mountain plateau where they could be closer to the sacred heavens.

Throughout the centuries, the city raised many proud warriors, resisting a multitude of invaders, and courted infamy as the birthplace of the *Nezarim*; a fatalistic cult of deadly assassins employed to murder and intimidate rivals. Unfortunately for the *Morghura*, such defences were powerless against their final foe.

A deadly plague known as *Slop Bowel*, a horrible wasting disease that ends in digestive and renal failure, took hold of the populace and eliminated half their number in a matter of weeks. Many citizens took their chances in the wilds, only to perish at the hands of predators, while those that remained were slaughtered by the dwarves of *Mor Thûrim*, who exacted vengeance for atrocities committed against their ancestors.

In the present day, *Ashabat* is but a shadow of her former glory; an assortment of stone and mortar ruins, most of which are only partly intact. The city is spread over approximately 1 mile x 1 mile of steep and craggy terrain, connected by a series of timeworn stone steps. Architecture is a mix of squarish buildings with multiple levels, decorated with pillars, arches, domes and spires, once brightly painted but now faded to dull grey.

Any woodwork the *Morghura* employed (furniture, doors, etc) has long since decayed, allowing for easy access to building interiors.



Over time various powers have controlled *Ashabat*, but for the past few years three opposing factions have contested her crumbling walls: the *Shaggash skorn* (aka beastmen or halfmen) lairing in the northern ruins, the *Rovog ogres* to the west, and the *urgot* mutants (calling themselves the *Exalted*) in the east.

The party might become involved in this adventure by (i) seeking out the ruins in search of the *Cerulean Stone*, (ii) being hired as bounty hunters to claim the head of the *ogre mage Vog*, or (iii) happening upon the ruins by chance while exploring the *Sunstone Ranges*.



#### **Mountain Encounters**

The ruins are at least 3 days trek into the eastern *Sunstones*, nestled on a broad flat on the northern face. The air here is cool and crisp, often layered in morning fog, and dotted with small trees. The higher one travels the more sparse vegetation becomes.

There is a 35% chance of a random encounter every 12 hours whilst climbing the ranges. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8 (plus 1 during the final day):

- 1. A hunting party of 3d10 barbarians (as *Berserker*) are waiting in ambush behind nearby rocks. They were expecting *beastmen* or *urgot*, and are not sure what to make of the adventurers.
- 2. A huge pack of 6d4 mountain *Wolves* can be heard howling as they close in on the party. They might be appeased with food or driven away with fire. There is a 50% chance they are led by a grey furred *Dire Wolf*.
- 3. 1d4 *Dire Bats* (if night) or 1d4 *Giant Eagles* (by day) issue a piercing shriek before diving out of the sky. They attempt to snatch a single party member and carry them away for eating.
- 4. Quake! Whilst the party are traversing a series of narrow ledges, a localised but powerful tremor shakes the region, causing part of the mountain to slide away. A Luck (Dex) save avoids falling/being buried under chunks of stone (3d6 damage and roll on the Injuries & Setbacks table).
- 5. 2d6 *Giant Ants* (workers) come skittering around the bend, antennae twitching as they smell the air for edible creatures. If combat ensues, there is a 50% chance 1d6 *soldier* ants appear in 2d4 rounds,

following the chemical trail of their nestmates.

- 6. A single *Cyclops* exile is camped nearby, talking to himself and weaving a hat of shrubs. He is quite mad, believing himself the prophet of a benevolent, vegan god named *Gonmog*. He refers to himself in the third person as the "*Shouting of Gonmog*" and often mixes up grammar (ala Yoda). *The Shouting* wishes to recruit others to *Gonmog's* fold, and might become a staunch ally to the party under the right circumstances.
- 7. A set of stone cut stairs leads down into a dark and narrow ravine, barely 4 ft wide. At the bottom, a low entrance to a cave may be found, edged with worn runes of judgment and protection. Perhaps an ancient tomb is inside, a tiny clan of dwarven ex-slaves that somehow managed to escape their human masters, or a hibernating *Owlbear*.
- 8. 4d6 *Skorn* (see Area 2) are hiding on ledges above a mountain pass, waiting for the party to come within range before peppering them with javelins and rocks. They then scrabble down the mountain side, eager to capture the PCs and take them back to their tribe's campsite.
- 9. The *Ogre Mage Vog* (see Area 4) is travelling in disguise, masquerading as a human ranger from the far eastern kingdom of *Shenzu*. He is intrigued to find (non-barbarian) humans this close to *Ashabat*, and wants to learn more about them. There is a 50% chance Vog's appetite gets the better of him and he tries to eat the PCs afterward.



#### **Ashabat**

Ashabat's ruins sprawl over about 1 mile x 1 mile of difficult terrain, interlinked by steps carved into the mountain. The area is often cloaked in morning mist that abates a few hours post dawn.

Depending on their direction of approach, the party might find signs of *skorn* (northern skull poles), *ogres* (large footprints in the west) or odd humanoid tracks (strangely mismatched (mutated) footprints of *urgot* in the east).

#### **Ruin Encounters**

As the party explores the ruins, there is a 30% chance of a random encounter every few hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8:

- 1. 4d6 *Shaggash Skorn* (see below) are hiding in nearby ruins, hoping to take an *urgot* or *ogre* by surprise. A representative Perc (Detection) vs Dex (Stealth) detects their foul stench or shadowy movement before they attack.
- 2. A nest of 2d4 *Giant Spiders* is concealed in a building, waiting for new prey to wander by. Within the building are 1d4 cocooned *urgot* (50%) or *skorn* (50%), half of which are still alive and might be (reluctantly) grateful for being rescued.
- 3. From a tall spire, 2d6 *Harpies* are singing their song of beguilement, calling their next meal to join them. If the party resist (*Luck* (Will) save), 1d3 *urgot* will be seen walking into the building in a trancelike fashion.
- 4. A thick fog envelops the ruins, reducing visibility to 60 ft and making hiding much easier (advantage). There is a 50% chance 3d10 *Skeletons* or *Zombies* (even chance), staggering from the gloom, triggered by an ancient abjuration.

- 5. A storm blows through the city, dropping heavy rain for several hours. Nearby, 1d3 Ochre Jellies submerge themselves in a rising pool, hoping to ambush their next meal.
- 6. 2d4 *Rovog Ogres* can be heard throwing large rocks at a *beastman* they've trapped against a ruined wall. If rescued, the *beastman* might have useful information or assist in gaining an audience with the *Karg*.



- 7. A Giant Winged Ape (see Owlbear variant) has taken up residence in a broken tower, and is growing hungry. It emerges from an archway and spreads its wings, scanning the ground for food.
- 8. The *Urgozer Slilb* (see Area 3) is sneaking about the ruins alone, seeking solitude to precipitate a vision. If he spots the party,



he hides and observes, considering whether he might somehow use them against his enemies.

#### Main Points of Interest

A number of points of interest are outlined below for the party to investigate and engage with as they please.

#### (1) Old Manticore

In the central ruins looms a tall, 60 ft stepped tower with multiple doorways and a flat, rectangular rooftop. The bricks of the tower are particularly fine, but dreadfully worn; there appears to be writing over a central arch but it is no longer discernible.

The interior is dimly lit in the day or dark at night, with ancient stairs leading to four distinct levels. One floor is especially damaged and requires a *Luck* (Dex) save to avoid collapse (dropping adventurers 30 ft). Any furniture here is broken and decayed, but a handful of stone benches and fire places remain. A thorough search unearths 1 x Valuables hidden in a cache behind a sliding stone.

The tower was originally home to a noble recluse, but the current occupant is an elderly *Manticore*. The beast is usually sleeping and is considered sacred by the *Shaggash*, who worship him as one of their totems. The skorn occasionally offer the

monster food (primarily captives but also their own sick or elderly).

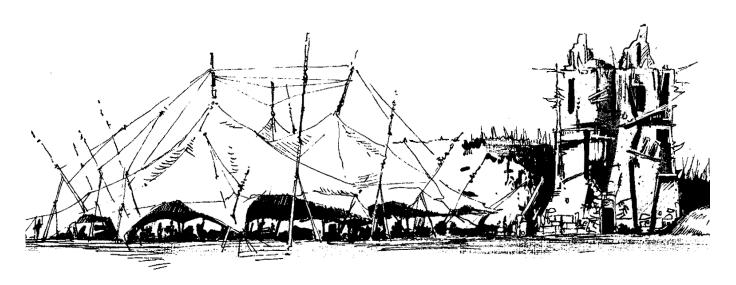
When the PCs visit here, there is a 50% chance of 3d4 *beastmen* being nearby, bringing the manticore an offering (a captured *urgot*). Trespassing within the tower by non-beastmen is punishable by death, and they will wake the beast to exact his judgment.

The old manticore is suffering dementia, and does not speak any language. He might mistake the party for beastmen depending on the circumstances. Otherwise however the *manticore* will be keen to taste new flesh. A search of the bones of left over victims earns 1 x Carry Loot.

Manticore, AC 13, HD 7, 2 x Claws 1d6, Bite 1d8 and 1d6 Tail Spikes 1d6+1, 19: special, S19 D16 C16 I3 P12 W15 Ch6, L5, Mv 60 ft. The manticore may fire its tail spikes up to 180 ft. On a 19+ attack roll, the target is knocked prone or moved 1d4 x 5 ft in any direction (Luck (Str) save resists).

#### (2) Shaggash Skorn

The northern ruins are controlled by 2d100 + 80 beastmen (half of whom are too young to fight), spread over a wide area of individual buildings. Sharpened stakes are dug into the ground in some places to form crude perimeters, and skull poles mark the *skorn's* territory.





ruined tower, their most honoured feasting and sleeping quarters. 4d6 beastmen are present in the *Karg's* tent at any one time (mostly breeding females), and a similar number in the tower. There is a 75% chance of the *Karg* present in one location or the other.

Karg Torgak, Boss Monster, AC 12, HD 4 (30 hp), Club 1d6+2, 19: the target is clubbed in the head, losing its next action (*Luck* (Will) save resists), S17 D10 C13 I7 P12 W8 Ch8, L4, Mv 30 ft. The *Karg* is a *Boss Monster* with the usual benefits. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage to sense danger or detect scents.

Skorn, AC 11, HD 1, Club 1d6+1, 19: the target is clubbed in the head, losing its next action (*Luck* (Will) save resists), S15 D10 C13 I7 P12 W8 Ch8, L4, Mv 30 ft. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage to sense danger or detect scents.

The *Karg* is a simple creature; he loves to fight, eat, and breed, and his tribe controls the largest portion of the ruins. He despises the mutant *urgot*, but tolerates their presence as a convenient food source (he is blissfully unaware of *Slilb's* spell casting abilities). The *Rovog ogres* on the other hand he takes very seriously, and battles with the giants are frequent. *Torgak* hates the sorcerous *Vog* most of all, and longs to skewer his head upon a skull pole. For now however, *Torgak* concedes the tribe is not strong enough, and bides his time. PCs inclined to speak with the *Karg* might find a willing ally against the giantkin.

At the base of the *Karg's* tower (a ruined temple), hidden beneath a secret door and unknown to the beastmen (covered in thick hides) is the *Well of Bones*; an excavated shaft lined with the skeletons of the ancient *Morghura* people. The shaft descends many hundreds of feet, and is sprinkled with valuable offerings to the gods (4 x Lair Treasure if fully looted, taking many hours if not days).

At the base however is a genuine treasure of antiquity, the *Cerulean Stone*, clutched in the grip of a fragile skeletal hand, mixed amongst piles of other bones (Perc (Detection) check at disadvantage to locate quickly).

The size of a knuckle, sky blue in colour and perfectly cut, the gemstone was enchanted by one of *Ashabat's* holiest clerics. Once attuned, the user may summon a *Genie* (use the *Summon Primordial Guardian* rules) once per month. If the user commands the genie to use *Forbidden Wish*, the stone vanishes afterwards (reappearing elsewhere in the game world). Summoning the *genie* automatically generates a *Dark & Dangerous Magic* effect. Whether the stone has any further attunements is for the GM to determine.

#### (3) The Exalted

The eastern ruins are inhabited by 5d10+40 *Urgot*; aberrant humans whose bloodlines have been tainted by ancestral pacts made with supernatural powers.

Each tribe is unique, but all display serious mutations, in this case distended skulls and malformed limbs. For the most part, *urgot* are intelligent, cruel and depraved pack hunters, burdened with insanity and bound forever to inscrutable masters.

The *Exalted's* progenitors committed themselves to an ephemeral entity known as the *Seeker of Dreams*; a mercurial sentience that drifts across realities, communicating in visions and gathering followers for a purpose known only to itself. The mutants believe that when they die they will merge with the *Seeker*; forming a glorious and eternal gestalt.

In the meantime however, *Urgozer Slilb* leads the tribe, enacting rituals of sacrifice and appearement. Consuming the marrow of the *urgot's* enemies engenders stronger visions, which *Slilb* takes advantage of as often as possible (primarily *skorn* and *barbarians*, but *ogre* marrow



is highly prized). PCs inclined to bargain with the *urgot* might find an ally against either (or both) rival factions.

*Urgot,* AC 11, HD 1+4, Club 1d6+1 or Bite 1d6+1, 19: as weapon, S13 D13 C16 I7 P9 W12 Ch6, L5, Mv 30 ft. A group of *urgot* may issue a simultaneous howl or chitter once/day, causing creatures within 20 ft to suffer a minor madness (*Luck* (Will) save resists).

Slilb, Urgozer, AC 11, HD 3+3, Dagger 1d4, 19: as weapon, S12 D14 C16 I10 P13 W14 Ch9, L7, Mv 30 ft. May choose from the following spells three times per combat (3<sup>rd</sup> level): Shennog's Blessing, Wings of the Starless Abyss, Lash of Unerring Pain, Arcane Aegis.

#### (4) Rovog Ogres

The 3d10+20 *Rovog ogres* of the western ruins are not unlike most of their kind; 9 ft, powerfully built brutes with limited wits and voracious appetites, but for by one very important fact: their *Ogre Mage* master, *Vog the Destroyer*.

Vog was always clever compared to his siblings, delighting in terrorizing and eating smaller humanoids as much as any ogre. One day he captured a witch, broke her legs, and forced her to teach him sorcery (which she did until he ate her). Shortly thereafter he slew the chieftain and took control of the clan, renaming them Rovog ("ruled by Vog").

As far as the clan are concerned, *Vog* lead them to *Ashabat* to feed on local *beastmen* and *barbarians*. And that is true. But *Vog* has also heard tell of the *Cerulean Stone*, and secretly searches for it in the ruins.

Vog has searched large sections of the site, but has not yet had the opportunity to check the old Morghura temple the Karg has made his home. He is keen to know what, if anything, is inside. Unfortunately for Vog, his shapeshifting powers have not been sufficient to gain him access; the

beastmen's acute sense of smell tipping them off each time. PCs inclined to treat with the *ogres* might find an ally against the *skorn*.



*Vog* considers the *urgot* an unwelcome complication, and is wary of the *Urgozer Slilb*. He has forbidden his kin from entering the eastern ruins alone, cognizant that the mutants covet them as sacrifices. Generally speaking the clan complies.

Ogre, AC 12, HD 4+3, Spiked Club 2d8, 19: special, S19 D8 C15 I6 P7 W8 Ch7, L7, Mv 40 ft. When Staggered, an ogre enters a murderous rage, gaining a free attack against every foe within reach. On a 19+ attack roll, the target rolls on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Con) save resists). 10 foot reach.

Vog, AC 15, HD 7+4 (45 hp), Big Sword 2d8, 19: Vog summons spirit warriors equivalent to Call Forth Simulacra II, S19 D10 C15 I15 P14 W15 Ch10, L9, Mv 40 ft. Vog may cast Rightful Ascension, A Wisp Unseen, Place of Perfect Night, Insidious Slumber, Gaze of Beguilement, Waking Dream and Blast of Frozen Ruin once per day. May spend an action to assume human shape or shift back to ogre form. On a 19+ attack roll,



the target rolls on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Con) save resists). 10 foot reach.

If the *ogres* are defeated, their cave like ruins contain 1 x 4 HD Lair Treasure.

#### (5) Tomb of Mor Thûrim

After the *Mor Thûrim* longbeards slew the last of *Ashabat's* residents, they held a week long feast, celebrating their victory and the restoration of their ancestor's honour. Hundreds of dead were entombed beneath the city's meeting hall, which was repurposed as a tomb, and consecrated with the rune of the *Stone Father*.

The tomb's traps were set off years earlier by *skorn* (spear, pit and arrow traps primarily), but 1d3 *Grey Ooze* are currently hibernating in the dark tunnels. They awaken ravenous if a humanoid approaches within 60 ft.

Grey Ooze, AC 12, HD 6, Pseudopod 2d4 + special or *Emotion Burst*, 19: a psychic lash drains the target 1d4 Int (*Luck* (Will) save resists), S18 D16 C16 I4 P14 W16 Ch1, L8, Mv 40 ft inc walls, ceilings. *Emotion Burst* extends up to 120 ft, single target, *Luck* (Will) save or suffer a moderate madness. 40% chance of recharging each hour.

Various dwarven valuables may be looted here (2 x Valuables) as well as aging shields, helms and similar armaments. In the centre of the tomb is a stone altar marked with dwarven runes. A secret compartment at the base conceals a small niche (Perc (Detection) check at -2 to locate), containing a preserved strip of flesh bearing a dwarven grudge brand (a tattoo referring to *Morghura* attacks on dwarves millennia ago, flayed from the back of *King Barador* after *Ashabat* was sacked). The grudge brand is worth 1d6 x 500 gp to the right historian.

#### (6) Nezarim Monastery

This domed ruin, with a tall and dangerously askew spire, was once the training monastery of the infamous *Nezarim* assassins. Little remains of the order's splendour, but sifting through the ruins

might turn up 1 x Trinkets & Curios and a handful of bronze throwing spikes.

The monastery is not without guardians. 2d4 *Shades* linger here, sacred warriors who dedicated their souls to *Ashabat* and the *Nezarim's* path. They silently follow any intruders, hoping to pick off stragglers or otherwise ambush them. The *skorn, urgot* and *ogres* are aware of the guardians, and do not enter the monastery.

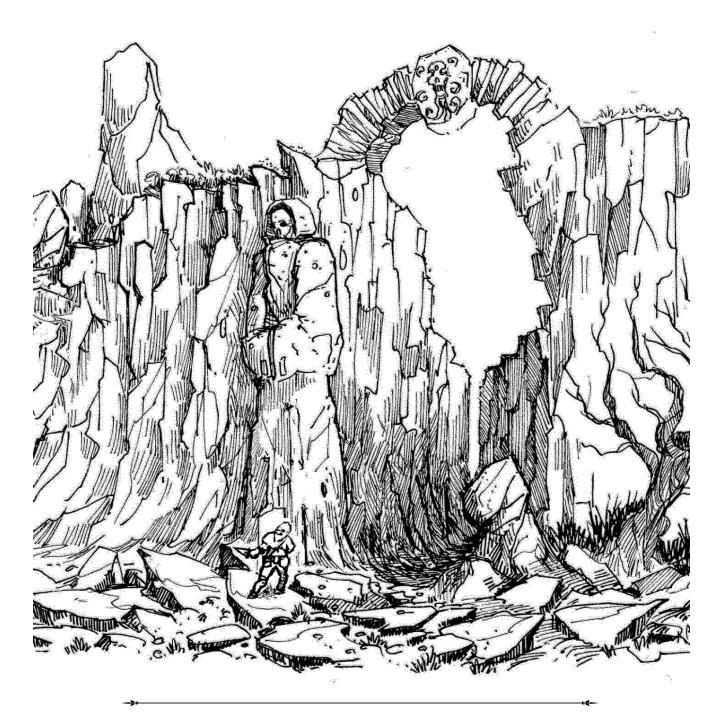


Shade, AC 12, HD 4, Touch 1d6+1 + Str drain 19: the target's weapon or armour (50%) is transformed into shadow (*Luck* save resists), S-D16 C-I10 P13 W10 Ch7, L7, Mv 40 ft inc walls, ceiling, etc. Shades are *Incorporeal Undead* with the usual benefits. On a hit, the target loses 1 Str. Targets reduced to zero Str are slain and have a 50% chance of rising as a shade.

#### Aftermath

If any of the factions is wholly destroyed, the other parties seize larger swathes of territory and/or go to war, perhaps leaving only one faction in control of the entire ruin. If *Vog* gets his hands on the *Cerulean Stone*, he takes over *Ashabat*, enslaving the *Shaggash* and purging the *urgot*. Over time he gathers further *skorn* to his banner, building a force that could threaten the nearest human city.

# SHADOWS & DUST





### Shadows & Dust

Raider captain *Drar Fjorg* is seeking hardy adventurers to accompany him into the *Valley of Dust*, in search of a lost fortress of the ancient *Ramorans*.

Ancient texts make reference to the *Altar of Resurrection*, an artefact said to be capable of restoring the dead to life. The altar was last located in a *Ramoran* temple in the *Valley of Dust.* 

#### Civil War

Early in the Second Age, hundreds of years into the dynasty of the *Ramorans* (a powerful human culture that embraced slavery, stargazing, and mummification) came the *Hazr Yucrim* or Great Divide.

A fundamental schism arose between the *Old Ramorans*, who embraced slavery and genocide, and the *Morukzakir*, cultists of *Baalec* (Master of Bones, God of the Dead), espousing blood magic and necromancy as the solution to *Ramora's* war torn woes.

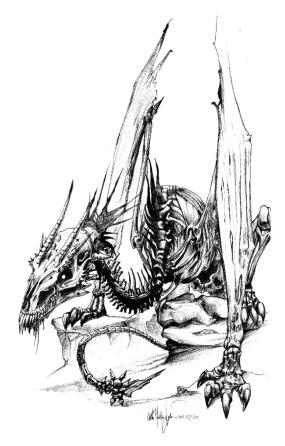
Relations between the two factions were increasingly strained until the empire lost a third of her lands (their conscript forces decimated by steel wielding dwarves), precipitating a civil war in the eastern provinces.

A bloody and bitter conflict followed, citizen slaughtering citizen across the *Twin Cities* and beyond. In the end, the *Old Ramorans* prevailed, and the *Baalecs* cast out. What meagre lands the cultists managed to retain were excised from the Empire, and left to perish.

#### Ortu Menon

Perish the cultists did, along with the greater *Ramoran* Empire several generations later. But before they disappeared, the cultists built *Ortu Menon*; a hidden citadel and temple, somewhere near the *Valley of Dust*.

Of potential interest to PCs, in rare texts it is recorded that the priests fashioned an altar of singular necromantic power; a shrine dark and dangerous, said to be capable of summoning spirits, and perhaps even restoring the dead to life.



As one might anticipate, such power is not simply waiting to be plundered. The treasures of the citadel are bountiful, but protected by all manner of undead servitors, including an ancient undead dragon.



The PCs might become involved in this adventure because they (i) wish to investigate the ruins of a (dead) magical cult, (ii) hope to raise someone from the dead, (iii) stumble across the ruins in their travels, or (iv) are hired by *Drar Fjorg*, a one eyed Varnori (viking like) raider who wants to investigate bringing his infant son *Borgov* back to life.

If hired by *Fjorg*, he explains his son was murdered by rivals, and is offering 500 gp for an escort to the *Valley of Dust*, to find a temple his *Rune Seer* says still exists. *Fjorg* is a little unhinged and unable to accept his son's demise, even after reaping bloody vengeance on his foes. He must accompany the party on the expedition, and carries the preserved corpse in a carefully wrapped pack, marked with holy seals of loyalty and protection.



Drar Fjorg, AC 15 (chain shirt and shield), HD 4+4, Axe 1d8+2, 19: injury, S15 D13 C14 I10 P12 W13 Ch10, L7, Mv 30 ft. May rage like a Barbarian three times per combat. May use his shield to negate a single directional attack.

#### **Peaks and Troughs**

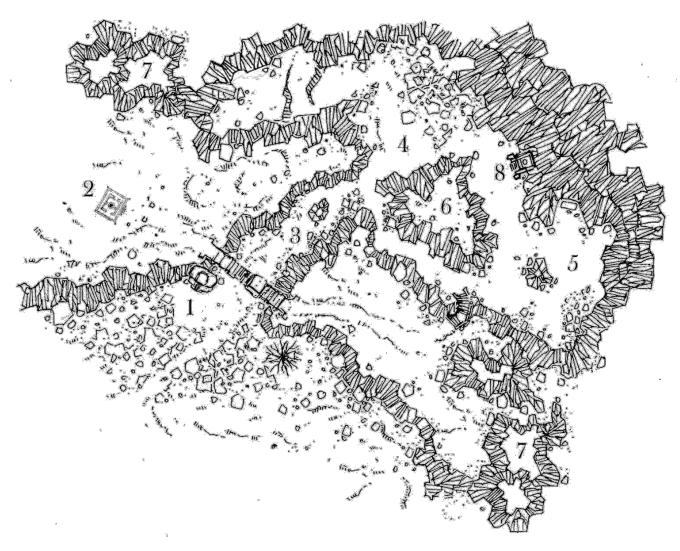
The Valley of Dust is located on the eastern outskirts of the *Ironhull Mountains*, requiring a week's navigation of steep slopes from the closest outpost. There is a 40% chance of an encounter every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8:

- 1. At the bottom of a narrow gorge, a nest of 3d6 *Argosan Stranglers* are hibernating downstream, submerged within a deep pond. If any injured PCs enter the water, they detect the blood and awaken (similar to sharks).
- 2. 2d4 *Giant Eagles* are hunting overhead, riding the thermals as they survey the lower canyons. There is a 50% chance the eagles are being ridden by bow slung thuels (barbarians) of the *Three Storms* clan; a particularly hostile and xenophobic people.
- 3. Hundreds of *Skorn* (*Beastmen*, including the *Norgu*, see Area 5) are descending into nearby ravines, drums sounding across the peaks, converging for a once in a generation conclave of intertribal breeding. As with every prior conclave, this one will end in bloodshed and cannibalism, but not until the tribes have mixed gene pools. If the PCs are detected, they will be hunted for days.
- 4. A steep cliff face has recently crumbled away, revealing a small vein of rare adamantine (Perc (Detection) check to spot). If harvested, there is enough ore to make a suit of armour/two weapons.
- 5. 3d6 *Cyclopes* lair in a nearby cave system, picking off *skorn*, thuel and *ogres* as meals. If killed, 1d4 thuel of the *Yellow Tusks* clan are tied up as captives, along with 2 x Carry Loot and 1 x Valuables.



- 6. A swarm of biting insects descends on the party at night, carrying the bloodborne disease *Four Finger Rot* (*Luck* (Con) save or lose 1d4 digits from one hand, as they blacken and die over 1d6 days). An apothecary with the right healing herbs might cure the disease.
- 8. 2d6 *Griffons* are perched upon a high ledge, scanning the low lands for easy meals. Characters in metal armour attract their attention, glinting in the sun.

Valley Map



7. A solitary *Hill Giant* named *Goff* is sleeping with her back to a tree. The 12 ft matron has a toothy grin, wild hair, and carries a large rock carved with a face (throws for 3d6 damage). She sometimes talks to the rock as if it was her friend. If treated kindly, *Goff* might join the party for a time, protecting them like adopted children.

#### Valley of Dust

The *Valley of Dust* is a particularly arid ravine, basalt walls interspersed with pockets of chalk rock spires, flanked by steep 200 ft cliffs. The climate is cool, with chill winds blowing in from the north. Footing is poor, scree and grit riddle the ground, turning to slippery mud when it rains.



#### Area 1 - The Harbinger

The most striking aspect of the 90 ft wide valley entrance is the unmissable 200 ft idol of a cowled cultist in a skull mask (reflecting the ceremonial dress of the *Morukzakir*), and the decorative arch spanning the valley's mouth.

Also immediately noticeable is the complete absence of greenery, including the enormous petrified tree to the right hand side. The entire valley is cursed; tainted by potent necromantic forces that still permeate the region, despite the passing of millennia.

Living creatures entering this valley feel increasingly parched, old injuries suddenly ache, and current wounds reopen slightly. A *Luck* (Will) save is required; on a failed save the PC is cursed, recovering only half the usual hp damage from short rests (until the next long rest outside of the valley). Worshippers of *Baal* are immune to this effect.

#### Area 2 - Shrine

This small pyramid mausoleum is 30 ft on each side, made of basalt and quartz, marked with the skull mask icon of ancient *Baalec*. Various religious and warding scripts are etched into the corners in *Old Ramoran*, reciting hymns of devotion, honour and eternal service.

There is no door, but with the right tools and sufficient time the tomb may be ruptured. Defilers must make a *Luck* (Con) save or suffer *Baleful Withering* (magical curse, lose 1d3 Str each day until zero Str, at which point turned into dust. Gain a new save each dawn).

Inside the tomb are various embalming pots containing the innards of the skeletal horseman in Area 3, as well as 1 x 4 HD Lair Treasure (LFG p.140). If the innards are destroyed, the horsemen shatter into fragments of bone.



#### Area 3 - Skeletal Horsemen

The main ravine leading to the valley proper is protected by a contingent of 3d6 *Skeletal Horsemen*; poor souls cursed as unthinking undead by long perished necromancers. Any humans or other intelligent living creatures entering this area are charged by the mounted warriors, their skeletal horses sending up plumes of dust as they thunder towards the PCs.

Skeletal Horsemen, AC 15, HD 3+2, Spear 1d6+3, 19: a defeated skeleton reanimates to aid this one, S15 D7 C18 I- P12 W- Ch- L5, Mv 60 ft. The skeletal horseman cause double damage when they charge, and gain the usual mounted benefits (LFG p.50). They are immune to piercing projectiles such as arrows, and automatically detect living creatures within 60 ft.



If defeated, some of the warriors' armour and horses' barding is studded with precious gemstones worth 1 x Valuables. One of the spears is *silvered* (magically preserved and in fine condition).

#### Area 4 - Scattered Rubble

This rubble strewn area might at first appear to be as a result of rockslides from the valley walls, but is in fact the result of a pair of mating *Bulettes*. There is a 50% chance the mating is occurring when the PCs arrive (earth shudders are noticeable), otherwise the pair are asleep (if so, careful perusal of the valley walls (Int (Wilderness Lore) check) suggests internal movement caused the rocks to fall, not natural weathering.

Bulette, AC 18, HD 9+4, Bite 3d6, 19: the target is dragged underground and begins asphyxiating. A Str check at disadvantage is required to dig free, S22 D13 C19 I2 P13 W14 Ch3, L10, Mv 30 ft inc when burrowing. Detects movement tremors within 120 ft, Causes Injuries on critical hits.

#### Area 5 - Norgu Dumping Ground

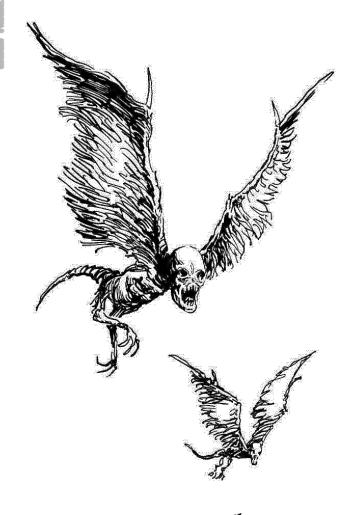
A number of mangled skorn corpses lie in pieces on the ground here (some limbs etc are scattered about). It is obvious from the blood stains that the *beastmen* were thrown from the high cliffs, and broke apart when they hit the ground. The nearby *Norgu* tribe (red war paint, file their teeth to sharp points, the leaders are infected with *werespider* lycanthropy) sometimes throw rivals or outcasts off the cliffs as punishment.

The *Norgu* are deathly afraid of the valley's magic and will not enter it under any circumstances. There is a 50% chance 3d6 *Norgu* are in the middle of throwing a victim into the chasm when the party arrive here. If they spot the PCs, they shoot at them with bows, and scamper about the high grounds hooting and roaring at them; beating their drums impotently. At the GM's option, a larger force (3d10+20) might subsequently camp

outside the valley entrance, hoping to track/ambush the PCs at a later time.

Skorn, AC 11, HD 2, Long bow 1d8 or Club 1d6+1, 19: the target is clubbed in the head, losing its next action (*Luck* (Will) save resists), S15 D10 C13 I7 P12 W8 Ch8, L5, Mv 30 ft. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage when detecting danger or scents.

Werespider, AC 15, HD 3+3, Bite 1d6 + 1d3 Dex loss (Luck (Con) save negates), 19: a giant spider comes to the lycanthrope's aid, S16 D17 C12 I10 P10 W10 Ch8, L6, Mv 30 ft inc up walls, ceiling etc. Lycanthrope with the usual benefits. By spending an action, may exert control and issue orders to spiders of all kinds. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage when detecting danger or scents. Skorn lycanthropy cannot be spread to non-skorn.





#### Area 6 - Rock Pillar

This high plinth of rock is 80 ft higher than the valley floor (but lower than the 200 ft walls). The top is largely unremarkable but for a narrow 10 ft fissure. Lurking within is a hibernating *Ochre Jelly*. The creature will not emerge unless warm blooded creatures approach within 30 ft, and even then only if overcast, raining or night time (otherwise a burbling, popping and sucking noise might be heard, but there is no sign of the predator within. At the GM's option, the monstrosity might attempt to track the party later, following their spoor).

Ochre Jelly, AC 11, HD 8, Pseudopod 2d8, 19: the *jelly* splits in two, S18 D10 C16 I2 P13 W16 Ch1 L9, Mv 30 ft inc walls, ceiling, etc. *Jellies* absorb any adventurer reduced to zero hit points in one round, making recovery of the body impossible. They are immune to fire and split in two via cold damage (divide hit points in half).

#### Area 7 - Rock Spire Watchers

These tall rock pillars are 70 ft higher than the valley walls. Perched atop each are 3d6 *Winged Abominations*; 4 ft tall blasphemous fusings of man, avian and reptile, bound together with dark

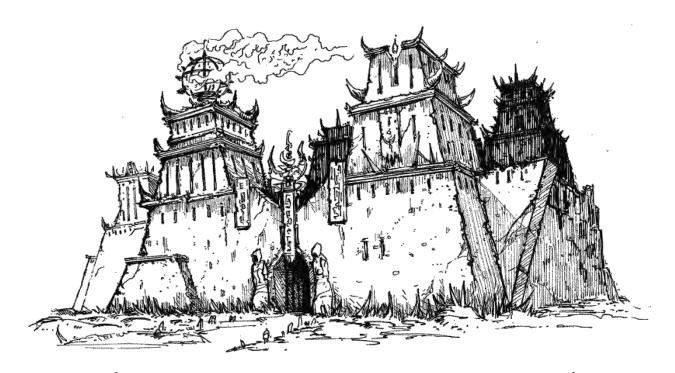
witchery. This unique flock of monsters has watched over the valley since the Second Age, sustained by the region's magic.

Winged Abomination, AC 14, HD 3+3, Claws 1d8+1, 19: special, S6 D10 C18 I- P15 W- Ch-, L6, Mv Fly 90 ft. An abomination may breathe a cone of sickly yellow gas, 30 ft long and 10 ft wide at the base, causing 4d8 poison damage (*Luck* (Con) save for half, recharge 30% at start of turn). On a Nat 19, the monster emits a dreadful wail (30 ft radius, living creatures *Luck* (Will) check or lose 1d2 Will). Sees as well in darkness as in light.

#### Area 8 - City Entrance Tunnel

Huge 20 ft wide, 40 ft tall basalt doors, decorated with the skull mask icon of *Baalec*, are set into the valley wall. The doors are shut and sealed with a *None Shall Pass* spell at 4<sup>th</sup> level. Devotees of *Baal* may open the doors without effort. Alternatively, with sufficient time and right tools, the doors may be breached to allow access.

Beyond the doors is a 20 ft wide corridor, gradually descending for 200 ft before emerging into a hidden valley.





The entire region is concealed by a potent illusion that causes the area to appear as impenetrable rocky badlands. The *Norgu* are well aware of the badlands' accursed sorcery, and her guardians, and stay well away. Characters approaching the citadel through the entry tunnel are immune to the illusion effect.

#### Ortu Menon

Characters entering the hidden section of the valley via Area 8 see through the concealing illusion as a momentary haze. A *Pierce the Veil* spell radiates illusion and necromantic magic.

The entry tunnel opens up into a 1,000 ft wide ravine of similar climate to the unhidden valley; the area is dry, littered with scree and absent any plant life. In some places are obvious, very large 7 ft long claw tracks (the undead dragon in Area 7). If the tracks are followed, they quickly disappear (as if the creature had flown away).

In the centre of the valley, approximately 2,000 ft distant, is *Ortu Menon*. Part stronghold, part temple, the cultists' citadel towers above the valley floor, stone walls decorated with jutting spines. Three large vertical tablets are inscribed with litanies praising the *Master of Bones*. On a high tower to the west, a gigantic iron brazier emits a gossamer yellow haze, which swiftly evaporates into nothing (Area 3).

The hidden citadel was destroyed not by the cultists' enemies, but by their own folly. Dark and terrible magic inevitably got the better of the necromancers when a grand ritual went catastrophically awry. *Ortu Menon's* population was struck dead or worse (transmuted into unholy horrors, trapped in vile demi planes, rendered utterly mad, etc). Now, no living creature remains here, but the keep is far from unoccupied. Its monstrous denizens are bound to the valley, unable to set foot beyond her confines (if forced outside, they crumble to dust).

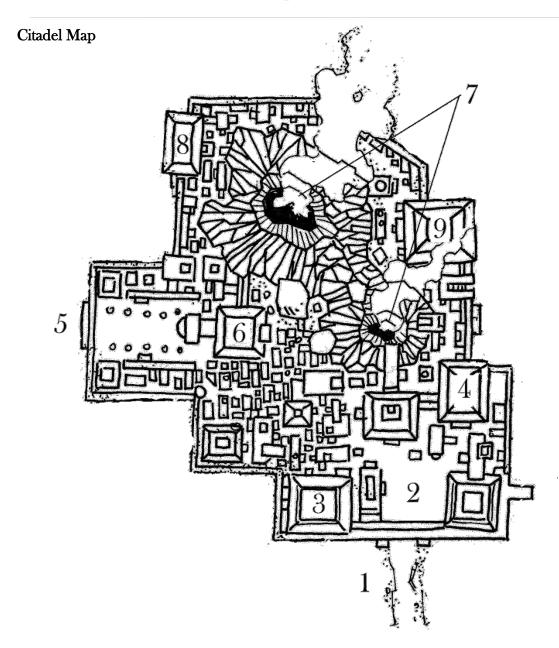
There are a number of means of entry into the fortress, the most obvious being the southern 15 ft double entry doors, flanked by twin statues of skull masked cultists (Area 1). The shortest walls are approximately 30 ft high, dotted with numerous open windows. A second set of doors may be found on the western face (Area 5).

#### **Citadel Encounters**

As the party explores the citadel, there is a 40% chance of an encounter every half hour. The GM might also choose make a check if the party is too flashy or loud. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d10. Add an extra 1 to the result for each prior encounter (eg for the 3<sup>rd</sup> encounter, roll 1d10+2, and so on).

- 1. 2d6 *Skeletons* with spears and chainmail are on eternal patrol, clattering along the street or into a building. They attack anyone not dressed in *Baalec* cultist robes (or displaying some other icon of *Baalec*). Destroying the skeletons adds an extra 1 to any future encounter rolls.
- 2. A mob of 3d8 *Zombies* are shuffling along the street, or in a nearby room, moaning awfully. They attack all living creatures.
- 3. 2d6 *Shades* glide silently into the PCs chamber from under a door, beneath a chest, sliding down walls from the ceiling or nearby rooftops. They crave the PCs' living essence.
- 4. The pitted remains of an iron wrought flower is somewhere nearby (on a shelf, on the ground covered in grit, sitting in a crumbling drawer). The rose was a lover's gift to a (now) incorporeal *Banshee*. *Uzerhet* (wild haired, naked, emaciated) appears through a nearby wall etc in 2d6 rounds to throttle any who dare touch it (she ignores others).





5. A *Barrow Wight*, an ex-Baalec necromancer named *Shupnek*, enters the chamber or is passing nearby.

Shupnek is quite delusional, whispering and cackling secretively to himself. If he detects humans, he pretends to be a zombie, attempting to gauge their threat level. He will gladly transform the PCs into zombies if given the chance.

- 6. 1d6 Wraiths suddenly materialize through the wall, or appear from a building down the street, luminous figures wrapped in curling smoke, armed with hooked swords.
- 7. 2d4 *Will o' Wisps* appear in the distance as floating, gaseous lights of pale green and flickering purple. They attempt to lead the party into the open to attract the *Undead Dragon*. If the wisps are defeated,



add an extra 1 to any future encounter rolls.

- 8. 1d4 *Gibbering Terrors* are hibernating in a nearby room or building, sustained by the necromantic energies permeating the citadel. They awaken if living creatures approach within 60 ft.
- 9. The PCs' presence in the undead citadel has triggered the summoning of an *Invisible Stalker*. The void beast stalks the PCs, locating them within 1d4 hours, and strikes to kill. It will wait till the PCs separate, or some are asleep, before attacking.
- 10. The *Undead Dragon* from Area 7 has caught the party's scent and is seeking them. If outside, it descends on the PCs from above. If inside, it's terrible shrieking can be heard in the skies overhead.

#### Area 1 - Main Entrance

The great 15 ft double entry doors are not locked but are stuck, requiring a Str (Athletics) check to open. Opening the door makes a very loud creaking noise.

#### Area 2 - Southern Square

This plaza is 100 ft wide and flanked by two large towers to the east and west, plus a large welcome hall to the north. Numerous smaller buildings are scattered about the edges.

Standing about the square, in a state of semi stasis, are 3d8+10 *Brain Eating Zombies* (wearing what remains of cultists' robes, travellers' cloaks and guard dress), amidst long rotten carts and stalls. The zombies awaken within 2d4 rounds, or if attacked, and track the party's scent.

Brain Eating Zombie, AC 11, HD 2+2, Bite 1d8+1, 19: a defeated zombie reanimates and comes to aid this one, S15 D17 C18 I- P12 W- Ch-L5, Mv 20 ft. An adventurer reduced to zero hp must be recovered in one round or their brains are eaten, turning them into a zombie in 1d4 minutes. Brain eating zombies may put on a brief burst of speed (move 40 ft) for 1d3 rounds up to once per hour (recharge 30%).

#### Area 3 - Iron Brazier

This 60 ft tower is filled with crumbling artefacts of the cultists, including broken tables, beds, shelves, etc. Scavenging through the debris returns 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Curios & Trinkets. The wooden stairs are dangerously rotted, requiring a Dex (Acrobatics) check to avoid crashing through a particularly damaged section (fall 1d6 x 10 ft).

At the top of the tower is a huge, 15 ft iron brazier, from which twinkling yellow smoke issues, seemingly from the centre, though no source is apparent. *Pierce the Veil* indicates potent illusion magic. If any part of the brazier is broken (not easily done, immune to non-magical weapons, but not *cold iron*, requires 100 hp damage to break a section), the Citadel's illusion enchantment is broken forever. Damaging the brazier summons the *Undead Dragon* from Area 7 (arrives in 2d4 rounds) and the *Skeleton Warriors* from Area 4 (arrive in 2d6+10 rounds).

#### Area 4 - Barracks

This 60 ft by 80 ft building is decorated with shields baring the skull icon of *Baalec*, and was the barracks for the keep's guards. The vast majority of the gear has rotten or rusted over time, but 1d3 suits of metal armour and 1d4 metal weapons (inc one *silvered* sword) are salvageable.

5d6 Skeleton Warriors remain here in a state of semi stasis. If they hear a ruckus in Area 2, or the PCs approach within 60 ft, they awaken within 1d4



rounds. The skeletons seek to disarm and bind the PCs, then drag them to a rusty cell to be kept as prisoners (indefinitely).



Skeletal Warriors, AC 15, HD 1, Sword 1d8+1, 19: a defeated *skeleton* reanimates to aid this one, S15 D7 C18 I- P12 W- Ch- L5, Mv 60 ft. Immune to piercing projectiles such as arrows and automatically detect living creatures within 60 ft.

If defeated, 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Potion may be seized from crumbling chests.

#### Area 5 - Western Entry and Prayer Plaza

A single massive 20 ft iron drawbridge decorated with motifs of cultists holding skulls aloft to a colossal raven serves as the western entry point. The door is long rusted and effectively encased in

the wall and impassable. Scaling the walls is relatively easy with the right gear, or requires a Str (Athletics) check to free climb (else fall 15 ft, causing 1d6 damage).

Beyond is a 100 ft by 200 ft grand plaza, with ornate flagstones and 30 ft prayer pillars (carved with *Baalec* litanies). Standing to attention along the sides are 5d6 *Skeletal Warriors* (see Area 4), but with tattered capes inlaid with web like silver (worth 2d6 x 10 gp if all collected). Living creatures entering the plaza are attacked. Reciting orisons from the prayer pillars (in *Old Ramoran*, a character fluent in *Ramoran* may read it with an Int check) keeps the plaza guardians at bay.

If the warriors are defeated, 1 x Carry Loot may be found.

#### Area 6 - Temple of Baalec

The 80 ft wide, flat roofed temple of *Baalec*, consists of a mixture of black basalt and white quartz, framed with decorative pillars of flying ravens. Moving past the entry arch, one enters a short hallway before emerging into the nave proper; a circular chamber with 45 ft ceilings and stone congregation benches, divided by narrow aisles.

An iron altar rests against the far wall, rusted and pitted with age. Whatever ancient prayers once inscribed it are no longer readable. 2d6 fire opals are still relatively untarnished however and may be pried loose (1d4 x 200 gp per opal).

The church is not unguarded. A single 14 ft *Stone Golem* of black basalt (in the likeness of a cowled cultist) stands to one side, keeping perpetual watch over the inner sanctum. Anyone defiling the area is attacked. The golem cannot leave the confines of the temple.

Stone Golem, AC 16, HD 11+3, 2 x Fists 2d8, 19: bear hug, S21 D11 C23 I- P13 W- Ch-, L11, Mv 20 ft. Usual *Golem* benefits as well as 60%



Magic Resistance, except against *Stone to Flesh, Melt Crag & Ridge, Bending the Stone* or *Master of Earth & Stone* which cause 6d8 damage (once only). A *golem* that hits a target with both attacks crushes the target (*Luck* (Con) save to avoid rolling on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table).

#### Area 7 - Sulphurous Craters

These huge (150 ft and 100 ft diameter) craters opened long centuries after the temple was abandoned, swallowing many buildings and their undead or monstrous inhabitants. Sulphurous fumes curl upwards from time to time, poisoning the air (50% chance when the PCs arrive, requiring a *Luck* (Con) save or 3d6 damage and lose 1d2 Dex).

By a quirk of fate, a primordial dragon skeleton was unearthed when the craters formed. After generations of exposure to the fortress' necromantic power, the wyrm's skeleton reanimated as undead.

The unholy monstrosity is mindless, and knows only the base instinct of hunger. It seeks to devour any and all living creatures it detects. The dragon's animus is inextricably bound to the citadel; it cannot exit the boundaries of the hidden valley (if forced outside, it permanently deanimates).

Undead Dragon, Boss Monster, AC 22, HD 18 (154 hp), 2 Claws 2d10 and Bite 3d10+2, 19: special, S23 D14 C23 I- P18 W- Ch-, L16, Mv 60 ft or 120 ft flying. Boss monster with all the usual benefits, and Dragon traits. The skeletal dragon may breathe a 240 ft long, 60 ft wide cone of impenetrable life leeching shadow, causing 16d8 damage and 1d6 Str loss (Luck (Con) save for half, 30% recharge at start of undead dragon's turn).

If the *undead dragon* is defeated, its bones and teeth are worth 2d4 x 1,000 gp to the right collector/alchemist/artificer. A handful of scales may also be retrieved, enough to fashion a single weapon, shield or armour piece (special qualities left to GM discretion).

PCs attempting to descend the craters find the edges slippery with scree, requiring a Str (Athletics or Acrobatics) check to free climb (or slip into the crater holes, which drop > 200 ft). Using ropes etc negates any fall chance. There is no dragon hoard at the bottom of the drop shafts, only the broken corpses of long dead *Morukzakir* (1 Carry Loot, 1 x Valuables).

#### Area 8 - Noble Villa

This building was once a richly appointed villa, but is now a crumbling ruin. Entry is via a broken door or hole in the roof. Inside, various trinkets and treasures may be searched for (1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Trinkets & Curios).

Of most import is a locked trophy room (Dex (Traps & Locks) check to open), trapped with a poison needle (*Luck* (Dex) save or paralysed hand for 1d6 days). Inside are stuffed animals and humanoids, including various humans, a dwarf, and an elf. The elf is wearing a *mithral* breastplate (worth 1d8 x 1,000 gp to the right buyer).

#### Area 9 - Necromancers' Tower

The necromancers' 90 ft tower is fashioned of black basalt, highlighted with capstones of shiny obsidian. The entire structure has been magically preserved throughout the ages and is in excellent condition. The tower is windowless, with a single stone entry door patterned with white glyphs.

The door is protected by a *None Shall Pass* ward at 7<sup>th</sup> level (manifests as skeletal hands holding the door shut), but may be broken apart with sufficient time (albeit noisily, drawing the attention of the *dragon* in Area 7, and abominations within).

The interior is remarkably well preserved, primarily consisting of a series of bedrooms, laboratories and a grand library, still holding many forbidden tomes (3d6 x 100 gp to the right buyer, as well as 1d3+1 Scrolls).



Of all the denizens of Citadel, the necromancers fared the worst when their grand ritual backfired, transforming 3d6 of them into mewling, fleshy masses of slime ridden blubber. The *Vile Terrors* are pure manifestations of sloth and greed, subsisting on the necromantic energies of the fortress, trapped in unending, torturous starvation. If the *terrors* detect the party, they lurch into motion, ravenous for their succulent flesh.

Vile Terror, AC 15, HD 6, Fleshy Slap 2d6, 19: Void Channel: target must roll on the Dark & Dangerous Magic table, S17 D9 C18 I3 P11 W17 Ch1, L8, Mv 30 ft. Vile Terrors have the usual Aberration benefits.

The *Altar of Baalec* (fashioned of human bones) is present at the top of the tower, behind a locked door (Dex (Traps & Locks) check at -2 penalty to open, or the key may be found in one of the cultists' bedrooms). The altar is magical and radiates blinding necromantic and transmutation magic if *Pierce the Veil* is used. The altar loses its magic if removed from the fortress.

Forbidden tomes in the library reveal how the altar works. Once every four years, when the stars are properly aligned, a dead human may be placed upon the altar. If a young child of good health is sacrificed, and the proper prayers intoned, the dead human is restored to life in 1d4 days.

There is a 50% chance the body is in fact inhabited by a demonic or alien force masquerading as the original identity (it gains some of the original's memories, but not all). If the original soul is restored, it suffers an incurable serious madness.

Activating the altar automatically triggers a *Dark & Dangerous* magic effect (rolled at disadvantage). Looting the tower in its entirety garners 1 x 8 HD Lair Treasure.

#### Other Buildings

For other buildings not numbered on the map, roll 2d6 on the following table to determine the nature of the building. Approx 50% of structures are in ruins:

RUINS		
2	Necromancer's abode. 50% chance of a Potion or Scroll.	
3-4	Rich Villa. 40% chance of Valuables.	
5	Shop. 25% chance of Carry Loot.	
6-8	Domicile. 20% chance of Trinket or Curio.	
9	Shop. 25% chance of Valuables.	
10	Complete ruin. Nothing of interest.	
11	Domicile infested with undead (2d4 Skeletons, Zombies or Shades, equal chance).	
12	Cursed Domicile. This building is particularly infused with dark magic, requiring a Luck (Con) save to avoid 1d2 Will loss.	

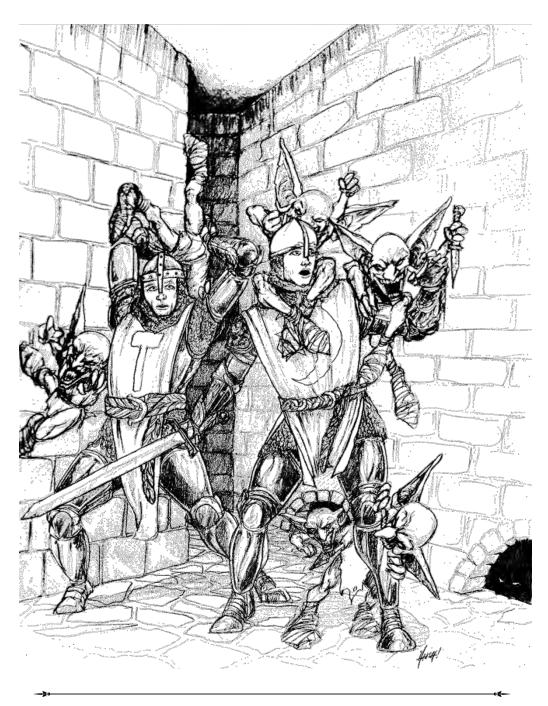
#### **Aftermath**

If the Citadel's illusion is broken, other forces might begin to investigate and take up residence in the fort, but only if the *undead dragon* and the other guardians are removed.

Otherwise, the inhabitants are effectively imprisoned within, and will not venture out. If word of the resurrection altar gets around, other powerful (and desperate) folk might possibly risk journeying here to use it (perhaps unwittingly unleashing a demon/alien force on the world, which could also be the outcome if *Borgov* is restored to life).



# VAULT OF GOBLIN DREAMS



## Vault of Goblin Dreams

A lost dwarven bestiary makes curious reference to the "Druvtog", or goblins, reportedly lairing in a deep vault hidden in the Wistwood. The tome suggests the goblins were extraordinarily long lived, hoarding precious metals before slipping into generations long hibernation, protected only by devious traps.

**Goblins** 

As a general rule, in the confines of the Midlands, *goblins* are nowhere to be found. Nor are *bugbears, gnolls, kobolds, orcs* and many other monstrous races. But this rarity does not necessarily mean such creatures do not exist. In the heart of the *Wistwood*, hidden deep underground, far from the stinging rays of the sun, lairs a singular tribe of unique greenskins: the *Druvtog*.

Referred to only in secret dwarven texts of the Second Age, the *Druvtog* are thought to have spawned from the blackest veins of the earth, a twisted curse upon (and some say reflection of) the longbeards themselves.

Goblins share the dwarves' diminutive height and rapaciousness for gold, but are green skinned, with pointy ears and sharp teeth. Singularly cruel, the *Druvtog* revel in the suffering of others, seized with unique insights into contraptions meant to capture, injure and maim.

More so than dwarves, the *Druvtog* are extraordinarily long lived, often surviving hundreds if not a thousand years unchecked. Unlike their cousins however, they shun daylight, which causes them severe optical pain.

Such remarkable longevity however comes at a price; the goblins are only active for brief periods before slipping into stasis like hibernation for centuries. When the party arrives, the greenskins have been slumbering for sixty years, protected only by their deathtraps and warning systems. Whether they stay that way is up to the PCs.

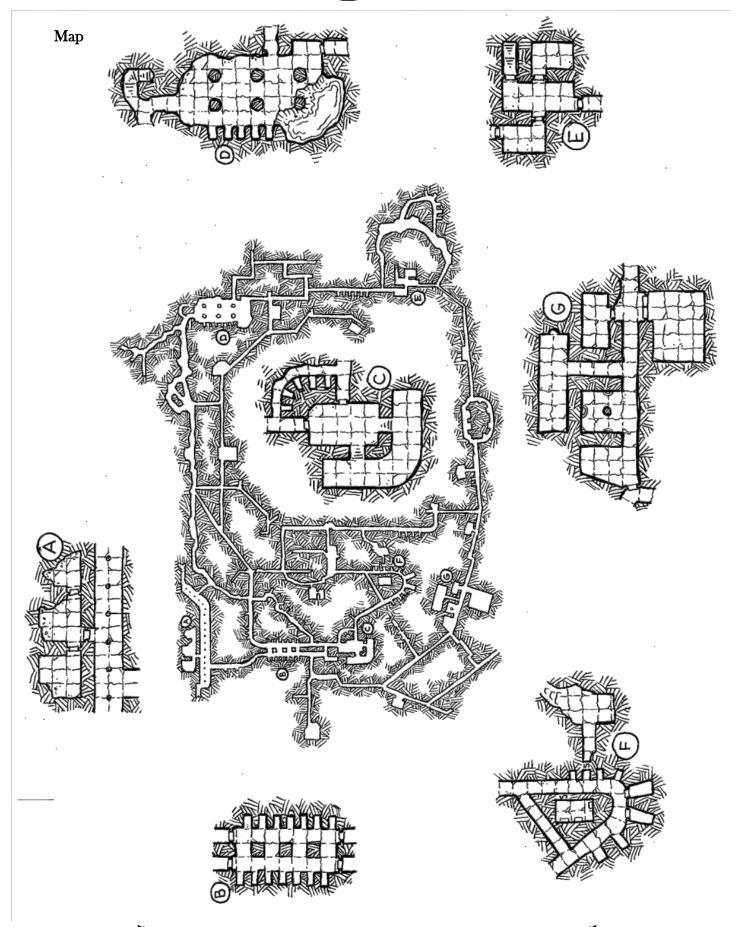


#### The Vault

Entry to the goblin halls is via three different sets of stone stairs: see Area A, D and E (all of them trapped).

The interior is cool, spookily quiet, and crafted of enduring, quality stonework. The corridors and chambers are completely unlit; adventurers will need their own light source to see. Living within the vault are three competing goblin factions;







(i) the *Jawjacks* (massive mouths brimming with teeth), (ii) *Gryndersnouts* (bulbous noses with a sharp sense of smell) and (iii) the *Eargoffs* (huge pointy ears, superb hearing).

The goblins speak their own language (a rare dwarven offshoot, unknown outside the complex) as well as common, which they learnt from countless barbarian victims. Whilst technically on friendly terms, the clans have developed a natural rivalry over millennia, and will be reluctant to draw the other tribes into their "fun" if they manage to capture any of the PCs. On the other hand, if genuinely threatened, the goblins will unite against a common foe.



#### **Jawjacks**

The Jawjacks are approximately 3½ ft high, with smooth, dark green skin and enormous maws filled with a multitude of teeth. They are the least numerous of the goblinkin, but are better equipped than their cousins. The Jawjacks are led by the brightest greenskin in the complex, Snerkles, the vault's premier trapsmith, and inventor of multiple strange technologies.

Jawjack, AC 12, HD 1d4 hp, Shortsword 1d6 and Bite 1d4, 19: as weapon or *Bleeding Bite* causing 1 damage each round for 1d6 rounds (action to bind wound and negate), S8 D14 C10 I10 P11 W13 Ch8, L3, Mv 30 ft. Goblins see as well in darkness as in torchlight, but suffer a 33% miss chance in daylight.

Jawjacks have a 30% chance of being equipped with one of Snerkles' artifices (roll 1d4):

- 1. *Steamhorn:* 2 handed, one shot per combat, blasts scalding steam in a 15 ft line causing 3d4 damage (*Luck* (Dex) save for half).
- 2. *Thunderpod:* single use, throw 40 ft, unleashes concussion blast in a 10 ft diameter, stunning targets (helpless for 1 round, *Luck* (Con) check negates).
- 3. *Ironward*: oversized belt buckle sprouting wires, single use, grants a 50% chance to deflect a metal weapon hit with an electromagnetic burst.
- 4. *Boomstick:* one shot per combat, two handed, range 120 ft, 4d4 damage ("exploding" 4's). On a fumble the boomstick explodes causing damage to the wielder.



Snerkles, Boss monster, AC 14, HD 3 (21 hp), Lightning Rod 1d8+1 and 1d4 Dex loss, 19: target is hurled backwards 1d4 x 5 ft, S8 D14 C10 I15 P11 W14 Ch13, L6, Mv 30 ft. Snerkles is a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits, and comes armed with each of his odd inventions, plus the Lightning Rod (2d4 charges before needing to recharge in a lightning storm). Goblins see as well in darkness as in torchlight. Snerkles' unique googles allow him to see and fight in daylight without penalty.

#### **Gryndersnouts**

Gryndersnouts are 4 ft tall, with blotchy green skin, small pointed ears and bulging, oversized noses (through which they snort regularly, similar to horses). Despite substantial numbers, and control of the western tunnels, Gryndersnouts are quick to flee from real danger. A sibling duo, the Jabbernook Brothers, rule the clan. Having fought together for more than 700 years, the Jabbernooks demonstrate uncanny synchronicity when fighting together.

Gryndersnout, AC 11, HD 1d4 hp, Spear 1d6+1 reach 10 ft, 19: broken spear, check for morale, S10 D14 C10 I10 P11 W7 Ch8, L3, Mv 30 ft. Advantage on scent related tests (including tracking). Goblins see as well in darkness as in torchlight, but suffer a 33% miss chance in daylight.

Jabbernook Brothers, Boss monster, AC 13, HD 5 (38 hp), Spear 1d8+1 and Snoutblade 1d6, 19: target is disarmed, S11 D13 C13 I10 P13 W12 Ch15, L8, Mv 30 ft. The Jabbernooks are a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits and fight as a single entity, occupying a 5 or 10 ft space as they please. When Staggered, all enemies within 5 ft suffer one attack, then one of the brothers dies (remove 1 of their 2 attacks). One of the brothers carries a shield which may negate a single attack (as shield rules). Goblins see as well in darkness as in torchlight.

#### **Eargoffs**

Eargoffs are the most diminutive of the greenskins, about 3 ft tall with comically large, pointy ears. Their skin tone is a light yellow-green, smooth and hairless with shiny bald pates.



More than any of the other vault occupants, the *Eargoffs* love to inflict suffering and strife, exulting in the pain and terror their victims experience. Ideally, *Eargoffs* like to be up close and personal during their target's misery, revelling in their helplessness.

The Eargoffs are controlled by the *Grand High Hobnobbler*, also known as the *Majestic Keymaester*, *Duke of Doors* and *His Most Perfect Puffery*, depending on his mood.

Larger than most of his kin (4½ ft), the *Hobnobbler* is an abhorrent psychopath and sadist, ruthless in his exercise of power; a loathsome despot of the highest order.



Eargoff, AC 12, HD 1d4 hp, Bite or dagger 1d4, 19: Luck (Con) check or suffer goblin rabies (see below), S6 D14 C9 I11 P13 W10 Ch9, L3, Mv 30 ft. Advantage on hearing related tests. Goblins see as well in darkness as in torchlight, but suffer a 33% miss chance in daylight. 1d4 hours after contracting goblin rabies, the subject salivates uncontrollably and develops a serious madness that cannot be cured until cleansed of the disease (Purge the Accursed, or apothecary care for 1d4 months allows a second save. If this is also failed, the victim slips into a coma and dies).



Grand High Hobnobbler, Boss monster, AC 15, HD 4 (30 hp), Dagger 1d4+2 and Bite 1d6, 19: Luck (Con) save at disad or suffer goblin rabies (see Eargoff), S13 D14 C11 I13 P15 W15 Ch15, L8, Mv 30 ft. The Hobnobbler is a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits and advantage on hearing related tests. He never makes morale checks and his kin have advantage on such checks if he is within sight or hearing. The Hobnobbler has a keyring with keys to all of the locked doors in the vault.

#### Goblin Crawlways

Running above, below or parallel to most of the vault's corridors is a network of criss crossing tunnels (not marked on the map). The crawlways are only 1 ft in diameter, just enough room to squeeze a lightly armed *goblin* or small child through. Secret hatches allowing access to the tunnels may be spotted with a Perc (Det) check. Once awake, the goblins use the tunnels to secretly reposition and outmanoeuvre the PCs. There is a 75% chance of a crawlway hatch along any long corridor, 30% for shorter passages.

#### Random Encounters

There is a 30% chance of a random encounter every hour the party spends in the vault, or any time the adventurers engage in conduct that is particularly loud. Although the *goblins* are initially hibernating, they are unlikely to stay that way the further the intruders delve. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8, adding a cumulative +1 for each incident of party "loudness".

- 1. Nothing but the flickering of the party's torches, and their darting, suspicious gazes.
- 2. Water drips from the ceiling nearby, forming a small puddle of the ground. If the PCs inspect the ceiling, water marks clearly outline a crawlway hatch.
- 3. 2d4 *Xornlings* have dislodged part of the wall, leaving a pile of rubble in its wake. They are hidden in the rocks, eager to feast on the PCs' gold and gems.
- 4. A *Grey Ooze* is hiding amongst a series of natural pools. 1d3 half consumed goblin skeletons are littering the area.
- 5. 1d6 globules of *Green Slime* are spread across the ceiling, hibernating. They awaken within 1d4 rounds.



- 6. A pressure plate (Perc (Det) check to spot, else 50% chance of stepping on) releases a 5 ft cloud of toxic gas (4d6 damage and 1 Str loss, *Luck* (Con) save negates).
- 7. A *Gelatinous Cube* occupies this corridor or a nearby passage. It senses the party's footfalls on the floor, and is coming to consume them.



8+ Goblins in the nearest sleeping chamber, or secreted in a crawlway junction as sentries (1d4 goblins), awaken. Their first objective is to learn more about the intruders, then alert others of their kind.

After at least some *goblins* have awoken, for further random encounters, roll on the original table as well as the below, and use the most interesting result (roll 1d6):

1. 2d6 *Jawjacks* are moving through nearby crawlways, manoeuvring to ambush the PCs from behind.

- 2. 2d4 *Gryndersnouts* appear at both ends of the next corridor the PCs move through (ie 4d4 total), bristling with spears and javelins. They yell taunts and snort like horses, attempting to trap the PCs and draw more of their kin (3d6 arrive in 1d10 rounds).
- 3. 6d6 *Eargoffs* armed with knives and teeth ambush the party from all angles (emerging from secret hatches in the walls, ceiling and floor), hoping to overwhelm the intruders in one large wave.
- 4. 2d4 *Gryndersnouts* armed with light crossbows take pot shots from the end of the next long corridor (+0/2d4+1 damage, 150/300 ft range). They flee immediately thereafter, yipping and barking like mad dogs.
- 5. A strange creaking and whispered bickering can be heard from a nearby corridor or room. 2d4 *Jawjacks* are pushing/pulling or setting up a 200 kg, iron tubed blunderbuss, on a wheeled wooden frame. They flee at the sight of the party.

There is a 50% chance the blunderbuss is a trap, exploding in a 10 ft radius for 5d6 damage (*Luck* (Dex) save for half) if fired. Otherwise it is one shot, 8d6 damage in a 30 ft long 10 ft wide cone, *Luck* (Dex) save for half.

6. Snerkles, Jabbernook brothers or the Grand High Hobnobbler (even chance) are tracking the party, along with 4d6 of their kin. They mean to encircle and capture the PCs for later torture.



#### Area A - Gryndersnouts' Entry

The vault entry in Area A is located at the most westerly point on the map; a 5 ft wide stairway of several hundred descending steps. At the end of the steps is a stone door with a pull ring (locked, Dex (Traps & Locks) check to open).

Like all of the vault's entrances, the entryway is locked and guarded. Once unlocked, pulling the door open is automatic for Str 12+, otherwise a Str check is required.

Beyond the door, a narrow 10 ft passage quickly opens into a 10 ft wide, 200 ft long corridor, lined with pillars bearing goblin images. The corridor is trapped. Three separate pressure plates (30% chance of triggering for each one) cause darts to fire from the eyes of certain pillar carvings (+5/1 hp damage plus paralysis in a random limb for 4d6 hours (*Luck* (Con) save resists the paralysis).



The northern door is made of sturdy, aged oak, and is locked (Dex (Traps & Locks) check, or Str check, to open). Beyond are three sleeping chambers, each housing 3d6 *Gryndersnout* goblins. If the door is opened quietly, PCs might sneak into the rooms without waking them. Their acute sense of smell however gives them advantage on any Stealth vs Perception contest (if successful, the goblins awake). If the door is broken down, the goblins are automatically roused.

Besides woollen bedding, each of the sleeping chambers contains 1 x Carry Loot, held in small chests, crates, shelves, etc.





#### Area B - Gryndersnouts' Den

The four wooden doors to this chamber are locked (Dex (Traps & Locks) check to open, or Str check to break). The 35 ft by 15 ft chamber has 14 narrow sleeping alcoves adjoining it, each one containing 1d3 sleeping *Gryndersnouts* (unless already woken). Searching the entire chamber reveals 1 x Carry Loot.



#### Area C - Meeting Hall

The doors to this split level hall are unlocked. The interior is decorated with goblinoid murals of greenskins torturing humans, skorn, elves, and dwarves (more than any other). Here and there, other unfamiliar humanoid races also appear (dragonfly winged humans, dog headed halfmen, etc). Oversized chairs studded with precious stones (1 x Valuables worth), stolen from some lost kingdom, are spread along the walls. When active, the various greenskin leaders often use the hall for formal meetings.

The northeastern alcoves hold 1d3 sleeping goblins each (random clan). Searching through their bedding garners 1 x Carry Loot.

#### Area D - Eargoffs' Entry

This entry to the vault is similar to Area A, stone steps stretching down into darkness, ending in an locked stone door with a pull ring. The large hall that follows has jet black tiles and marble pillars etched with *goblin* verse (their creation story, seemingly from a cursed dwarven bloodline). A subterranean lake burbles quietly in the southwest corner, black as night but glinting in the party's torchlight. Hibernating in the pool is the goblins' *Giant Serpent* pet guardian; if disturbed it is ravenous and doesn't hesitate to devour the party.

Giant Serpent, AC 13, HD 5, Bite 1d8 + poison, 19: special, S19 D16 C13 I3 P10 W12 Ch5 L8, Mv 30 ft. Poison causes 1d6 damage and 1d4 Dex loss (a Luck (Con) save resists). On a natural 19-20 attack roll, the target is constricted, rendering it helpless. A trapped victim may spend their action to make an opposed Str check to break free.

The western wall contains 5 alcoves holding 1d3 slumbering *Eargoffs* (the first sentries), who gain advantage on any hearing based Stealth vs Perc contests. The corridor heading east leads to further sleeping chambers (exact numbers up to the GM, or alternatively 1d6+4 hideyholes with 2d4 *Eargoffs* each, along with the *Grand High Hobnobbler* himself. If this area is cleared, 1 x 2 HD Lair treasure worth of precious metals may be scavenged from the *Hobnobbler's* personal quarters.

#### Area E - Jawjacks' Entry

Like the entries in Area A and D, stone steps lead to a locked stone door with a pull ring handle.

The 20 ft by 25 ft room beyond is flagstoned and the walls expertly hewn. Carved into each ceiling corner (20 ft high) is an oversized *goblin* head, its mouth agape and eyes bulging.

Across the centre of the room is a 5 ft wide line of trapped flagstones (the *goblins* use crawlways hidden in the walls as a bypass). Standing on a trapped tile (80% chance, studying the floor grants a Perc (Det) check to spot the pressure plates)



breaks the false top and the character's foot descends into a 1 ft hole. The hole is lined with metal spikes pointing diagonally downwards at 45 degree angles.

Inserting a foot into the barbs causes no damage, but pulling it out quickly inflicts 3d6 damage and a likely foot injury (*Luck* (Con) save at disadvantage to negate the injury; entry 3 on *Injuries & Setbacks* table). Extracting the foot slowly over 2d4 rounds causes 1d8 damage only.

Part 2 of the trap is linked to a timer and activates the round after a PC becomes trapped in a foot snare: a hatch drops from the ceiling, dumping a barrel of tar like, highly flammable oil onto the victim (causes 2d8 damage if the victim has a torch or other open flame). If the character has a shield or similar large item, they make a *Luck* (Dex) save to deflect the majority of the oil (half damage). After the oil has dropped, a grinding sound can be heard as the firing ports concealed in the goblin heads rotate to take aim at the triggered area. If more than one PC is trapped, the heads divide up the targets.

Part 3 of the trap is linked to a timer and activates the round after the oil dump. Firstly, the entry door locks shut (may be opened with a Dex (Traps & Locks) check). Secondly, all four of the goblin heads release a stream of sleeping gas (a narrow cloud, 5 ft wide, stretches to the floor, the target and anyone adjacent must make a *Luck* (Con) save or fall unconscious for 1d4 hours, an apothecary with the right healing herbs might brew an antidote).

Part 4 of the trap activates a series of bells in the sleeping chambers to the immediate east and west (these doors are locked; Dex (Traps & Locks) check to open, housing 3d6 *Jawjacks* each), and also the far eastern sleeping alcoves (1d3 *goblins* per alcove, as well as the *Grand High Hobnobbler* himself).

#### Area F - Jabbernook Brothers Hideyhole

This area includes 6 smaller sleeping alcoves (1d3 *Gryndersnouts* each) and two larger ones (2d4 *Gryndersnouts* each).

The walls here are painted with *goblin* murals depicting huge underground hives of greenskins sheltering from flaming suns. A secret door is hidden on the western wall (Perc (Det) check to spot the outline, opens by depressing a pressure plate in a goblin's chest). The 10 ft by 13 ft chamber within houses the sleeping *Jabbernook* brothers and their valuables (small chests holding 1 x 2 HD Lair Treasure).

#### Area G - Ancestor & Sleeping Chambers

The northern chamber, and two eastern most rooms, each contain 5d6 sleeping *goblins* (one of each of the three clans). Clearing each space earns 1 x Carry Loot.





The central chamber is a small worship hall with a 20 ft high domed ceiling. A round pillar expertly carved in the shape of a great goblin arm and claw holds up the roof. The hand's claws have beaten silver fingernails (worth 2 x Carry Loot if pried from the ceiling).

Obsidian statues are set into the north, east and west walls, depicting long dead *goblin* leaders (especially grotesque and ancient specimens, the founding members of the complex, buried below). Each of the statues has jade stones for eyes (1d4 x 100 gp each).

The worship chamber is watched over by a *Goblin Stoneblood* named *Zornog*, cursed by dark magic to watch over the bones of the founders.

Zornog has been quiet for more than five hundred years, and will be slow to awaken (1d4 rounds). Once activated however, the half goblin half stone sentinel will not stop until all intruders are destroyed.



Zornog, AC 15, HD 3+3 (22 hp), Hammerfist 2d6+1, 19: Head smash; target is prone and stunned (loses move and action) for 1d2 rounds, S16 D7 C18 I11 P13 W14 Ch10, L6, Mv 30 ft. Zornog sees as well in darkness as in torchlight, is immune to morale checks and has *Off Turn Attacks*.

#### **Unkeyed Rooms**

A quick perusal of the map reveals multiple unkeyed rooms. When the party enters these spaces, roll 1d10 to determine (or choose) the nature of the chamber as indicated below:

- 1. *Kitchen* and/or *Mess Hall*, including benches, carving implements, bowls, and pantries containing barrels of rotted food, hard tack, and other foodstuffs.
- 2. A filthy latrine *Cesspit* is located here, possibly with a resident *Slop Gorger* in hibernation.
- 3. A deep water *Well* is located here, with a chain bucket. The well is big enough for person to be winched down. *Goblin* crawlways litter the walls. Whether there are further tunnels below is up to the GM.
- 4. Torture Chamber. 50% chance of 1d4 chained skeletons (naked) missing random body parts. Various implements of torture lie on shelves and tables. A strap chair occupies the centre of the space.
- 5. *Holding Pit.* Sheer 20 ft pits with metal grate covers. Padlocked. 50% chance of 1d3 skeletons at the bottom (left to suffer and die prior to the last hibernation).
- 6. Activated Trap. A recent adventurer's skeleton or rotting corpse is skewered here on spring loaded stakes (1 x Carry



Loot and 1 x Valuables. If this is found, one of the entry ways has been unlocked).

7-8: *Common Area* used for socialising when the *goblins* are awake and between victims. Rickety chairs, table and throw rugs abound.

9-10: *Sleeping chambers* or alcoves, with 1d3 *Goblins* per 5 ft space. If the area is carefully searched, 1 x Carry Loot may be found.

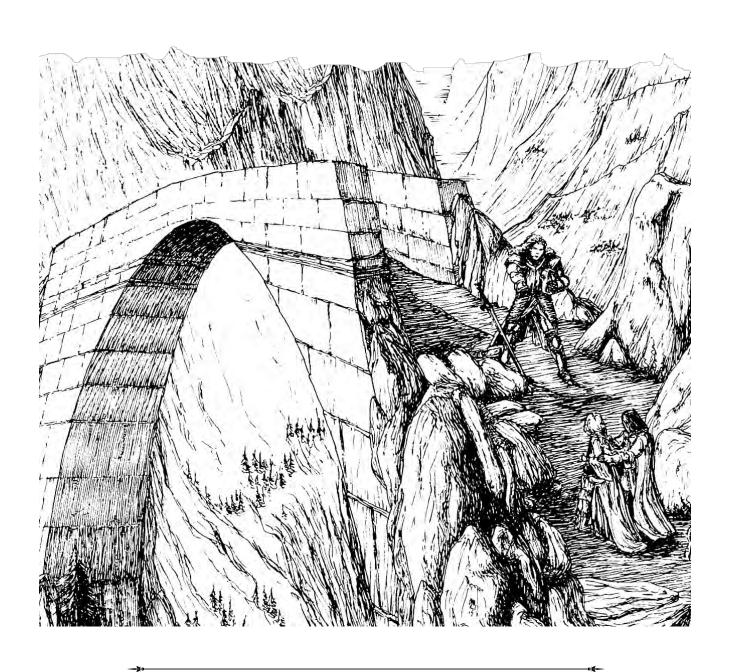
#### **Aftermath**

The *goblins* have been lurking in their vault since the Second Age, and have no intention of straying far. They are acutely aware of the many dangers beyond their doors, and have survived by staying out of harm's way, hiding below ground and hibernating for extended periods (sometimes for multiple human generations).

From time to time, during periods of wakefulness, the *Druvtog* kidnap *barbarians* or *beastmen* for torture or other dark amusements. A determined armed force would likely wipe them out (although a few might withdraw into their deepest crawlways to escape, and plot their revenge).



# VENGEANCE AT TROLLBRIDGE





## Vengeance at Trollbridge

*Thraani*, a barbarian and recent resident to *Crow's Keep*, is seeking mercenaries for a troll hunting expedition into the wilderness.

#### **Sole Survivor**

*Thraani* (tall, blonde, grim faced muscular female, missing one eye), is the sole surviving thuel (barbarian) of the nomadic *Cliff Striders* tribe, and she wants only one thing; vengeance.

Driven from the *Ulgoth Foothills* three months earlier by rival clans, her small tribe of forty made their way south, following the clifftops above *Lake Argos* into unfamiliar territory. One day they camped by an ancient stone bridge that crossed a deep ravine. Unfortunately for the tribe, a *troll* warren was concealed below, and they were attacked during the night.

Knocked off a cliff during the troll battle, *Thraani* fell upon a small ledge. And there she hid, cowering against the rock face, hating her weakness but unable to summon the courage to return to what was almost certain slaughter. When the battle ended, *Thraani* quietly climbed her way to safety and fled to *Crow's Keep*. And there she has remained, wallowing in her shame but vowing revenge.

*Thraani's* plan is simple: to recruit able adventurers with strong backs, mighty thews, and sharp swords, guide them to the stone bridge, and kill the trolls - every last one of them!

By way of recompense, *Thraani* has found a buyer for *troll* blood (*Siripid*, a gangly alchemist who lives in a tall spire in the merchant's quarter), willing to pay 100 gp per quart of blood (a full grown troll has up to 15 quarts, but after being burnt, the amount harvestable is typically 3d4 quarts).

#### Recruiting

Thraani counted six *trolls* during the battle, which were enough to ambush and kill her forty strong tribe in short order. More than most, she knows the terror the *trolls* instil, and is seeking warriors of stout heart.



Whether the PCs come looking for *Thraani*, or she seeks them out, the barbarian quizzes them about their exploits over a few jugs of ale before making any deals.

A great story of might and martial prowess impresses her the most (possibly requiring a Cha (Persuasion) or (Deception) check), but any mention of sorcery is met with narrow eyed suspicion and scornful muttering: "Bor kuufa uchawi" (better dead than a demon/wizard). Thraani might be persuaded to grudgingly take a



spell caster (or magic item wielder) with them, but only on the strict condition that they refrain from invoking any "accursed sorcery".

#### Bar Brawl

At the GM's discretion, a "test of might" may be required, in which case *Thraani* picks a fight with the biggest, most dangerous looking northmen in the tavern (she tells them she has a message from the PCs, spits in their food, flips their table, or similar). The inevitable brawl that follows embroils the entire drinking establishment, giving *Thraani* a chance to vent some anger whilst gauging her potential recruits' capacity for violence. Select a random player to roll on the *Bar Brawl* table each round the brawl persists.

Thraani, AC 13, HD 3, Axe 1d12+2, 19: Causes Injuries, S15 D16 C16 I10 P10 W13 Ch13, L6, Mv 30 ft. When fighting the trolls, Thraani is immune to morale and will fight to the death.

*Tavern Brawler*, AC 10, HD 1, Fist 1d2+1, 19: roll on the *Bar Brawl* table, S11 D10 C10 I10 P10 W9 Ch10, L4, Mv 30 ft.

d20 Roll	BAR BRAWL
1	Break it up. 3d6 city watch enter the tavern,
	putting an end to the brawl.
2	KO! The PC is knocked out by a lucky
	haymaker for 2d6 rounds ( <i>Luck</i> (Con)
	check resists).
3	Wear the Chair. A brawler breaks a chair
	on the PC (roll on the <i>Injuries &amp; Setbacks</i>
	table, ignore permanent results, <i>Luck</i>
	(Con) save resists)
4	Pile on! 2d4 brawlers pile onto the PC,
	pinning them down (helpless, Str contest vs
	Str 16 to resist).
5	Grunnit, a skinny thief skirting the edges of
	the brawl, yells out 3 to 1 odds on the PC
	being the last to be knocked out. 1d6
	brawlers take up the wager and converge
	on the PC.

6	Bloody ruffians! A serving wench whacks a PC on the head with a skillet, stunning them (lose next action).
7	Where'd you come from? A small dark haired child, Rani, suddenly scuttles out from under a table, about to be crushed by a toppling brawler! (Dex check to intervene).
8	Fire! A shattered lantern flares in some spilt alcohol, setting part of the tavern on fire!
9	Barkeep. The PC glimpses the tavern owner unconscious on the floor, being looted by an opportunistic brawler.
10	Cat Projectile! A flying feline rockets across the tavern, claws outstretched, latching onto the PC's head (blind, spend an action to make a Str check to remove).
11	Duck! A shower of mugs, bottles and plates hurtle across the tavern. All PCs must make a Dex check or suffer 1d6 damage.
12	Who is that? A mysterious patron in a deep hood sits unperturbed in the midst of the fight, eating their stew as the brawl rages around them.
13	A bard, <i>Devin</i> , begins beating his drum, breaking into song as the brawl unfolds. All brawlers gain advantage on their next attack.
14	Cutpurse! An opportunistic pick pocket tries to steal something from the PC (Perc (Detection) contest vs Dex 15).
15	Hard Steel. One of the PC's opponents turns serious, pulling a knife.
16	The biggest, meanest looking warrior in the tavern (Fighter 3) cracks the head of his current foe before pointing at the PC and making a bee line for them.
17	Bitey. An old woman with crazy eyes suddenly bites at the PC from under a nearby table, causing 1d4 damage and tripping them (Dex check resists).
18	Bar Slide! The PC is grabbed by two brawlers and thrown across the bar,



	knocking off mugs and plates (1d6 damage
	and lose 1 Dex, <i>Luck</i> (Con) save resists).
19	Window exit! The PC is hurled out the
	nearest window into the street (Str contest
	vs Str 15 resists). 50% chance of being
	knocked out for 1d6 rounds.
20	Ale Refreshment. In the rafters, a
	mischievous child pours a pitcher of ale on
	the PC, then gives them a cheeky grin. The
	PC restores 1d6 hp (including regaining
	consciousness if at zero hp).

#### Fire, Acid, and ... a shovel?

At the GM's discretion, the party might know (perhaps with an Int (Arcane Lore) check), or previously heard/read that trolls have supernatural regeneration, but that fire and acid help to kill them. On a great success, they might also know that completely burying a *troll's* remains prevents them from healing.

If the party heads to the nearest alchemist to stock up on fire pots and acid vials, the GM determines how many are available (or alternatively 3d4 each). With respect to ordinary lantern oil, the party can probably obtain as much as they wish to carry.

#### **Journey Encounters**

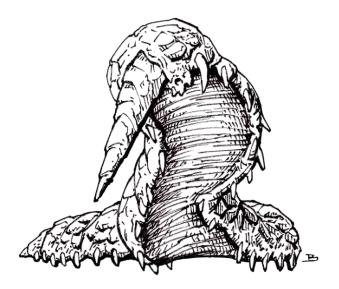
The trollbridge is located in high cliffs overlooking coastal waters, at least 5 days trek from *Crow's Keep*, through increasingly hilly and mountainous terrain. Whilst travelling there is a 40% chance of an encounter every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d10 or select from the following:

- 1. 1d4 *Giant Eagles* can be heard screeching high overhead, somewhere in the cloud cover. Suddenly, a low flying eagle appears from a nearby rise, slowly flapping skyward with a struggling barbarian (*Guda*) clutched in its claws.
- 2. 4d6 *Skorn* are hunting nearby, banging their war drums. There is a second hunting party also nearby, moving

- stealthily, positioned in the opposite direction to the drum party.
- 3. A solitary *Hill Giant* exile (Int 12) is making his way along the cliff tops, searching for something he doesn't understand, drawn by strange whispers. Marked by the void, *Norwug* may cast up to three of the following spells per combat: *Channel Lightning, Hunger for Blood, Strange Joining, Call Forth Simulacra III.*
- 4. The party locates an ancient staircase leading to a secret underpass through part of the mountains, shortening their travel time by one day. There is a 50% chance of finding a dwarven relic in the dark roads (iron pendant in a hammer shape, worth 500 gp to the right buyer).







 A colossal 40 ft Horned Crawler bursts up from the earth, launching rock and party members in all directions as it burrows out of the ground, instinctively ravenous.

Horned Crawler, AC 15, HD 16, Horn 3d10, 19: special, S22 D10 C22 I3 P10 W14 Ch4 L15, Mv 50 ft or 30 ft burrowing. The horned crawler has Major Exploit Protection and Off Turn Attacks. On a 19+ attack roll the target is skewered on the horn: roll 1d6 and consult the Injuries & Setbacks table.

- 6. A hunting party of 3d10 thuels (as *Berserker*) is camped nearby with 1d4 wandering sentries. There is a 50% chance they are *Stone Bloods*, allies of the *Cliff Striders*. Otherwise they are dreaded *Bone Jaws* and bitter enemies of *Thraani's* (now effectively extinct) tribe.
- 7. A pack of 2d4 jet black *Dire Wolves* stalk these mountain passes, hunting for humanoids (or anything living, really) to sink their fangs into.
- 8. The weather turns poor, showering heavily, and causing part of the cliffs to collapse at an inopportune time. The party must make a *Group Luck* save or be swept up in a devastating mountain slide

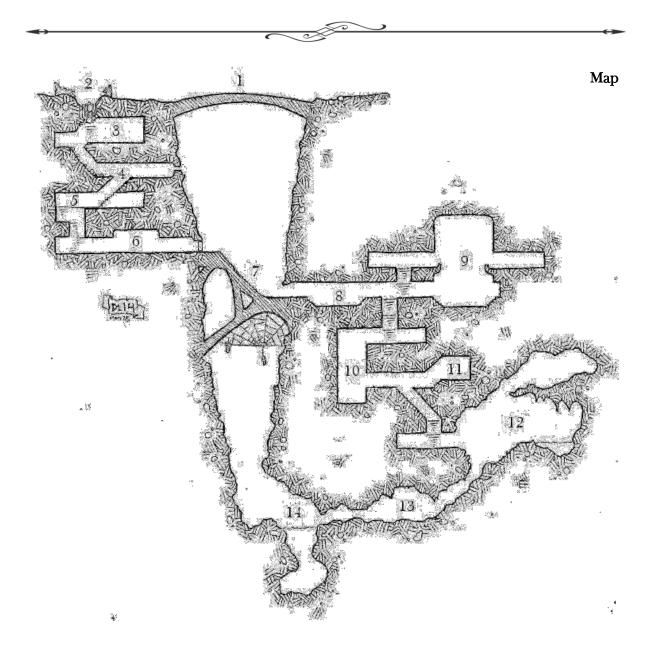
- resulting in death (50%, swept off the cliffs or utterly buried) or (50%) 6d6 damage (landing on a ledge).
- 9. A series of ravines dots this area, requiring numerous difficult and taxing climbs. Each PC must make a *Luck* (Str) check or lose 1 Str due to exhaustion.
- 10. On a high and windy tor sits an old and weather beaten tomb, its entry archway as black as night. Hidden inside is 1 x 4 HD *Lair Treasure*, guarded by the *Spectre* of a priest from a past age.



#### Trollbridge

The trollbridge corridors and stairs are mostly cut stone, excepting the south eastern tunnels. The western wing is lit with candles, allowing *Yoggzul* to navigate the otherwise dark tunnels.

In the eastern wing, excepting where daylight is able to penetrate Areas 8 and 13, the tunnels are completely dark. The trolls are able to see in the dark without difficulty but PCs will need their own light source.



#### Area 1 - Highbridge

The ancient stone bridge is 70 ft long and 15 ft wide, fashioned of mountain granite, with high 4 ft railings. Despite its great age, the bridge is in good repair, and will not crumble away if the adventurers set foot on it.

From the apex of the bridge, the ravine drops approximately 200 ft to its lowest point, where a shallow and slow moving river runs north to south.

About 25 ft down, on the western face, 3 arrow slits might be seen, although they are somewhat overgrown with clinging shrubs (Perc (Detection) check at a -2 penalty). At about 60 ft down is an

obvious stone staircase and secondary bridge, which descends another 15 ft or so before joining a tunnel on the eastern face. Thick, oversized webs can be seen wrapping about the lower bridgeway.

If the party lingers on the bridge for any length of time, the *Trollspider* in Area 7 will spot them and alert his kin with a strange clicking noise that echoes through the ravine.

At the GM's option, depending on the weather, thick fog might shroud the lower confines of the ravine, concealing the secondary bridge or other locations.



#### Area 2 - Bridgehouse Ruins

Only rubble and a few sad feet of foundations remains of the bridgehouse that once occupied this spot a thousand years ago. The stone is overgrown with weeds, but digging around in the collapsing floor unearths 1 x Carry Loot. PCs probing for descending stairs will find them filled with fallen rubble, blocked for centuries. Determined PCs with the right tools might excavate a tunnel to Area 3 (albeit noisily and taking many hours).



#### Area 3 - Necromancer's Lair

This 35 ft long by 70 ft wide chamber has a 10 ft ceiling, and used to form an underground barracks for the tower guard stationed here. The stairwell leading up to Area 2 has been blocked with rubble for centuries.

The chamber is now used as a sleeping chamber by the necromancer *Yoggzul* (50's, 6½ ft, beard, bushy eyebrows, long hooded robe). *Yoggzul* is an exile by choice, permanently marked by his use of

dark magic (he emits a constant smell of brimstone, and occasionally launches into random bouts of non-sensical slurping and croaking).

Under the protection of his *troll* allies, the necromancer studies the dead in his lab in Area 4, experimenting in the hopes of unlocking a secret nirvana betwixt life and death. He is fixated upon the subject, barely eats, drinks or sleeps, and has not spoken with a human for years. He refers to the living as the "dying", and (if not hostile) will greet the PCs with an guestimate of years until their passing (eg: "ah, a dying, how interesting. How did you find me? Twelve years I think for you, yes. Your friend with the axe, tut tut, just two. Superb musculature, however. Perhaps when you are done with her you might bring her here, hmm?").

Yoggzul is not inherently hostile to the PCs, and might even offer them work (bringing him cadavers for 10 gp each). He considers the trollbridge his home however, and any assault upon his quarters will be fiercely resisted. If the eastern tunnels are attacked, Yoggzul may or may not come to the aid of his troll allies, depending on his assessment of the situation. His preference is to use his magic through the arrow slits in Area 4 or through the doorway in Area 6.

Yoggzul, AC 12 (heavy robes), HD 6, Knife 1d4, 19: as weapon, S11 D9 C10 I16 P12 W12 Ch10, L10, Mv 30 ft. Yoggzul may choose from the following spells four times per combat (6th level): Arcane Aegis, None Shall Pass, Fusing of Flesh, A Wisp Unseen, Purge the Accursed, Place of Perfect Night, Bestial Communion, Riddle of Bones, Runic Rite of Wonderment, Gift of the Fiery Furnace, Spectral Transfixion. Yoggzul has advantage when resisting adverse mind effects such as sleep, charm, fear and madness.

If the necromancer is killed and his quarters searched (cot, stone slab for writing, scattered scrolls and parchments, handful of eating utensils), 1 x Carry Loot and 1 x Trinkets & Curios are found.



#### Area 4 - Laboratory

This narrow 35 ft by 10 ft wide chamber has a 7 ft ceiling and three shuttered arrow slits facing east. *Yoggzul* uses the chamber as his lab, presently there are two cadavers rotting away on two roughhewn slabs (the *trolls* dragged the stones into the chamber for him). If combat breaks out on the bridge, or the party assaults the door to Area 6, *Yoggzul* might hail them from here (or cast spells at them).

Area 5 - Trapped stairs

This stone staircase is approx 20 ft high and carved with runic symbols of the arcane, magically trapped by *Yoggzul* (via an abjuration ritual). Anyone other than *Yoggzul* or a *troll* that ascends the stairs is overcome with escalating lethargy, every step weightier than the last. Each step taken requires a Will check to resist losing 1 Str. There are approx 40 steps to the top of the staircase. Flying or traversing the stairs by other means does not invoke the curse.

#### Area 6 - Western Entryway

A roughly lashed wooden door has been installed at the eastern end of this corridor. It is unlocked, but may be barred from the inside (breaking through requires 3 successful Str checks at disadvantage).

A long, defensive tunnel lies beyond, 55 ft long, 10 ft wide and 5 ft tall, except where the middle roof rises to 7 ft. Characters fighting in the cramped 5 ft sections with weapons larger than short swords fight at disadvantage (inc *trolls*). In the raised section stand four human skeletal warriors. They allow none but *Yoggzul* or *trolls* to pass.



Skeletal Warriors, AC 14, HD 4+2, Sword 1d8+2, 19: a defeated skeletal warrior re-animates to aid this one, S17 D10 C16 I- P13 W- Ch-, L7, Mv 30 ft. Skeletal warriors are Undead with the usual benefits, automatically sense the living within 60 ft and are immune to piercing weapons such as arrows. Each warrior carries a shield which they may use to negate a single directional attack once (as shield rules).



#### Area 7 - Lowbridge

This 35 ft long, 10 ft wide steep staircase-bridge is spotted with moss and underhung with thick strands of sticky webbing. A 10 ft *Trollspider* lurks here (a horrifying troll arachnid mutant, appearing as a giant spider with green, noduled troll skin, able to parrot a few random "troll" words in a hideous, chittering voice).



Trollspider, Boss Monster AC 13, HD 7 (54 hp), Bite 2d4+1 + poison and 4 Claws 1d8+1, 19: the target is encased in webs (helpless, spend action to make a Str contest vs Str 17 to break free), S19 D14 C15 I3 P10 W13 Ch3, L9, Mv 40 ft inc walls, ceiling, etc. The trollspider is a Boss Monster with the usual benefits. It regenerates like a troll, and its poison Bite causes 1d4 Dex loss (Luck (Con) save resists). The monster's webs are infused with a fire retardant mucus and do not burn, instead giving off a poisonous fume causing 1d3 Str loss in a 20 ft radius (spiders and trolls are immune, otherwise Luck (Con) save resists).

The *trollspider* is an abomination, twisted into its current form by *Yoggzul's* magic gone awry. It retains only the basic vestiges of its former troll life, but knows allies from enemies, and remains loyal to *Gort*. If defeated, the monster's webs contain the bodies of recently slain barbarians and beastmen (1 x Trinkets & Curios).

#### Area 8 - Eastern Entryway

This defensive tunnel is 10 ft wide, 60 ft long and 5 ft high, except in the middle where the height rises to 10 ft. A single *troll* sentry is on guard duty in the raised section, sitting on a heap of furs (50% chance dozing off after a meal, the half eaten corpse of a *beastman* beside it). Characters fighting in the cramped 5 ft sections with weapons larger than short swords fight at disadvantage (*trolls* also fight with disad in these spaces, and will retreat to Area 9 or 12).

#### Area 9 - Secondary Troll Den

This 30 ft long, 50 ft wide and 40 ft high chamber was the original ore cavern for the bronze mine that founded the outpost here. After it ran dry, the cavern was reinforced and converted to a storage area between caravan runs to the city. The *trolls* now use the chamber as a secondary living area, littered with piles of furs and the cloaks of dead *barbarians*. A thorough search of the area turns up 1 x Carry Loot. 1d2+1 *trolls* are here at any one time, sleeping or eating a recent *beastman* kill (red stains cover much of the area).

Troll, AC 13, HD 7, 2 Claws 1d4+1 and Bite 1d8+1, 19: if the target is accompanied by a pet or henchmen, the pet/ally is eaten by the troll (or has a limb torn off), S19 D12 C17 I6 P7 W8 Ch7, L9, Mv 30 ft. Trolls regenerate all damage at the start of their next turn, or in 1d6 rounds if reduced to zero hit points. Damage from fire or acid is not regenerated. A troll reduced to zero hit points and completely burnt or buried does not regenerate. 10 ft reach.

#### Area 10 - Elevator Shaft

This 30 ft high drop shaft was harvested for bronze before being reinforced and turned into a winch elevator. A number of thick iron chains dangle from the roof, looking worse for wear, but still perfectly functional. The winches and platform rotted away years ago, but the chain may be climbed (automatic unless during combat, in which case a Str (Athletics) check is required).

#### Area 11 - Weapons Cache

This small 10 ft square side chamber was an emergency weapons stash for the original occupants, in case of a quick retreat through the lower caverns. It now holds a broken weapons rack with 1d6 spears, swords and maces spread about the floor. 1d4 shields are also lying about. There are also a large number of further weapons broken by the trolls, or otherwise deteriorated over time.

#### Area 12 - Main Troll Den

This large, natural cavern is approximately 50 ft in diameter, with a rock shelf separating the highest 10 ft. In the south eastern corner is a section of underground river (up to about 7 ft deep).

The *trolls* use this cavern as their primary den. 2d3 trolls, plus their leader *Gort*, are usually here. *Gort* is not the biggest, fastest or most vicious of the *trolls*, but he is the smartest and most determined. Smart enough to learn a simple fire spell from *Yoggzul*, in fact, which cemented his position as leader and consolidated his partnership with the necromancer. *Yoggzul* is in the process of teaching



Gort Shadows & Dust, but it is slow going (and the longer it takes, the better for Yoggzul).

Gort's stats are as Troll, but Int 8, 32 hp, Major Exploit Protection and may cast Flame Bolt once per combat (120 ft range, single target, 3d8 damage, Luck (Dex) save for half).

Gort sleeps atop the rocky shelf in the upper half of the cave, overlooking the rest of his kin. He has 2d4 spears that he can throw while taking half cover (+2 AC) at the overhang's edge. If the *trolls* are defeated and the cavern searched, 1 x Carry Loot is found hidden amongst the furs and small piles of bones.



#### Area 13 - Bone Pile

This 30 ft wide cavern has a 12 ft ceiling, in the top reaches of which lurk 1d4 *Yellow Mould*. The *trolls*' regenerative abilities make them immune to the mould's effects. A large collection of bones, more than two feet high, are piled up here. Sifting through the pile reveals 1 x 4 HD Lair Treasure.

Yellow Mould, AC 10 (automatic hit in melee), HD 3, Projectile Spore (see below), 19: the spore is extra strong, bursting in a 10 ft radius, S6 D-C16 I2 P14 W-Ch-, L6, Mv immobile. Yellow mould is immobile but attacks by way of projectile spores up to 60 ft that burst in a 10 ft diameter. Failing a Luck (Con) save against the spores means that the adventurer dies a horrible choking death in 1d6 rounds. An adventurer protecting their nose and mouth with a mask gains advantage on the check.

#### Area 14 - Stream

A shallow, low lying river (approx 25 ft deep) runs north to south along the bottom of the ravine. Swimming across is generally straight forward but jumping requires a Str (Athletics) check at disadvantage (the run up is uneven and littered with scree). The *trolls* might use the river to try and drown heavily armoured PCs, or douse themselves if on fire.

#### **Aftermath**

If the *trolls* are slain and *Thraani* lives, she is proud to have avenged her tribe, but flooded with deep sorrow, and uncertain as to her future. Depending on how the adventure unfolded, the barbarian might offer her services to a PC of similar views and martial prowess as a loyal henchmen. Any troll blood the party manages to return to *Siripid* is gladly paid for, with the alchemist keeping the party in mind for future work.

If *Yoggzul* survives but is driven from his home, he might turn up in a remote tower elsewhere in the realm, a secret laboratory in the sewers of *Crow's Keep*, or be caught by *beastmen* and swiftly devoured.

# WHITESTONE TOWER



### Whitestone Tower

Rumour has it a winged beast is picking off *Vorngard's* messenger ravens and the occasional scout venturing too far west. If the tales are true, *Borgotha*, one of *Vorngard's* best apothecaries, is offering good coin in exchange for the monster's wings.

#### Vardova

In a tract of forested land, between the *Sunstone Ranges* and outermost borderlands of *Vorngard*, stands a decaying tower of white stone.

The age of the dwelling is uncertain, but weather stained stone and collapsed walls suggest several generations have past. What happened to the original resident, a sorceress, is a mystery, but there is no mistaking the current master; a fearsome 12 ft *Manticore* named *Vardova*.

The monster is a recent arrival to the area, the only manticore to descend from the Sunstone peaks. His mate and cubs died from *Ribcage Rot*, a horrible lung disease, during the last winter. *Vardova* is also afflicted, but is showing only early symptoms at present (occasional wheeze, and spitting up bloodied phlegm).

Though dull witted, *Vardova* understands what is happening to him, and has decided to spread as much misery and suffering as he can before he dies. Whether there are other *manticores* living in the high peaks is a matter for the GM, but if so, they shun him as cursed, offering no assistance.

Since taking up residence in the abandoned tower, *Vardova* has managed to draw a deal of attention to himself; eating *barbarians, skorn*, Midlanders and any other intelligent beings he can get his claws on.





The *manticore* speaks old common, with a heavy, growling accent, and enjoys taunting his prey before devouring them live, like a cat toying with a field mouse. Following the death of his pack, *Vardova* has grown ever more reckless and murdersome, taken to slaying humanoids for the bloody sport of it (as opposed to eating them), leaving corpses where they drop, or dangling them from high branches in gruesome displays.

In recent weeks, the beast has upped the ante, eating any messenger ravens to/from *Vorngard*, seeking to disrupt communications and draw more humans out of the walled city to be feasted on.

#### Apothecary Borgotha

Borgotha (6 ft, robust, auburn hair, never without her wiry ratdog *Gibbit*), an apothecary living in the city, spotted the monster whilst collecting herbs one afternoon. She is willing to pay 400 gp for its dragonesque wings, and another 300 gp for the spiked tail. *Borgotha* does not require that the beast be slain, necessarily, but in order to claim the appendages it will likely need to be incapacitated.

The party might become involved in this adventure by (i) accepting *Borgotha's* bounty, (ii) stumbling across the ruined tower whilst travelling, or (iii) discovering an old letter referring to the sorceress *Trinnien* said to dwell there.

#### **Random Encounters**

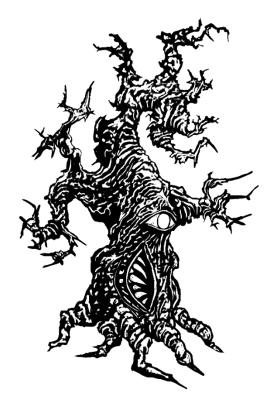
Travelling to the tower is at least 3 days trek through forested, alpine hills. There is a 50% chance of a random encounter every 12 hours. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d10:

1. A lone *Dire Wolf* begins tracking the PCs, howling to its pack. A single responding howl is very, very distant. If the PCs attempt to catch the wolf, it baits them deeper into the forest, where 2d4 of its pack members are silently waiting to ambush them.

- 2. At the base of a huge fir tree is the outline of a door covered in heavy moss. If scraped clear, silver elvish script can be seen along the edges.
- 3. The desiccated husk of a dead *Skorn* with yellow warpaint lies on the ground. The body is several days old and laden with grubs. In the high trees, a *Veil Spider* is watching, hoping to ambush the outermost party member if they stop to investigate.
- 4. 4d4 *Frost Eater* barbarians are camping nearby, roasting game. They are in good spirits, high on fermented alcohol. The thuels will be suspicious of the PCs, but might be talked or bribed into sharing their fire, with a demonstration of the party's strength.
- 5. The weather turns treacherous, unleashing a thunderstorm and powerful winds. The freezing cold saps the explorers' strength as they slosh through slippery mud. All PCs must make a Con (Athletics) check or lose 1 Str due to exhaustion.
- 6. In the midst of the night, a single *Tree Abomination* emerges from the forest, creaking and groaning with inhuman hunger.

Tree Abomination, AC 14, HD 11, 2 Batter 3d6, 19: a sliver of the Veil is unleashed, the target rolls on the Dark & Dangerous Magic table, S22 D10 C20 I3 P13 W17 Ch4, L11, Mv 20 ft. The abomination Causes Injuries on a natural 19-20 attack roll, 10 ft reach. If both batter attacks hit, the target is also bitten (roll on the Injuries & Setbacks table). The abomination has Off Turn Attacks. Advantage on saves against magic. Particularly susceptible to fire which causes double damage.





- 7. The sounds of horns can be heard minutes before 5d4 *Varnori* scouts appear along the rise of nearby hills. They seek to extort the "*Jarl's tithe*" from the party, at the cost of 20 gp per PC, for "*the right to bear arms*". The captain, *Geira* (blonde, brazen female who likes to "pat down" handsome PCs to check for "weapons"), might give one PC a pass in exchange for a tussle in the bushes instead (well respected in *Vorngard*, *Geira* might make a useful future contact).
- 8. Beneath the rotting trunk of a fallen fir tree crawl 2d12 *Giant Centipedes*, antennae twitching curiously. The nest is very old; a handful of *barbarian* skeletons can be seen amongst the bracken (1 x Carry Loot).
- 9. Within the branches of a tall fir tree are the bodies of two *Frost Eater* barbarians, brutally torn apart and missing large strips of flesh. They appear to have been dropped into the tree from on high.

10. Vardova the Manticore (Area 3) wheels in the sky overhead, on the lookout for fresh prey. Depending on their location, the beast might try to kill one of them with his long range tail spikes before retreating to the tower (if pressed).

#### Tower Approach

The tower itself is located at Area C on a high bluff. There are two primary approaches, following old, overgrown paths ascending the rise from opposite directions.

#### Area A - Grey Star Tribe

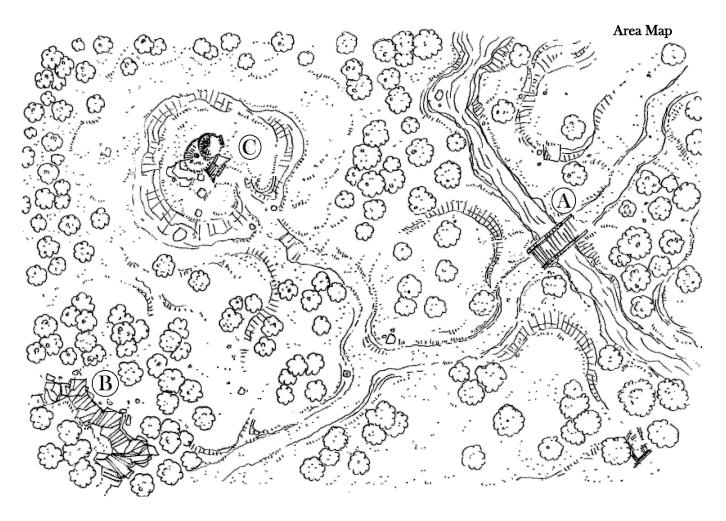
This access point involves a 30 ft rotting bridge spanning a 25 ft wide stream. The bridge is very old, mostly termite ridden timber but patched in critical locations by the manticore's human followers. Crossing the bridge is safe unless fighting upon it, in which case a Dex check is required to avoid falling into the river (and being swiftly dragged downstream).

3d4+10 *barbarians*, known as the *Grey Star* tribe, camp near the bridge, keeping watch on behalf of their monstrous master. The *Grey* are a mix of tribal exiles banded together for protection, beholden to *Malmogg* (hulking young teen, bald, skin covered in battle scars, exiled for seducing his chief's second wife).

Barbarians, AC 13, HD 1, Spear 1d6+1 or Axe 1d8+1 or Sword 1d8+1 or Long Bow 1d8, 19: as weapon, S12 D10 C13 I10 P10 W12 Ch11, I.4, Mv 30 ft. 50% of the Grey are berserkers with S13, +2 bonus to attack, +2 damage, and never check for morale.

Malmogg, Boss monster, AC 14, HD 4+4 (31 hp), Huge Club 2d6+4, 19: target stunned and loses next action, S18 D10 C15 I10 P10 W12. Ch15, L7, Mv 30 ft. Malmogg is a Boss Monster





with all the usual benefits. He is fearless to the point of recklessness, leading his "tribe" from the front or not at all.

*Malmogg* respects the manticore's strength and serves him in the hope of convincing the beast to destroy his old clan. He might let the party pass the bridge for a suitable bribe, but only if he gauges them as little more than a snack for *Vardova*. If defeated, the exiles have 1 x Carry Loot hidden amongst their bedding and travelling furs.

#### Area B - Manticore Feasting Ground

The top of this 50 ft high cliff is blood stained and scattered with bones, old and new. At the bottom are more skeletons, overgrown with glass and other plant life.

Vardova comes here to feed when he has the choice, reluctant to eat in his tower lair, given the mess that usually results. Searching through the remains garners 1 x Valuables hidden in the bottom of a boot.

There is a 50% chance 1d4+1 *Giant Worker Ants* are at the site when the PCs arrive, picking over some recent corpses. If they detect the party, they prefer to carry a live human back to their nest instead. If the workers are killed, 3d6 *Giant Soldier Ants* swarm the area in 1d6 x 10 minutes.

Giant Worker Ant, AC 13, HD 2, Bite 1d6, 19: knocks prone, S16 D10 C16 I1 P10 W10 Ch4, L5, Mv 40 ft and may climb walls, ceilings etc. Workers may swarm a target, gaining +1 to hit for each additional ant beyond the first (max +4).



Giant Soldier Ant, AC 15, HD 3+3, Bite 2d4 + poison, 19: the soldier spits acid on the target, causing 2d4 damage, S19 D12 C16 I1 P12 W12 Ch8, L6, Mv 40 ft and may climb walls, ceilings etc. Soldier ants have a venomous bite that requires a *Luck* (Con) save or the target loses 1d4 Con. *Soldiers* may swarm a target, gaining +1 to hit for each additional ant beyond the first (maximum +4).

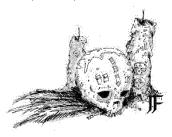
#### Area C - The Tower

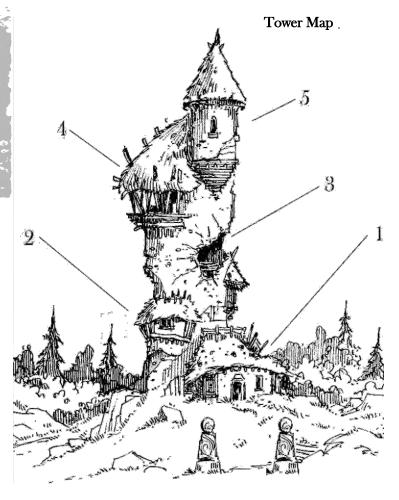
The tower is approx 100 ft tall with a 40 ft wide base at the lowest point (ground level), cut from white stone. The entire structure is riddled with lichen and decaying daub adorns the tiered rooftops.

About 30 ft southeast of the tower are a pair of gateway stones, 10 ft high, carved with swirling symbols akin to some kind of elvish writing (but not elven). The stones are enchanted, working a potent charm on any humanoid that comes within 30 ft of the tower (*Luck* (Will) save or suffer a serious madness; "*This place is cursed, I feel it in my bones. No brother, I won't let you make the mistake of entering here*").

The interior of the tower is fairly bright during the day, sunlight penetrates the windows and large holes, allowing light to stream in. At night, the tower is dark, but for a strange glow in Area 5. All doors are made of pine.

Numerous entry points are available, from breaking down doors (Str (Athletics) check), to windows (automatic or Dex check perhaps), or climbing (up to the big hole in Area 3, or deck in Area 4, automatic with a grapple and rope or else Str (Athletics) check).





There is a 50% chance the *manticore* is home in Area 3 or 4 when the PCs arrive, alternatively he is out hunting (and returns in 2d6 hours, in which case, a fresh, mostly devoured barbarian corpse is left in Area B. He then settles in to sleep for a time). *Vardova* is too large to fit through the stair ways leading to Areas 1, 2 and 5.

#### Area 1 - Main Entry, Lounge, Bathroom

The iron banded pine entry door is locked tight, sporting a brass turning knob and keyhole. The door is trapped, any attempt to yank violently on the handle detaches the knob and unleashes a small cloud of choking dust (5 ft diameter, 5d6 poison damage, *Luck* (Con) save for half). A Dex (Traps & Locks) check picks the lock or Str (Athletics) check (2 successes) busts the door down.





The entry hall beyond is compact and covered in dust. A few long dead pot plants sit by windows, along with walking sticks, boots, hooded walking cloaks on wall pegs, and so on. A short corridor leads to a decaying lounge covered in mildew, stairs wind up to level 2, and a door opens into a bathroom/toilet.

Sometime after the sorceress died, the bathroom was taken over by 3d4+5 *Horned Worms* that burrowed their way through the buckled northern wall. The room is covered in worm faeces and smells awful. The invertebrates sleep by day and hunt by night, sometimes daring to scavenge the *manticore's* left overs. *Vardova* is aware of the infestation and pays it no heed.

Horned Worm, AC 13, HD 1d4 hp, Bite 1d3+1, 19: worm's horns emit a hypnotic hum (Luck (Will) save or lose next action), S3 D14 C8 I2 P14 W6 Ch4 L3, Mv 20 ft or 5 ft burrowing. Bite has a 50% chance of Puckering Filth, causing 1d3 Dex loss each day until bedridden at zero Dex. A Luck

(Con) save resists. An apothecary may be able to cure the disease with the right healing herbs.

Horned Worms are 2 ft, carnivorous annelids with undulating "horns" that sense motion. Their rubbery hides are surprisingly resilient, maws lined with sharp, flesh rending canines.

#### Area 2 - Laboratory, Storage Room

Stairs from the ground floor lead to this level and continue up to Area 3. Two doors at the end of a short corridor open to a laboratory, and a storage room.

The storage room contains timber, some blocks of white stone, and other building materials, as well as an assortment of tools (shovel, mattock, saw, etc). Additionally, there are three crates containing 3 x random weapons, a suit of chainmail, and two shields.

The laboratory is dusty, tables laden with beakers, flasks and chemical stains, all manner of strange bric a brac (organs, crystals, powders, etc) scattered about or stored in pots, boxes, etc. The various ritual components are worth 1 x 4 HD Lair Treasure.

The lab is watched over by twin guardians. Whilst the young sorceress lived, she animated two sets of spiked armour to serve her. Originally charged with patrolling the tower grounds, the suits were temporarily housed in Area 2 for minor repairs just before their mistress died (each suit shows signs of denting, etc). Although motionless for decades, the guardians creak to life if the PCs pocket any of the lab's valuables (adhering to their prime directive).

Animated Armour, AC 14, HD 6, Spiked Mace 2d8, 19: opponent's weapon is shattered by a spiked mace (*Luck* (Dex) save resists, magical weapons are damaged/unusable until repaired), S17 D8 C18 I- P14 W- Ch-, L8, Mv 30 ft. The



suits are *Golems* but lack resistance to non-magical weapons. They have 30% Magic Resistance, except against *Curse of Searing Steel* which *Slows* them (50% lose action each turn, for 2d6 rounds).

#### Area 3 - Manticore Lair

The 25 ft wide central chamber was once a large study, filled with shelves and books, until a magical accident obliterated the contents (inc the sorceress), and blew out the eastern wall. The walls are still blackened by fire, and burnt pages make up part of the manticore's bedding (along with clothing torn from victims), massed on the western side. A burnt out stairwell (no longer intact) is located by the northern wall.

If the beast is home when the PCs arrive, he is most likely here. If the PCs manage to take *Vardova* by surprise, he will be shocked, and fly into a rage. If he sees them coming however, the manticore will attempt to speak with them (who are they, why have they come here to die, what crime have they committed to deserve such a fate, which one should he let live to spread word of his might, and so on).

If battle commences, the *manticore* will take wing and use its tail spikes to shoot from afar, using flyby style attacks to rake his foes or grab them to drop from great heights. He will not willingly land to engage in protracted melee, except perhaps to finish an almost downed PC.

Vardova, Boss Monster, AC 14, HD 7 (54 hp), 2 Claws 1d6, Bite 1d8 and 1d6 Tail Spikes 1d6+1 (180 ft range), 19: special, S19 D14 C18 I7 P11 W12 Ch8, L9, Mv 60 ft or 120 ft flying. Vardova is a Boss Monster with all the usual benefits. On a 19+, Vardova wing buffets the target prone, pushes them up to 1d4 x 5 ft (Luck (Str) save resists), or grabs them and flies away (Str contest to resist).

If *Vardova* is defeated, searching the chamber reveals 1 x Scroll, secreted in a fire blasted bronze case, buried under the remains of some charcoal shelving.

#### Area 4 - Viewing Deck, Kitchen, Dining

This 20 ft roofed platform provides excellent views over the surrounding area. The ceiling is dangerously unstable, any attempt to climb up causes it to collapse (3d6 damage, and *Luck* (Dex) save or knocked off the edge (60 ft drop). Two doors to the east lead to a small kitchen and dining area (grimy and untouched for decades). Stairs in the kitchen lead down to Area 3 and up to Area 5.



The *manticore* sometimes settles himself on the platform, surveying the forest and hills. If *Vardova* is home when the PCs arrive, he is either here or in Area 3.

#### Area 5 - Bed Chamber

This 10 ft diameter sleeping chamber contains a mouldy hammock and rug, small trunk, tarnished mirror and dressing table.



Silently lurking within is the ghost of the sorceress and mistress of the tower; *Trinnien Cinderil* (female, 30s, translucent, ethereally shifting form as if seen through water).



Trinnien barely remembers her name, and recalls only a colossal explosion before she "woke up this morning"; some kind of nightmare, to be sure. Trinnien is lost in her own world (materializing into view reading tarot cards, brushing her hair, gazing upwards as if studying the sky, etc), and will mostly ignore the PCs. A PC attempting to touch her ages 3d10 years (*Luck* (Dex) save to pull away at the last moment).

Every now and then however (1-2 on 1d6, check every minute the PCs are in her presence), *Trinnien* will have a moment of lucidity, wailing about the utter loneliness of her cursed existence, prevailing upon at least one of the PCs to remain with her as a companion.

Once this request has been made, whatever other reveries *Trinnien* might fall into, she remains acutely aware of the PCs' actions, and will move to prevent any of them leaving the tower. As far as the *ghost* is concerned, their sole purpose is to keep her company, and she will kill them rather than let them leave.

Trinnien, Ghost, AC 12, HD 8, Touch 1d4 + special, 19: the target ages twice as much as usual, S-D15 C-I10 P13 W17 Ch3, L9, Mv 30 ft flying. Ghosts are Incorporeal, able to pass through objects, and are harmed only by magic or cold iron weapons. A ghost's awful caress instantly ages the target 3d10 years (no Luck save permitted) and requires a Luck (Will) save to resist suffering a serious madness. If a target is aged more than its expected lifespan, it dies a desiccated husk.

If one or more PCs agree to remain as her companion, *Trinnien* treats them well, and manages long stretches of lucidity discussing a wide range of subjects.

After 2 weeks, assuming the PC(s) build a rapport, the *ghost* invests part of her power into a single PC (her favourite "student"), granting them the ability to cast a single 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>std</sup> level spell of their choosing (castable once per long rest, or alternatively if a Magic User, learning 2 new spells of their choosing).

In order to bestow this ability on the PC however, she must touch them on the forehead, aging them 3d10 years.

After conveying her gift of secret knowledge, *Trinnien's* soul is finally at peace. The PC(s) may leave unmolested, and *Trinnien* fades away, never to be heard from again. Alternatively, at the GM's option, she might remain as a strange and volatile scholar whom the PCs might consult from time to time, provided they are willing to stay with her a period (longer and longer on each subsequent occasion).



If the bed chamber is searched, the trunk contains 1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Valuables and 1 x Trinkets & Curios.

#### Aftermath

If the manticore is allowed to survive, he slaughters all messenger ravens and begins harassing caravans, causing ongoing supply shortages in *Vorngard*. Returning the beast's wings and/or tail

to *Borgotha* earns the agreed fee, and a degree of fame amongst other apothecary, explorers, caravan guard, rangers and so on. If *Trinnien* endures, she stays put in her tower, engaging in necromantic rites meant to extend her lucidity. Over time however it becomes clear that her sanity is eroding. Eventually she will turn on the PCs, or any other humans entering her crumbling home, until she finally slips through the Veil forever.





# RIDDLE OF THE GOLDEN RAT





### Riddle of the Golden Rat

The *Golden Rat*, an enchanted idol from a prior age, is said to grant the power to summon and control vermin of all kinds.

"Oh Rool, you and that stupid rat dream!"

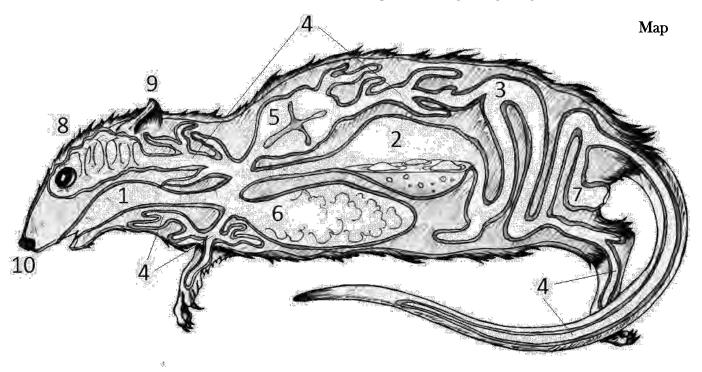
- Franjean the brownie to his friend Rool (also a brownie) in the 1988 movie Willow.4

Crafted by the capricious hag *Menethorii* during a past age, the *Golden Rat* is a 4 inch statuette of pure gold, shaped to resemble a field mouse standing on its hind legs, pawing at the sky.

In fact, the idol is a trap; a cursed object intended to punish greed and school mankind in the importance of perspective, vulnerability and wonderment. Infused with the blood of the unseelie crone herself, the idol's magic is especially potent, insusceptible to *Purge the Accursed* or *Sever Arcarnum* spells (but may be countered by *Eldritch Mirror* or *Forbidden Wish*).

Any human touching the idol triggers its curse, instantly affecting not only the touching mortal but all allies in a 30 ft radius. Targets immediately feel nauseas and sway precariously, dropping to one knee or grabbing hold of a nearby wall to steady themselves. After a moment, the true curse is unleashed, rapidly shrinking all mortal targets to a mere 3 mm tall (including their gear); no larger than a tiny bug!

Furthermore, as the PCs shrink, the idol begins to move, its metallic form transmuting into a common variety field rat. Scrunching up its nose, the furry colossi issues a deafening squeal before scooping up any tiny humans and swallowing them whole. At the GM's option, PCs with a cunning plan or the right magic might be able to



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> If you're never seen *Willow*, stop reading this and go watch it right now! You're welcome.

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avoid this fate (eg: perhaps by turning invisible and immediately flying away). If some PCs do escape, they have successfully avoided this adventure, and might like to join the GM behind the screen or play a trapped henchmen, hireling, faithful hound, etc instead. Escaped PCs return to normal size when the trapped PCs escape, or in 4d6 hours, whichever occurs first.

The rat cannot be defeated through brute force, magical or otherwise. It is immune to hostile sorcery, including charms and suggestions, and its outer flesh far too thick to be pierced by tiny weapons. The vermin has an acute sense of smell, good enough to track down a slow moving invisible target, and is much too fast to outrun.

Swallowed PCs are immediately engulfed in darkness, soaked in saliva and battered by the tongue and oesophageal pipe before being shunted into the stomach moments later (see Area 2 below).

The PCs might become involved in this adventure by (i) finding the *Golden Rat* as treasure, (ii) being paid to retrieve it by a wealthy antique collector, or (iii) the GM running the scenario as a dream the whole party shares when camped in the deep woods one night during a blood moon.

#### Fluctuating Size

As the adventure progresses, the party continues to change size, sometimes shrinking to microscopic form, other times enlarging back to a few millimetres tall. Upon escaping the rat they are restored to normal size.

At the microscopic level, a bluish bioluminescence covers everything, allowing the PCs to see long distances (relatively speaking). Additionally, while at this size, their basic life functions are magically maintained without the need to drink, eat or breathe. This elementary protection does not extend to injuries, exhaustion, disease and so on.

Although magically shifting size is not ideal from a consistency point of view, it allows the PCs to interact with a wider variety of locations and hazards within the rat's body. Given the degree of suspension of disbelief already required for this adventure, a little more probably won't hurt.

#### Ain't nobody said nothin 'bout no science

At this stage some GMs might be concerned that their players have a better knowledge of anatomy, chemistry or micro physics than them. Phah! Use your best judgment, and if any complex sciency issues arise that you can't explain or don't make sense, consider deploying one of the following venerable GM solutions:

- 1. "I dunno, it's magic or something".
- 2. "Bloody stupid adventure writer obviously didn't think about that. Let's handwave it for now."
- 3. "I hear what you're saying, but hold up let me just check something... (rolls dice) uhuh - RANDOM ENCOUNTER!"

#### **Random Encounters**

The party's first stop is the stomach (see Area 2) where they must contend with bubbling acid and grinding walls. If they survive that location, the PCs are pushed through a number of other dangerous places before any real chance of escape arises.

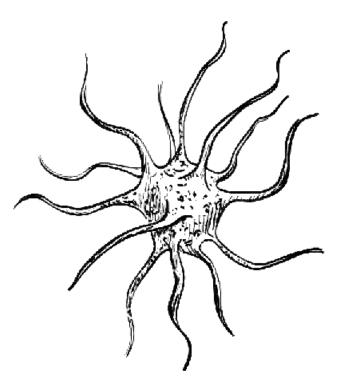
Whilst moving between locations, there is a 90% chance of a random encounter. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d6:

1. 2d6 White Blood Cells appear from the blood steam or emerge from membrane walls. They instinctively attack the PCs as foreign bodies, seeking to absorb and neutralise them.

White Blood Cells, AC 13, HD 3, Partial Ingestion 2d4+1, 19: special, S16 D7 C16 I- P12 W- Ch-, L6, Mv 30 ft. White Blood Cells absorb foreign bodies, breaking down their constituent parts and eradicating them. On a 19+ attack roll, a piece of random non-magical equipment is destroyed (1d4: (i) weapon, (ii) armour, (iii) shield, (iv) other). The cells are relentless; if an adventurer is reduced to zero hp, and the body not recovered in one round, the PC dies.



2. Rush of Blood. An adrenaline burst causes a rush of blood, flushing the party downstream. The roller coaster like ride causes PCs to knock into each other, organ walls and red blood cells, causing 2d6 damage (Luck (Con) save resists). After the rush stops, the party could be anywhere in the body (determine location randomly).



- 3. 1d6+1 *Cancer Cells* (see Area 5) peel themselves off some discoloured red blood cells and swim towards the PCs, intending to fuse with them.
- 4. A random permanent magical item comes floating down the blood steam, or is embedded in a flesh wall, etc. Although the poor sod that owned the item is long dead, his/her supernatural trinket still endures.
- 5. The rat suffers an injury (bitten by some random predator), and is losing blood. Platelets are already forming around the wound, but up to 1d4 PCs might be able

- to escape before the hole is sealed (a Dex check at -2 is required). Any PCs that make it out immediately morph back to normal size, but may have to deal with up to 2d6 random predators (GM discretion). Escapees may also want to catch hold of the rat if any PCs remain trapped inside.
- 6. *Quake!* The rat goes for a tumble, falling while climbing or thrown by a predator. The PCs collide with such force that they must roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Con) save resists).

#### Organ Locations

#### Area 1 - Mouth Cavity

If the party makes their way back up towards the rat's mouth cavity, the enchantment begins to reverse, the PCs enlarging up to three millimetres tall. The mouth cavity is a dark red cavern, foul smelling and lined with slippery saliva, the tongue a roiling mass of pink doom.

The tongue, saliva and jaws are deadly hazards at this size; anyone attempting to traverse the rolling tongue must make up to 1d4 Dex (Athletics or Acrobatics) checks to avoid being crushed against the wall of the mouth (50% chance, 3d6 damage) or thrown into a pool of diseased saliva (*Luck* (Con) save or infected with lethal (for humans) *Purple Cankers* (bloody mouth and throat sores, spread by coughing up fetid purple phlegm, causing 1 Con loss per day. The disease may be cured by an Apothecary with the right healing herbs, recovering 1 Con per week).

Passing through the yellowed fangs is to court death itself. The rat is liable to open its jaws at any time, but just as likely to snap them shut again, biting at small insects or responding to strange itching along its gums (ie the PCs). A successful Str (Athletics) check is required to climb the teeth to a suitable height for crossing, and a *Luck* (Dex) save to cross the fangs at the right moment. On a



fail, the PC either dies instantly (50%, torn to pieces by the towering fangs), or is reduced to zero hit points (50%, crushed against the teeth by the flailing tongue, before dropping to the gum line, still inside the teeth perimeter).

PCs attempting to use torches or fire, and/or by irritating the ulvula, to encourage the jaws to open are met with a thrashing head and waves of saliva instead (Str check at disadvantage or swept down into the stomach). If the party manages to cross the teeth they earn their freedom.

#### Area 2 - Stomach

After being thrust down the oesophagus, the party is dropped into an almighty, lightless chamber, half filled with acidic digestive juices. The stomach acids are bubbling and echoing as walls of muscle grind against each other in an attempt to break down food into smaller components. And to top things off, the PCs are still shrinking, now down to about 1 mm in height.

Being submerged in the acid extinguishes torches and lanterns. A PC with quick reflexes might be able to use a grapple rope (or blade thrust into stomach lining) to hang from a wall, and keep their light burning.

Those in digestive juices suffer 2d4 acidic and grinding damage at the start of each round. Those hanging from flesh walls suffer 1d4 damage (grinding only).

There are two main exits from the stomach:

- 1. Scaling the stomach walls, forcing open the upper sphincter, and climbing back up into the oesophagus (requires three Str checks at disad vs Str 19), or
- Being sucked and/or squeezed out the lower sphincter into the digestive tract.
   After 2d6 rounds in the stomach, PCs must make a successful Str check each

round to avoid being pushed or washed into Area 3.

PCs attempting to make their own exit by hacking through a flesh wall find it surprisingly rubbery and resilient. Small holes can be made with time, however such damage causes the stomach walls to grind that area with extra force, causing 1d6 extra damage and forcing a Str contest (as above) to avoid being squeezed out of the lower sphincter.

#### Area 3 - Digestive Tract

The tubing of the digestive tract is a nightmare of biblical proportions: a colossal tunnel of undulating flesh, grinding and folding together to squeeze food along as it melts in digestive juices. Foul gasses fill the tunnel, which is partially filled with organic acid.

Each round a PC remains in the digestive juices causes 1d4 damage, and requires a Dex check to avoid being hurled or pushed further along the tube. The intestines stretch far longer than any PC could possibly survive, but happily for them, they don't have to stay here.

Shortly after entering the tract, the PCs shrink down to microscopic size (comparatively speaking about half the size of a *red blood cell*, or a quarter of the size of a *white blood cell*). In this miniscule form, the tract becomes all encompassing, so large that the far walls cannot be seen, the juices a veritable sea, dominated by a sickly white, fleshy sky. By now, even the most hardened adventurer is struggling to hold it together, and all PCs must make a *Luck* (Will) save or suffer a moderate madness (recurring night terrors of being eaten by a colossal rat, and/or waking delusions of the same).

More importantly, the PCs become small enough to squeeze through the tube walls and enter the veins and arteries of the rat, gaining them access to other organs. The party will see *red* (and occasional *white*) *blood cells* doing exactly this; wriggling their way through fleshly crevices in the



translucent walls. A Str check is required to pass through.

#### Area 4 - Veins & Arteries

If the party enter the veins or arteries, they are microscopic and swept along in a surging torrent of clear yellow plasma, within which hundreds of *red blood cells* are travelling nearby, tumbling and jostling with each other as they ride the circulatory system.

PCs caught up in the general flotsam are inevitably hammered by careening *red blood cells*, causing 1d10 damage. The party might be able to protect themselves against bombardment by hitching a ride on a *red blood cell* or other benign organism (requires a Dex check at disadvantage), by forming a protective ring of their own and deflecting cells with long weapons or tools (requiring a successful attack roll vs AC 13), or by some other means at the GM's discretion.

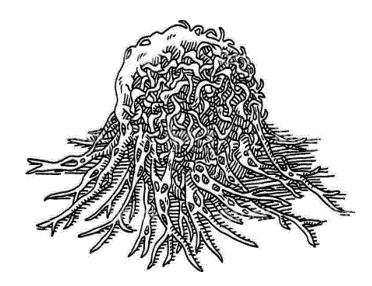
In any event, the party are largely at the mercy of the rat's circulatory system, and might be hived off into any location within the body. At the GM's option, riding a *red blood cell* (or by some other means) might enable the PCs to "steer" towards (or away from) specific locations, granting a +1 bonus on the following 1d8 roll (max 8). The party may not visit the same location twice before visiting another new location (reroll).

- 1. No exit this time. The party is caught up in a turbulent artery and suffers 1d10 damage due to bombardment (or must make a check, as noted above).
- 2. As above, but instead of hp damage, each PC must make a Con check or suffer 1 Str loss due to exhaustion.
- 3. The PCs are deposited into Area 5 the *Heart*.
- 4. The PCs are deposited into Area 8 the *Brain*.

- 5. The PCs are deposited into Area 6 the *Lungs*.
- 6. The PCs are deposited into Area 2 the *Stomach*.
- 7. The PCs are deposited into Area 3 the *Digestive Tract*.
- 8. The PCs are deposited into... roll 1d4: (i) Area 1 (*Mouth Cavity*), (ii) Area 2 (*Poop Chute*), (iii) Area 9 (*Ear Canal*) or (iv) Area 10 (*Nasal Cavity*).

#### Area 5 - Heart

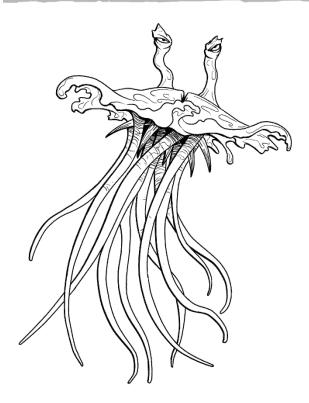
PCs deposited into the heart do so at microscopic size, emerging into a gigantic chamber that thrums with sound so loud it cannot be heard by the party, only felt. The shockwave of the beating heart causes nausea and disorientation, requiring a *Luck* (Con) save to avoid 1d3 Str loss.



Upon stabilising to the environment (as much as that is possible), the adventurers find themselves in a relatively steady corner of a lower chamber near a partially blocked valve. The cause of the blockage is immediately obvious: a black, slimy looking cancerous growth. Within a few rounds, the cancer detects the party and spawns 2d6 *Cancer Cells* to feed on them.



Cancer Cells, AC 15, HD 5, Cankerous Polyp 3d4+1, 19: special, S19 D9 C18 I- P9 W- Ch-, L8, Mv 30 ft. Cancer cells appear as black, misshapen growths with grasping polyps. They seek to attach and meld with other living tissue, then multiply out of control. On a 19+ attack roll, a random body part is lost; transmuted into a new cancer cell (1d6: (i) foot, (ii) below knee, (iii) hand, (iv) below elbow, (v) arm, (vi) head), per the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (loss of head causes death). A *Luck* (Con) save resists this effect.



If the party fend off the *cancer cells*, they may resume their travels through the circulatory system (Area 4). The colossal source cancer cannot detach itself from the valve it has melded with, and has the equivalent of 30 HD, strikes for 4d10 damage, and *Causes Injuries* on a 17+ attack roll.

#### Area 6 - Lungs

PCs deposited into the lungs do so at microscopic level, floating through a vast void, between sponge like cliffs that tower higher than any mountain. The lungs spread out in all directions; a

honeycomb morass of pasty white air sacks drawing in oxygen and expunging carbon dioxide.

The atmosphere in the lungs is highly toxic, filled with CO2. Whilst the PCs need not breathe, mere skin exposure to this (relative) volume of noxious gas requires a *Luck* (Con) check to avoid 4d6 damage.

Those that survive initial exposure are either drawn into the sponge like air sacks when the rat inhales (50%), or expelled into the mouth cavity when the rat exhales (50%, see Area 1).

A PC sucked towards the air sacks may make a Str or Dex check (their choice) to grab hold of a stringy air sack web or lip, preventing them from being drawn in. If drawn in however, the PC has one round to be freed or braced by his/her allies, else they are automatically bound by the sticky fibres of the deep lungs (helpless). At this point, if allies cannot come up with a plan to retrieve their comrade, 2d6 *White Blood Cells* emerge from nearby flesh walls in 3d6 rounds to annihilate the foreign body.

#### Area 7 - Poop Chute

PCs entering the bowel pass through the flesh wall in microscopic form, but swiftly grow to about 1 mm tall. The lower digestive tract is a revolting, feculent tunnel of discoloured flesh, mostly filled with reeking excreta. Swimming through the sloshing faeces is horrendous at best and debilitating at worst, requiring a *Luck* (Con) check to avoid contracting *Vermin Palsy* (causing 1 Dex loss within 1d4 hours, and over the course of a week paralysis in one random limb. The disease may be cured by an apothecary with the right healing herbs).

As the PCs navigate the bowel, they come upon a solidified island, upon which 3d6+20 strange, mushroom like creatures are milling about.

The creatures are approximately ½ mm tall, with mushroom like heads, twin eye stalks and leg like tentacles. They are sentient, but without language, making only a series of "Flurp" noises as they scoop excrement into their undermaws. The Flurps have never seen humans before, and are highly territorial. Whether they can come to some



understanding with the party is up to the GM. If not, the *Flurps* attack.

Flurp, AC 14, HD 1, Tentacle Slap 1d6+1, 19: special, S12 D15 C10 I4 P10 W10 Ch6, L7, Mv 40 ft. Flurps employ a swift, loping movement, flowing across terrain on their many tentacles. They make excellent floaters due to their muffin top bodies. On a 19+ attack roll the flurp's gas filled torso explodes, causing 1d8 damage in a 5 ft radius and causing humans to gag uncontrollably on nasty after fumes (helpless for one round, Con check resists). During the explosion, miniscule baby flurps scatter across nearby terrain like dandelion puffs (some of which the party might unwittingly carry into the outside world, enlarging to 1 inch tall if so).

If the *flurps* are defeated, it is only a matter of time before the rat relieves itself, and the party is released back into the world via a ghastly commotion of excrement.

#### Area 8 - Brain

PC's deposited into the brain press through the protective membrane in microscopic form. The brain landscape appears as an all-encompassing field of white flesh, interlaced with huge, scarlet red fissures of canyon like proportions. Between the brain and skull floats a colourless sea which the PCs effectively float in; the cerebral fluid. Movement in this area is effectively swimming.

The hazards of the brain include 3d6 White Blood Cells (see Random Encounter 1) somewhere in the vicinity of the PCs (either cleaning up some random toxin or "patrolling"), and make a bee line for the party if they detect them.

Secondly, the brain is constantly firing off and receiving electrical nerve impulses, some of which lose their way and escape into the brain fluid. There is a 30% chance of this occurring every 1d10 rounds that the party spend here (causing 6d6 hp damage and rendering the target blind for 1d2 months (*Luck* (Dex) save for half and to negate the blindness).

Being in the brain however allows the PCs to orientate themselves with respect to three possible exits: (i) the nasal cavity, (ii) the mouth cavity, or (iii) the ear canals. If the party attempts to move in one of these directions, a successful Int (Apothecary) check steers them to veins that will deposit them in the intended location. Otherwise the party ends up back in the veins/arteries at large (Area 4).

#### Area 9 - Ear Canal

When the party first emerge into the ear, they do so at microscopic size, but quickly enlarge to a height matching that of some black hairs lining the canal. The enormous chamber magnifies sounds many times over. A Perc (Detection) check picks up a hint of odd clicking noises coming from the outer ear.



Further along, in the outer ear canal, are 3d6 *Ear Mites*. The bugs, slightly larger than the PCs, are carrion feeders, gnawing on dead rat flesh or wax covered hairs. They are easily spoked and unlikely to respond favourably to the party, intent on defending their feeding grounds. Intruders such as the PCs must be killed or driven away.

Ear Mite, AC 16, HD 2, Bite 1d8+1, 19: special, S16 D8 C14 I4 P10 W11 Ch5, L5, Mv 30 ft. These scaly, beetle like insects have a hardened carapace, six powerful legs and snapping, beakish jaws. On a 19+ attack roll they crush their foe beneath their rigid bulk, requiring a *Luck* (Con) save to avoid rolling on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table.



If the party defeats or bypasses the mites, they may exit the rat's body via the outer ear.

#### Area 10 - Nasal Cavity

The party enters the nasal cavity in microscopic form, floating in an immense space, the far walls fading to black. Hairs the size of mountains poke out from the flesh wall the party entered through, but on the horizon is a bright light (either daylight, moonlight or torchlight from beyond the rat's nostrils).

The rat's back nasal passage is completely blocked with mucus, so much so that it cannot breathe through its nose. As a result of the blockage, there is no chance the party will be inhaled back down into the lungs.

Unfortunately it also means the adventurers must "swim" through air towards the nostril exits using their own motion, an ordeal that will take some considerable time, sped along by outside breezes circulating through the nasal cavity. At the GM's discretion, a random encounter check might be called for.

Before the PCs may escape, there is one final hazard to contend with. A *cold virus* has been multiplying here, and millions of wriggling, spasming *virions* (virus particles that have not yet attached to a living cell) are tumbling in the air, forming a kind of biological asteroid field.

Navigating the virions without incident requires 1d4 successful Dex checks. If failed, the PC and some virus particles end up on a collision course. A final *Luck* (Dex) save is permitted to avoid being engulfed. If failed, the PC dies: instantaneously transformed into a gloopy, amoeba like virus cell, drifting down to implant in the nasal cavity. If the virions are avoided, the party may exit the rat's body via the outer nostrils.

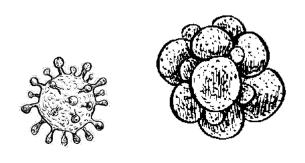
#### **Aftermath**

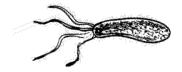
If the PCs make it out of the rat, they immediately begin to revert to normal size, slowly expanding until they reach their full proportions (most likely soaked in various bodily fluids).

While this process is going on, the rat stands up on its hind legs, pawing at the air, then hardens back into a statue before vanishing in a flash of golden fire. Whether the idol reappears elsewhere in the game world is a matter for the GM.

Although there is no obvious reward at the end of this adventure (apart from perhaps a tall tale that not even their grandchildren will believe), if the party meet any rats, giant rats or dire rats in the future, the verminous beasts are automatically cowed by the PCs, bowing their heads in submission before slinking away.

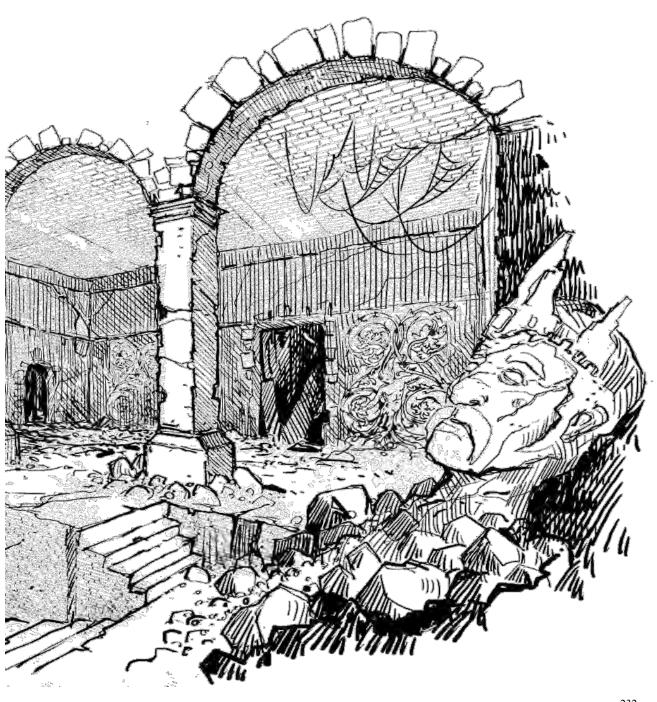
At the GM's discretion, a single PC might develop this ability further over time (similar to additional magical item attunements). With study and practice, the PC unravels the riddle of the golden rat, learning to summon and control vermin and vermin like monsters.





## **DUNGEON FLIP:**

## MORE SKULLS FOR ULGOTH





## Dungeon Flip: More Skulls for Ulgoth

In a fungi lit corridor, *Jordak* sniffed the air, drawing the scent deep into his lungs. "*Men.*" he queried. *Grouda* nodded, licking her lips expectantly. "*Brugmaw will like. More skulls for Ulgoth.*"

#### Intro

Warning: this is not a normal Adventure Framework. Taking inspiration from 2e's Reverse Dungeon module, in this scenario the players take control of the monsters and their underground lair. The players' objective is to defend their subterranean complex, holding together a monstrous alliance in the midst of a concerted assault by NPC adventurers.

Dungeon Flip: More Skulls for Ulgoth is intended as a one off change of pace, an entertaining novelty, perhaps when an essential player can't make game night. Alternatively it wouldn't take much to switch things back to normal, with the GM running the monsters and the players' their usual PCs, seeking out the Tablets of Baal.

#### **Objectives**

The players' objective is to repel the foreign incursion (and, ideally, eat the humans). The adventurers are brutal, merciless, and efficient, sternly fixed upon their prize: the *Tablets of Baal*, a "spellbook" of sorts, recently liberated from nearby ruins and conveyed to Area 10 by one of the monster *Leaders*.

For better or worse, the *Leader* has hidden the tablets in Area 10 for later study, unbeknownst to the other inhabitants (including other players – reveal this fact only to the relevant *Leader* – see

below). This might cause some tension later in the adventure, if/when the tablets are revealed.



#### Set Up

Before the adventure begins, there are a number of dungeon keeping matters to attend to. As outlined further below, players should:

- A. Determine starting *Monsters* and *Leaders*,
- B. Determine Dungeon Politics,
- C. Review their copy of the *Dungeon Map*,
- D. Allocate *Traps*,
- E. Allocate Custom Architecture, and
- F. Allocate monster starting positions.

The dungeon itself is all that remains of a human keep that perished in the outlands nine hundred years earlier, at about the end of the Second Age, when *Mount Rokan* scorched the land. No records exist to explain who lived here, nor what brought them low, but no surface buildings survived.



#### (A) Starting Monsters & Leaders

The players make six rolls, at least once on the *Humanoids* table, and at least once on the *Monsters* table, to determine their starting forces (reroll any repeats). Players may choose either table for the remaining four rolls. These creatures, plus 3d6+20 *Skorn*, make up the players' baseline forces.

Each player must nominate a single monster as their personal *Leader* (inc if desired/necessary individual monsters such as a *Dire Wolf* or *Stirge*, in which case the GM might permit a degree of "Lassie" like communications). The *Leader* is the player's PC for the purposes of the adventure. If their *Leader* dies, a player may nominate another monster to take direct control of.

HUMANOIDS	
1	Skorn Werewolf
2	Minotaur
3	Owlbear
4	1d4+1 Ogres
5	Cyclops
6	3d6 + 10 <i>Skorn</i>

Importantly, one random Humanoid<sup>5</sup> has access to a secret stash of magical items:

- (i) Two random scrolls,
- (ii) Two potions: *Burrowing* and *Borrowed Talent*, and
- (iii) The *Tablets of Baal* (see Area 10).

Given the *skorn's* loathing for magic, the *Leader* has secreted these items in Area 10.

MONSTERS	
1	Western Panther
2	1d4+1 Dire Wolves
3	Hammer Snail
4	1d4+1 Wild Boars
5	1d4+1 Giant Spiders
6	1d10+15 <i>Stirges</i>

#### (B) Dungeon Politics

Players roll 2d6 on the *Politics* table to determine initial attitudes between the various monster races:

POLITICS	
2	Hostile
3-4	Unfriendly
5-6	Cautiously Neutral
7-8	Friendly
9-11	Allies
12	Strong Allies



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> If only the *Owlbear* is available, it is uniquely intelligent with Int 8 and speaks a chirping/screeching common, and has a mute *skorn* slave to open doors, etc for it.



#### **Monster Stats**

Statistics for the various monsters appear on the following two pages (for easy copying and handing out). All *Leaders* gain +4 Cha and have *Major Exploit Protection*.

Cyclops, AC 12, HD 7+2, Oversized Club 2d8+1, 19: special, S19 D12 C16 I6 P8 W10 Ch9, L9, Mv 40 ft. Lacks depth perception suffering disadvantage on ranged attacks. 10 ft reach and Causes Injuries on a natural 19-20 attack roll. Cyclopes retain vestiges of augural ability and gain a free attack on a natural 19 or 20 attack roll.



Dire Wolf, AC 13, HD 3+4, Bite 2d4+1, 19: a wolf (60%) or dire wolf (40%) comes to aid the *dire wolf*, S18 D15 C17 I2 P13 W14 Ch6, L6, 60 ft. Advantage when tracking and on attack rolls when flanking.

Giant Spider, AC 13, HD 2+2, Bite 1d6+1 + poison, 19: special, S14 D16 C12 I2 P12 W10 Ch4, L5, Mv 40 ft inc up walls etc. On a natural

19-20 attack roll, a *giant spider* wraps its victim in webs, rendering them helpless (a *Luck* (Str) save resists). Trapped victim may spend its action to attempt to break free (Str contest vs Str 17). Bite causes 1d6 damage and 1 Dex loss (*Luck* (Con) save resists). 25% chance of harvesting 1d3 doses of poison from a dead spider.

Hammer Snail, AC 16, HD 5, 5 x Hammerstalks 1d4+2, 19: special, S12 D7 C15 I3 P8 W17 Ch1, L6, Mv 30 ft inc up walls etc. On a natural 19-20 attack roll, target is crushed, losing its next action (*Luck* (Con) save resists). Snails attack the same target with all 5 attacks until incapacitated. If struck by 3 or more hits in one round, target rolls on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table.

Minotaur, AC 15 (armour), HD 5+4, Big Axe 2d8, 10 ft reach, 19: roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Dex) save resists), S19 D14 C19 I6 P14 W15 Ch7, L8, Mv 30 ft. Charge 60 ft, gain adv to hit for 2d8+2, target makes a *Luck* (Con) save or roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table.

Ogre, AC 12, HD 4+3, Spiked Club 2d8, 19: special, S19 D8 C15 I6 P7 W8 Ch7, L7, Mv 40 ft. When staggered, an ogre enters a murderous rage, gaining a free attack against every foe within reach. On a 19+ attack roll, the target rolls on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Con) save resists). 10 foot reach.

Owlbear, AC 13, HD 6+3, 2 Claws 1d6+2 and Bite 2d4, 19: bear hug, S19 D12 C16 I3 P10 W15 Ch4, L8, Mv 40 ft. A hit with both claw attacks draws the victim into a crushing hug, forcing the victim to roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (*Luck* (Con) save resists). Owlbears cause 20 hp damage on critical hits and have a 10 ft reach.

Skorn, AC 11, HD 2, Club 1d6+1, 19: the target is clubbed in the head, losing its next action (*Luck* (Will) save resists), S15 D10 C13 I7 P12 W8 Ch8, L5, Mv 30 ft. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage when detecting danger or scents.



Skorn Werewolf, AC 13, HD 6+4, Bite 2d6, 19: a wolf (60%) or dire wolf (40%) comes to the lycanthrope's aid, S18 D14 C14 I10 P15 W13 Ch8, L8, Mv 30 ft. Lycanthrope with all the usual benefits. By spending an action, may exert control and issue orders to wolves and dire wolves, which are compelled to obey. Rudimentary dark vision, advantage when detecting danger or scents. Skorn lycanthropy cannot be spread to non-skorn.

Stirge, AC 12, HD 1d4 hp, Sting 1d3 + blood drain, 19: blood disease, lose 1d4 Str over 1d6 hours (*Luck* (Con) save resists, S4 D16 C6 I2 P10 W5 Ch4, L3, 60 ft flying.

After hitting auto drains 1d4 hp on their turn. PCs suffer -2 to hit an attached *stirge* (won't hit host) or may swing with abandon (25% chance of hitting both *stirge* and host). An attached *stirge* drains an unconscious PC to death in 1d6 rounds.

Western Panther, AC 14, HD 6, Bite 2d6 and 2 Claws 1d6, 19: random limb torn off (*Luck* (Con) save resists), S19 D16 C16 I3 P15 W13 Ch6, L8, 60 ft.

Wild Boar, AC 12, HD 3, Gore 1d8+2, 19: severe gore, roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table, S15 D10 C17 I2 P10 W14 Ch4, L7, 40 ft. *Boars* go into a bestial fury when staggered, gaining advantage on attack rolls.





#### (D) Allocate Traps

In addition to their (mostly) humanoid forces, each player rolls 1d12 on the *Traps* table. Players may place their traps anywhere on the map.

	TRAPS		
1	Pit	10 ft diameter pit, 1d3 x 10 ft deep, with <i>Spikes</i> (extra 2d6 and roll on the <i>Injuries &amp; Setbacks</i> table), 33% chance the pit trap locks itself shut after a PC falls in. <i>Luck</i> (Dex) save negates.	
2	Poison Gas	15 ft cloud of gas, causing choking /suffocating for 3d6 rounds. <i>Luck</i> (Con) save resists.	
3	Deadfall	A heavy 1 ft block drops from above. <i>Luck</i> (Dex) save or 3d20 damage.	
4	Alarm	Luck (Perc) check to notice trigger. If activated, the alarm sounds in this or a nearby room: a sentry or random monster investigates.	
5	Arrows	1d4 targets, +8 to hit, 2d8+2.	
6	Lock- down	Chamber seals with portcullises. <i>Luck</i> (Dex) save to wedge something in an opening before they seal. 1d3 x Str (Athletics) great successes required to lift a portcullis.	
7	Rolling Boulder s	A series of man sized rolling boulders must be dodged ( <i>Luck</i> (Dex) save). Failure causes 2d20+5 damage and a roll on the <i>Injuries &amp; Setbacks</i> table.	
8	Scything Blades	30 ft line (floor, ceiling, wall). 4d8 and roll on the <i>Injuries &amp; Setbacks</i> table. <i>Luck</i> (Dex) save negates.	
9	Net	20 ft rope net. <i>Luck</i> (Dex) save to avoid being helpless. Action to make a Dex/Str check to disentangle/cut self free. Nearby alarm activates.	

10	Spikes	2d10 damage and 1d2 Str, Dex or Con loss (even chance). <i>Luck</i> (Dex) save negates.
11	Reloc- ation	A wall turns on its axis, pushing the nearest PC into an adjacent room (50%) or into a Spike trap (50%). Dex (Acrobatics) check resists.
12	Gelatin- ous Cube	A secret door or ceiling hatch releases a <i>Gelatinous Cube</i> .

#### (E) Allocate Custom Architecture

Each player rolls on the *Custom Architecture* Table. Players may place their modification anywhere on the map.

(	CUSTOM ARCHITECTURE	
1	1d3 Secret Passages joining up two spaces (rooms, corridors, or both).	
2	2d4 <i>Reinforced doors</i> (Str (Athletics) check at disad to open).	
3	1d4 Locked Doors (Dex (Traps & Locks) check to open). The PCs' Leaders have the keys.	
4	Locked Portcullis, raising winch on one side only. 2 x great success Str (Athletics) checks required to lift.	
5	1d3 <i>Barred Doors</i> from one side. A Str (Ath) check great success is required to open.	
6	Player Special.	

#### (F) Monster Starting Positions

With reference to the Dungeon Map, players select starting rooms or corridors for their monsters to begin in. Once play commences, the GM controls the monsters (excluding *Leaders*) like any other NPC, but *Leaders* may attempt to direct their fellow monsters activities if desired.

#### **Directing Monsters**

Players have complete control over their *Leader*, like any other PC. Other monsters however are



NPCs, and may or may not be disposed to taking orders from the Leaders.

Each time a *Leader* attempts to order, persuade, cajole or otherwise influence an NPC monster into action, the GM may require a Charisma check. Suggested modifiers are outlined below. The GM may simply veto suicidal or similarly fanciful directions.

- Leader has 2+ higher HD (advantage).
- Monster has 2+ greater HD than the *Leader* (disadvantage).
- Monsters outnumber the *Leader* by more than 3:1 (-1 penalty for each monster beyond this ratio). And vice versa.
- *Leader* offers significant bribe (+2 bonus).
- Leader threatens the monsters (+2 bonus, but monsters will violently retaliate on a fail).
- Leader and Monsters are the same kind (+2 bonus).

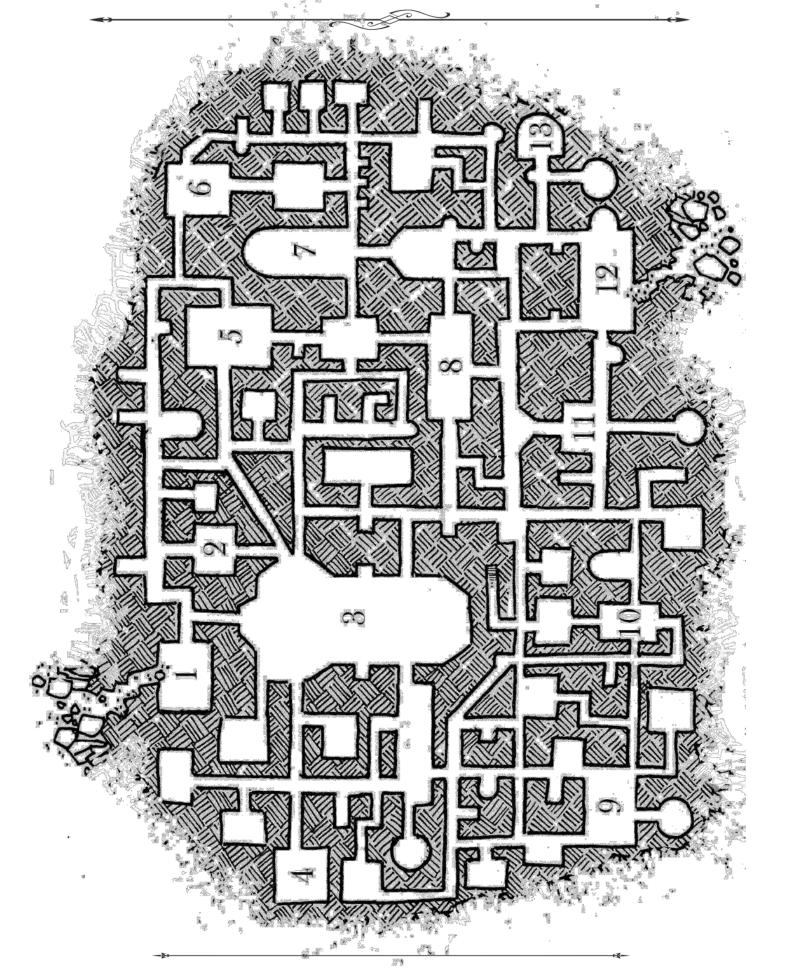
- Course of action is obviously very dangerous (-2 penalty, disadvantage, and/or requires a great success, depending on the base recklessness or bloodlust of the target).
- *Leader* and monsters have an unfriendly or hostile relationship (disad and/or great success required, or impossible).

#### **Dungeon Locations**

The majority of the granite dungeon is dimly lit by *gloomspore*, a softly glowing fungi on the walls/ceiling of the ancient corridors. As noted below, some rooms also benefit from torches maintained by the *skorn*. The air is generally cool and still, tinged with bestial scents.

Unless indicated below, most chamber exits have aged wooden doors (despite no doors being marked on the map). If the presence or absence of a door becomes important, there is a 1 in 3 chance of no door (just an archway, removed/broken door, ruined curtain, etc).







#### **Dungeon Entries/Exits**

On the default map, the NPC adventurers (and monsters) may enter/exit the complex via the northern or southern tunnels (Areas 1, 12), or the stairwell below Area 3. The stairwell is rarely used, concealed on the surface by a trapdoor covered with tall grass. The NPC Adventurers may or may not know about the secret entrance (depending on the *Under Attack!* rolls, see p.12).

#### **Unkeyed Areas**

A large portion of the map is unkeyed. If the contents of an unkeyed location becomes important, roll 1d8 (or choose from the list below). Potential loot has not been included (given the GM plays the adventurers).

- 1. *Refuse Pit* bones, faeces, general waste the monsters are too lazy to deposit outside of the complex.
- 2. Drinking Well. 20% chance the well is befouled in some way; using its water requires a Con check to avoid Skorn Lung (hacking cough, bloody phlegm, all endurance related checks (fleeing, long wilderness treks, combat exceeding 10 rounds) made at disadvantage for 3d6 weeks).
- 3. Cook Fire with chimney for roasting/cooking the occasional meal. Skorn generally prefer their flesh raw, but sometimes cook it.
- 4. *Kennel.* 1d3 pet *Wolves* (tethered to a stake or wall). Bracken/straw or rag piles, a few left over bones.
- 5-6. *Sleeping Chamber* furs and bracken for most of the humanoids. 50% chance of a sleeping *Skorn*.

7-8. *Storage* - primitive tools, foodstuffs, hanging meats, and so on. 50% chance of a torch.

#### Area 1 - Northern Guards

This 30 ft by 20 ft barracks houses 1d4+1 *Skorn*, ostensibly to keep a lookout for intruders, but who mostly argue/fight. There is no door and the 5 ft wide tunnel is strewn with rubble. The interior is lit by a torch. Convincing the guards to leave their post and assist elsewhere is difficult unless the intruders are very close (disad on any influence check). A large drum is in one corner.

#### Area 2 - Workroom

This 20 ft square messy but serviceable workspace contains a handful of old tables cluttered with tools (knives, hammers, crude nails, etc) and half finished armaments. 1d6 javelins, a shortbow, 2d6 arrows, 1d4 shields and some hide armour may also be found. Half finished armaments (1d6 spears, 2d4 javelins and 1d3 shortbows with 4d6 arrows) may be completed with another 1d4 hours work (per item).

#### Area 3 - Great Hall

The Grand Hall, 60 ft wide at its broadest, 100 ft long, with 30 ft ceilings, was once gilded with elaborate silver and gold finery. Over the centuries it has been picked bare, the walls now stained with blood, bile and pinned human skins; the primary den of the man eating beastmen and their allies. 3d6 *Skorn* are here at any one time, feasting, fighting, dozing or mating (even chance).

#### Area 4 - Prison Cells

This 20 ft square chamber has a locked door. Within are 2d6 *humans* or *skorn* from competing tribes, shackled or roped to stone pillars. If the NPC Adventurers free the prisoners, they might gain some useful reinforcements.



Human Prisoners, AC 10, HD 1, as weapon, 19: as weapon, S10 D10 C10 I10 P10 W10 Ch10, L4, Mv 30 ft. The prisoners are desperate to exact vengeance and/or escape and don't check for morale.

One of the prisoners is *Grindo*, a veteran ranger taken by surprise two days earlier.

Grindo, AC 12, HD 3, as weapon, 19: as weapon, S15 D15 C13 I10 P13 W9 Ch9, L6, Mv 30 ft. Grindo may choose from the following Rangercraft talents twice per combat: Off Hand Adept, Veteran Scout, Nature's Venom. He gains advantage on all wilderness related checks.

#### Area 5 - Trophy Room

This chamber has no doors, opening into a 25 ft by 30 ft space housing the monsters' trophies. Skulls, ear necklaces, fingerbones, etc (mostly human, but also bison, panther, rival *skorn*, other humanoids/*giants*) line crude wooden shelves and tables, and skin tapestries hang from the walls. The monsters exult in their trophies and will fight hard to preserve them (adv on morale checks). If the NPC Adventurers take control of this room, the trophies might be valuable bargaining chips and/or reduce monster morale.

#### Area 6 - Master's Bedchamber

This 20 ft by 25 ft room was once the master's bed chamber. A large wooden bed, ragged linen, cupboard and desk still remain (the room is easily set alight). At the player's option, one of their *Leaders* might lair here (if so, a box, crate or chest of loot is also located here, roll 1 x Carry Loot if the value is required).

#### Area 7 - Chapel

This 40 ft by 20 ft chapel is falling apart, its many splendored tiles cracked and littering the ground. On a northern dais is an iron altar dedicated to a manifestation of *Graxus*, the war god. The altar has been defiled with human skulls, skin banners

and *skorn* warpaint, converted to the worship of the beastmens' immoral deity, *Ulgoth*. The phrase *Var Khora nok Ulgoth* ("*More skulls for Ulgoth*") is painted on the altar/floor. Monsters fighting in the chapel gain advantage on morale checks, inspired by their divine tyrant.

#### Area 8 - Infirmary

This relatively central 40 ft by 20 ft infirmary has no doors, and is lined with crude wooden cots. At any one time there are 1d4 maimed or sick *skorn* or other monsters here having their condition tended by the healer, *Solob* (as *Skorn* but 3 HD, rudimentary healer's kit).

Solob wields considerable power among the beastmen; those she deems as unsavable (or undeserving of respite), are eaten. For the purposes of the Leaders, wounded monsters tended to by Solob regain 1d8 hp after 1 hour (once only per creature). Finally, Solob has a 1 in 4 chance of saving any apparently "dead" monster brought to her within 5 minutes, restoring it to 1 hp after 1d3 minutes (once only, and not applicable if the NPC party begins "making sure" dropped foes are dead).

#### Area 9 - Torture Chamber

Prisoners and other unfortunates marked for torture are conveyed to this 50 ft by 30 ft death chamber, which is filled with all manner of blood stained tables, blocks, racks and torture implements. The room is lit by several torches, and all the exits have doors.

#### Area 10 - Mating Chamber

This 20 ft by 15 ft study is the exclusive province of the Leader with the hidden magic item cache. There are locked doors on all exits (the *Leader* has the key). Ostensibly, the *Leader* uses the room as his own exclusive torture and mating chamber (either because they are a boss, or because they earned some kind of a special temporary reward).



Whilst the *Leader* does enjoy such activities, the true purpose of the room is to study the *Tablets of Baal* (if studied for 3 months, the reader may become a 1st level Magic User), recently recovered from a nearby ruin. The stone panels, along with the two scrolls and potions (referred to on p.234) are hidden beneath a trapdoor under an ancient rug. If the *skorn* discover the true contents of the room, the *Leader* will be held to account (horribly tortured then devoured alive).

#### Area 11 - Brugmaw's Kitchen

This 20 ft square chamber has a stove and chimneys, which the skorn sometimes use to cook their food. Meat hooks hang from chains, 3 x oil barrels are stacked in a corner, and human organ stew boils in a large, steamy cauldron.

Brugmaw, an especially callous and unhygienic Ogre, is the kitchen despot, feared for eating those that complain about her gritty gruel. Convincing Brugmaw to leave her kitchen, or lend her cauldron, oil, chains, hooks, etc, is unlikely. She is however deathly afraid of Stirges and Dire Wolves, should the Leaders have access to any.

#### Area 12 - Southern Guards

This 20 ft by 40 ft entry hall is occupied by 2d4 *Skorn* guarding against intruders (they have horns). Doors are situated at the northern and western exits. The 5 ft wide southern tunnel has no door, and is strewn with large rocks and debris. The interior is lit by a torch.

The eastern alcove contains a ruined human statue (a human female prophet, stopping a blade with her open palm) and a barrel of spirits. The guards have been binge drinking *Mrudnuk* (a highly potent fermented grain spirit), and are very drunk (disad on all checks, 50% are dozing). Confiscating the barrel might cause a riot, and/or weaken morale.

#### Area 13 - Alchemy & Poison Cache

This 20 ft by 15 ft store room contains the monster's rare weapons, under lock and key (a random *Leader* starts with the key). Inside are 2d4 fire pots, 1d3 acid vials and 1d3 doses of random poison (roll 1d6, check for each dose: 1-3: *Giant Spider* venom, 4-5: *Ghoulsheen Admixture*, or 6: *Purple Worm* poison.



#### **Adventurer Assault**

The NPC party makes its initial appearance as noted on the table below. The GM might also use this table if the adventurers retreat before making a counterattack from another entry point.

If the first sign of the party implies they are already within the complex, assume that the closest entry guards have been overcome (perhaps with a *Sleep* spell, or overwhelming ambush), and other monsters remain unaware. Alternatively, the party might have taken advantage of one off teleport magic to enter the complex.



UNDER ATTACK!	
1	A war horn sounds from the northern or southern complex (even chance). The sentries in Area 1 or 12 are under attack or perhaps it's a decoy to lure the monsters away from another Area.
2	A bloodied skorn staggers into sight of a <i>Leader</i> , then collapses (dead)
3	A <i>Leader</i> hears muffled sounds (grunting, thumping, the noise of something metal falling to the stone floor) coming from a nearby corridor.
4	Mombo, the man eating monkey, is suddenly sighted by a random Leader (via nearby corridor or doorway, etc). Has the monkey been caught scouting, or is he bait to lead the monsters into a trap? (see Ranger Kynali).
5	A random <i>Leader</i> may make a Perc (Detection) test to smell that a human is nearby ( <i>Nebbers</i> , scouting, turned invisible by <i>Gwideon</i> ).
6	The party descends the secret stairwell just south of Area 3. From there, they cautiously scout around, killing any monsters they find.

Once the party becomes known, the GM plays them like any other NPC group, bearing in mind their objective to obtain the tablets (hidden in Area 10). With incomplete knowledge of the complex, the adventurers might fall prey to traps, dead ends, miss secret doors, etc. If the GM wishes to quickly abstract a result or decision, roll 2d6:

QUICK RESULT	
2	Catastrophic failure
3-4	Failure
5-6	Success with great cost
7-8	Success with minor cost
9-11	Success
12	Great Success



#### **NPC** Adventurers

By default, the NPC party begins with four individuals. GMs are encouraged to swap in other classes or characters if preferred. If the party is driven off, they return 3d6+12 hours later with 3d6 men-at-arms and 2d4 hirelings in tow (porters, torchbearers, etc).

Ruckus, AC 16 (heavy amour), HD 5 (40 hp), Silvered Great Axe 1d12+3, 19: as weapon, S16 D10 C16 I10 P8 W10 Ch10, L10, Mv 30 ft. Ruckus has the Fighter Adaptable ability, with the Two Hander style. He may change styles twice per combat. Ruckus is relatively pale skinned with





dark hair, wearing chainmail and wielding a large axe. When in melee with more than one foe, *Ruckus* may make two attacks per action instead of one (must be against different targets).

Gwideon, AC 13 (leather), HD 5 (23 hp), Sword 1d8+1, 19: disarm, S10 D16 C14 I16 P10 W17 Ch8, L8, Mv 30 ft. Gwideon has a 5th Level Magic user's spell slots (4/2/1) until the end of the adventure. He knows the following spells:

(1\*) Gaze of Beguilement, Fusing of Flesh, Insidious Slumber, None Shall Pass, (2nd) A Wisp Unseen, Fetid Fog of the Rotting Horde, Waking Dream, (3nd) Gift of the Fiery Furnace, Hunger for Blood. Gwideon's DDM tally starts at 3.



Nebbers, AC 14 (skullcap & leather), HD 5 (30 hp), 2 Shortswords 1d4+3, 19: disarm, S15 D17 C13 I10 P17 W14 Ch10, L12, Mv 30 ft. Nebbers has advantage on Stealth related checks, and Backstab, Skirmisher and Finisher abilities like a 5th level Rogue. He may choose from the following tricks three times per combat: Choking Dust, Hidden Blade, Flash Powder, Smoke Bomb, Unseen Whip.

*Kynali*, AC 13 (hardened leathers with hood), HD 5 (28 hp), Long bow (1d8+3), 19: arrow to the eye, throat or heart, killing the target (*Luck* save resists)

S14 D17 C10 I10 P15 W14 Ch14, L11, Mv 30 ft. *Kynali* may choose from the following Rangercraft talents three times per combat: *Sharpshooter, Veteran Scout, Slip Away* and *Cover Fire.* She gains advantage on all wilderness related checks and crits on 19-20 ranged attack rolls.

The ranger's beast companion is an albino *Man Eating Monkey* named *Mombo*. Kynali raised the carnivorous primate as a babe after a visit to the *Suurat Jungle*.

Mombo, AC 13, HD 1 (19 hp), Bite 1d6, 19: throws faeces in his opponent's eyes, blinding them until they spend an action to clear their vision, S10 D17 C10 I6 P13 W8 Ch12 L special, Mv 30 ft inc climbing. On a critical hit, Mombo climbs the target's back and knocks them prone (Str check resists). Mombo communicates with sign language, may use tools (but not weapons), open doors, etc. He sees as well in darkness as in light, and has advantage on Athletics related checks.

Men-at-Arms, AC 14 (chain & shield), HD 1+3, Axe 1d8, 19: as weapon, S14 D10 C12 I10 P10 W10 Ch9, L4, Mv 30 ft.

*Porters*, AC 10, HD 1d6 hp, Knife 1d4, 19: as weapon, S10 D10 C11 I9 P9 W10 Ch10, L4, Mv 30 ft.

#### Major Exploits & Rescues

The party has access to *Major Exploits* and *Rescues*, as if they were regular PCs.

#### **Aftermath**

Given this adventure is a one-off, there is no real aftermath to contend with. If the monsters prevail however, the players might like to know that *Ulgoth* appeared pleased, gifting the next birth litter with many fierce, man eating *skorn* babies.



## **Credits**

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