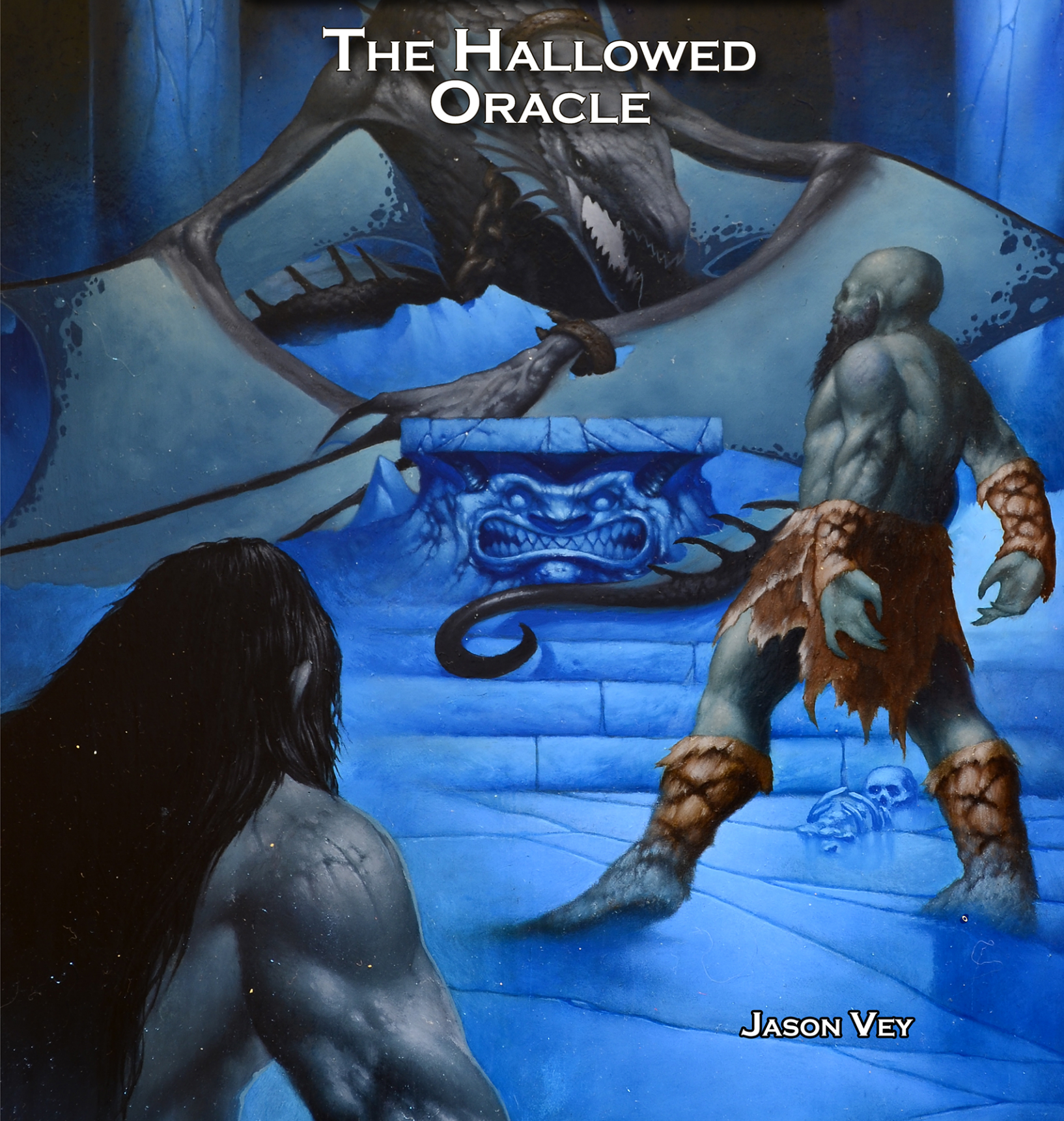


CASTLES & CRUSADES[®]

THE HALLOWED ORACLE



JASON VEY



THE HALLOWED ORACLE

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For the **Abyss Walker** Campaign setting based on the world created by Shane Moore.

In memory of those that have suffered from Eldred's Everlasting Turn that forgot "He who wears the pots — wears the pants, but Randy still goes first." All the characters that helped forge the **Abyss Walker** world setting from 1985 and beyond.

And lastly, to Gary Gygax. By playing his game I was able to not be a suicidal ten year old growing up in a home of addiction. He helped me to be a hero, a wizard, or a mighty king. He helped me to create a world to escape into when mine was unfavorable. He helped me believe in myself. He helped save my life. I would not have achieved any of my life's dreams without him. And now, the worlds he inspired me to create are out there for other young Shane Moores. To inspire them. To lead them from the darkness and into the adventure of success.

Printed in the United States of America

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1: UPON LONELY SHORES

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the world of the Abyss Walker! **Abyss Walker** (also called **The Hallowed Oracle**) is a series of fantasy novels by author Shane Moore, which take place in a detailed, dark and gritty fantasy world called Terrigan. Over the coming months we will be releasing more about this world, including seven more adventure modules which together form an epic campaign surrounding the Abyss Walker itself, as well as a complete Player's Guide, which will further detail the world. For now, however, we hope this adventure serves as a great entry point into the **Hallowed Oracle** universe, and hints at a few of the unique aspects of that world and the rich history behind it.

THE PROPHECY OF THE ABYSS WALKER

In the world of Terrigan, there is a prophecy that predicts the coming of the Abyss Walker, a creature of eldritch power whose actions shall unleash Hell upon the Mortal Realms. The prophecy is held by the hallowed oracle, an ancient silver dragon who has been imprisoned on an island in the Polar Flats. This knowledge is the dragon's alone.

Many centuries ago, a group of evil priests imprisoned the dragon on its remote island prison. This dark sect worships the Abyss Walker and will go to any ends to keep word of the end of days from spreading across the lands, for there is another prophecy as well: one that speaks of a great hero who will rise with the power and knowledge to stand against the Abyss Walker. They will do anything to keep the dragon imprisoned and stop the rise of this hero.

THUS OUR STORY BEGINS...

A wise sage has learned that a wondrous and mysterious magic lies hidden in the Polar Flats. Though he has only a rough idea of where it is, he knows that it is locked behind enormous and stout doors which can only be breached with the use of a magical key. He hires the characters to retrieve the key, which lies hidden in the ruins of an ancient watchtower called Darien's Guard, and fully intends to send our heroes on a quest to find the treasure hidden behind those gates...

Unfortunately, the forces of evil are ever active, and the quest will be fraught with peril, including the loss of a friend and mentor so soon after their first meeting.

CASTLE KEEPER'S BACKGROUND

Upon the Lonely Shores is an adventure for first-level characters. It introduces them to the world of the **Abyss Walker** and the dangers they will face. It is the first in a series of eight adventures forming a campaign that leads them from their first steps in the world to become great heroes, who may indeed stand against the rising darkness and save the entire world. It's an adventure that begins *in medias res*, and is designed to proceed at breakneck pace from that point forward.

In terms of story, the adventure is fairly straightforward: The characters are hired by a sage named Alfgeirr to retrieve an item in the ruins of a place called "Darien's Guard." The item is a key, large and brass, with a blue head depicting the head of a demon swallowing the head of a dragon. Along the way, the heroes will face assassins, sea monsters, fish men, ravenous wolves, degenerate beast men and even a gigantic, carnivorous ape. The adventure is certainly challenging for new characters, and CKs are encouraged to monitor the difficulty of each encounter, adjusting monsters and abilities as needed or allowing for additional healing in the form of potions, scrolls and the like that the heroes encounter on the way. While the characters should always feel in peril, a total party kill is perhaps not the best outcome for the beginning of a campaign.

ADVICE FOR NEW CASTLE KEEPERS

Following each encounter, you will see a listing for "Experience Awards." These are based strictly upon the monsters fought in a given encounter. CKs should feel free to modify these awards as they see fit, based on the characters' achievements, role playing, or indeed, how fast you want your game to progress. Experienced CKs will have little need of this information; it's largely there for those new to running the game.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

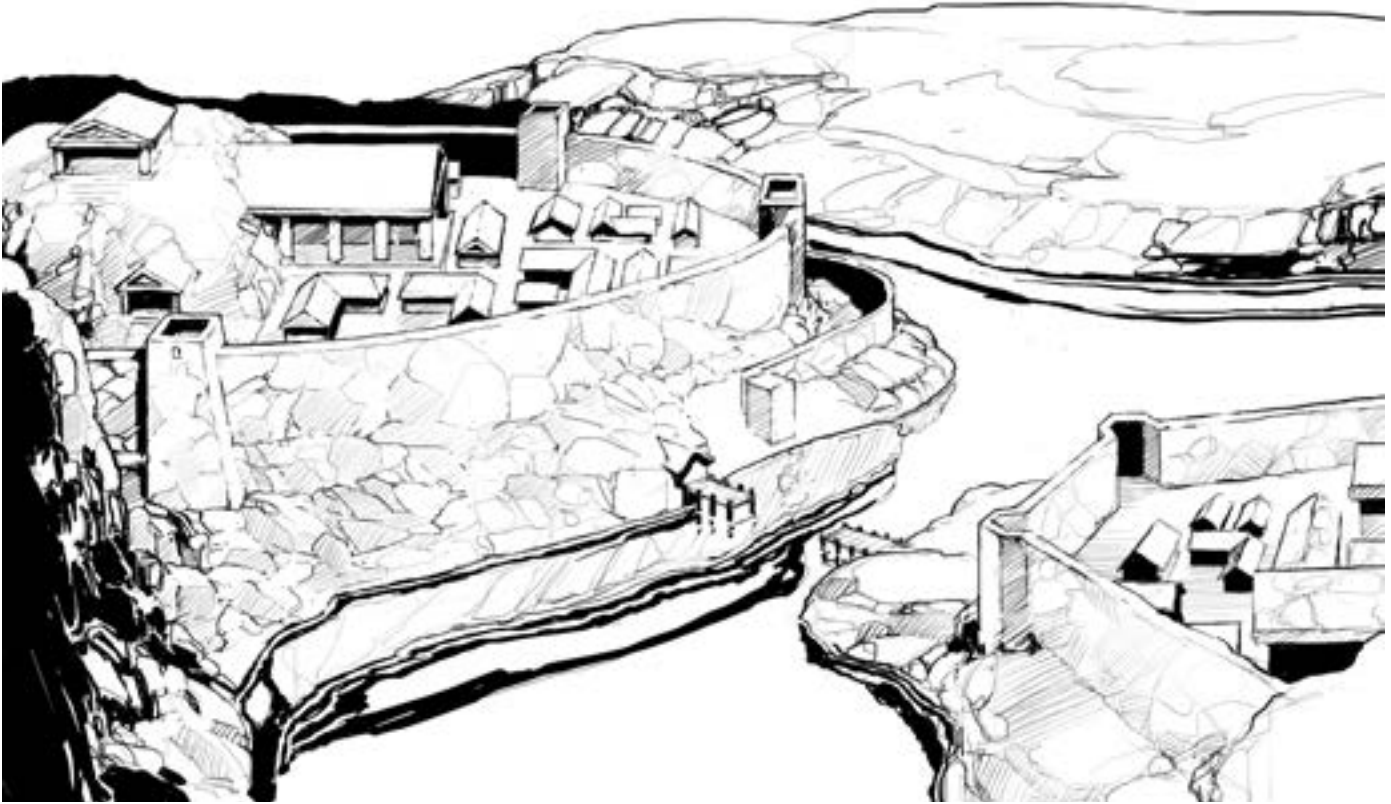
This adventure throws the characters in at the deep end. That is, it starts with a chase, and the castle keeper is encouraged to keep up the pace throughout the adventure. It should be fast-paced, swashbuckling action that throws them deeply into the world of the **Abyss Walker** and the **Hallowed Oracle**, and hooks them for a desire to learn more.

THE CITY OF LOSTOM

Lostom is a city of thieves. It's a major city located along the shores of the North Sea, but it's a city of shadows, where street gangs and thieves' guilds run the night. It's a place where deals get made and betrayals just as quickly follow. When you want to find hard-to-locate items, or get lost in the crowds, Lostom is where you vanish. The problem is, the unwary tend to vanish permanently.

The nobility in Lostom are as corrupt as the people in the shadows; making backhanded deals, playing at politics and betrayal, and ignoring the plight of the common people. It's not a good place, but it's a place that functions, because there are unwritten rules by which the guilds play. Imagine a city run by organized crime families who maintain a delicate peace between their various unsavory enterprises, and you've got Lostom.

The city itself straddles the Blank River, sitting just on the edge of the Adorian wastelands. The populace is an equal mix of merchants, sailors, slavers and farmers. The residents keep their heads down, keep to themselves, and focus on survival



and profit as well as avoiding conflict. It's not uncommon for "medal merchants," those authorized to trade in the Queendom of Aten, to stop in Lostom, a last "safe" haven before entering the Queendom, wherein men have no rights outside the limited privileges their merchant medal affords them.

Lostom is considered an open city, with small ferries at work taking people from the east to west river banks and vice-versa. The river is fast-moving and impassable by swimming. There are bridges available for those who don't care to take a ferry, though ferries tend to be faster and less likely to be targeted by brigands. In Lostom, the attitude is "you mind your business, friend, and I'll mind mine."

Total Population: 3000-3500

Human: 78% (Male 40% Female 38%)

Kai-Harkian: 7%

Halfling: 2%

Dwarf: 7%

Elf: 1%

Other: 3%

GOVERNMENT: The town is governed by the heads of the four major industries that fuel its economy: Slaver, Merchant, Sailor, and Mayor. This council is overseen by a wealthy Duke who lives in a keep to the east of the town. The council meets monthly to discuss any issues their supporters may have brought to their attention. Of these, the merchant leader is the target of the most disdain, as his supporters are the most transient, but at the same time he brings the most money to the economy, so he wields the most temporal power. Taxes in the town come from businesses as opposed to individual residents. There is a town Mayor, who has a seat on the council but no real voice; they

are elected by the citizens and basically oversee the day-to-day administration of the town as well as bringing the issues of the common people to the table.

MILITARY: The town has no militia to speak of, but each of the four groups (and the Duke) maintain their own armed force and work together to police the town, and contribute to its defense. There is a single communal jail, though each power group certainly holds its own "facilities," into which private prisoners sometimes disappear, never to be seen again.

ECONOMY: The slavers work with sailors and the Mayor to auction off their slaves discreetly. Merchants work closely with sailors and the Duke and are entirely focused on profit and building the coffers of the town. Sailors work closely with the fishing industry, the slavers and the merchants. They wield a great deal of power in this regard, and they also don't particularly like the Duke or the mayor. The mayor caters to the citizens, oversees the town's function, and hates the slavers. Finally, the Duke is disinterested in politics and simply focused on profit and financial gain. Much of his wealth comes from a mine he has deep in the Kai-Harkian Mountains.

ATEN INFLUENCE: There is a tower located on the border of Aten, just a few miles east of Lostom, run by Marzahna the Yellow, an exiled sorceress from Aquabar. She isn't a member of the resistance, but her belief that men should be treated equal has lost her favor with the Aten ruling tower. Marzahna is a 13th-level Chromatic Mage (Primary: Black, Secondary: Blue, Tertiary: Green), who is thought of as a priestess and evoker. She focuses her necromancy mostly on "light" necromancy, or healing (as opposed to "dark" necromancy, producing harmful and death effects).

4 CASTLES & CRUSADES

RELIGION: The only forbidden practices in Lostom are Rha-Cordon and dark necromantic magic (though “light” necromancy such as healing spells is permitted). The devastation of the Battle of Calito is still strong in the minds and hearts of the populace, who remember the necromancer Randolph Forelinger and his undead army sacking the city, a battle ultimately won by Lostom.

LANGUAGE: Common

MAJOR GUILDS: No major guilds in the town. See the previous groups outlined.

MARZAHNA’S TOWER: Marzahna is a 5th level priestess of Shar-Shor-Nai and an 8th level sorceress of the Yellow Sept. Mary is her first mistress and she is an accomplished 7th level evoker. Marzahna has various other spell-casting women of lower levels and freemen that work in her tower. She respects the cultural differences, but still holds her Queendom’s bias.

THE WHITE SASH

Our adventure begins with a group of roughians chasing the PCs, who all wear dingy white sashes about their waists, which mark them as members of the White Sash, a society dedicated to spreading darkness throughout the world and, though they themselves don’t know it, to bringing about the prophecy of the Abyss Walker.

The Order is secretly controlled from above by the ancient order of evil priests mentioned in the introduction, but all the group’s members know is that they get their orders and carry them out. They think of themselves as a sort of local thieves’ guild; in reality they’re more like a street gang that functions as a pawn of a higher power.

AQUABAR

Aquabar is a major coastal city in the Queendom of Aten – a militant matriarchy in which males of any race are considered inferior and are immediately made into slaves or killed at birth. Only a choice few males are kept alive for reproduction purposes only. The women of Aten are adept sorceresses and keep a rigid society of backstabbing and political maneuvering. The city of Aquabar does permit trade with Lostom, but only out of sheer necessity. Males from other nations are under no circumstances permitted off the docks. They drop off cargo, pick up cargo, and leave. There are also very few ship captains who are trusted, and the vast majority of these are women. Thus, when the PCs try to book passage later on, it’s highly likely they will sign onto a rare vessel that is captained and crewed largely by women.

CHASE!

Our adventure begins in the streets of Lostom, *in medias res*. The characters dash through narrow alleys and back roads, having been betrayed by someone they thought a friend. This friend set up a business deal, brokering the sale of what seemed

a trinket through the characters, but sold them out to a gang of roughians, and they fled, seeking a more advantageous position to stand their ground.

Read the following text aloud to the players:

Nobody ever said being an adventurer was easy, but it’s just your luck that your first expedition would end up like this. It was supposed to be an easy job; your friend Barton asked you to retrieve and deliver an amulet to a sage named Alfgeirr in a tavern located in one of the seedier areas of Lostom. You arrived, only to discover that your “friend” had sold you out. There was no sage, just a group of thugs looking to rob you of the talisman and pay you with steel blades instead of silver pieces.

It took all of two seconds to realize that the twenty or so thugs in the tavern were too much to handle all at once... so you fled. Now you’re running down blind back streets and narrow alleyways. Every time you think you’ve got a clear path, it seems like walls magically spring up in front of you, fences appear out of nowhere or crates and barrels collapse before you. After a few minutes, you begin to feel like you’re being herded through a maze like so many sheep to a pen.

Fortunately, it also seems that with each barrier you face, you leave a couple more of the thugs behind, and you wonder if this is all blind luck, if someone’s helping you...or if you’re running into another trap.

Then it happens: you find yourself in a dead end, your backs to the wall, as a group of roughians rounds the corner and approaches, about twice your number. Their swords gleam in the moonlight, and you draw your own, ready for your last, desperate stand...

Roll initiative!

There are two thugs for each PC.

THUGS: *These neutral, 1st level rogues’ vital stats are HP 4 each and AC 13. Their primary attributes are dexterity, constitution, and wisdom. Their significant attribute is dexterity 13. They attack with short swords (+0 to hit; 1d6). Their special abilities are hide, move silently, back attack (x2). They wear leather armor and have 12 cp each.*

AWARDING XP: The thugs are worth 10 XP each.

As the battle concludes, a dozen more rough looking thugs round the corner and begin to close in, when a secret panel slides open to the heroes’ left and an elderly voice beckons, “Quickly, now! Inside!”

The PCs at this point have little other choice; their backs are literally against the wall and their enemies seem to have plenty of reinforcements. They could stand and fight, but that would end the campaign fairly quickly.

WITHIN THE SAGE'S HALLS

As the PCs enter the darkened passageway, the panel slides shut behind them, leaving them in absolute darkness for a few seconds before suddenly, orange lights flare into existence. As the heroes blink their eyes against the sudden brightness, their vision adapts and they see oil lanterns set into the walls, leading down a hallway which seems to progress underground. The same voice that beckoned them into the passage now sounds again, this time echoing as though from far away.

“Well, don’t just stand there!” the voice says, “Come down and let’s see your faces!” It’s followed by a mischievous chuckle.

Traveling down the hallway, the characters find themselves entering a cozy study filled with books, vials, bottles, unguents and bizarre knick-knacks. The rich smell of pipe tobacco combined with the sweet odor of incense fills the room. A wizened old man with a wild tuft of white hair and a scraggly beard sits in a large, comfortable easy chair, smiling at them, with a pair of round glasses perched on the end of his giant nose. He puffs aggressively on a pipe and sits with a blue book in his lap. Were it not for his size—quite definitely human—he might be mistaken for a large gnome.

“Well don’t just stand there gawking,” he says. “Come in and make yourselves comfortable!”

He stands and fusses over the PCs as they find chairs, carelessly moving stacks of books and papers to make places for them. If any of the PCs makes a move to look at anything, he’ll scold them not to touch; after all, his filing system is complex and he can’t afford for it to be mixed up.

He gives them all flagons of ale or wine if they prefer, and offers them tobacco for their pipes, and then makes himself comfortable once again and gets down to business.

The old man introduces himself as Alfgeirr, the very sage they were supposed to meet to deliver the amulet they carry. He apologizes for the mess, but his owl, Sanf, warned him of a trap at the very last minute and he didn’t have time to warn the characters. All he could do was guide them through the alleys to his home and grant them entrance once they’d dealt with their pursuers. He asks if they have the amulet they were tasked to bring him and offers the agreed upon payment of five silver apiece...plus another job, if the PCs are amenable.

Upon delivering the talisman, he thanks the characters and simply tosses it over his shoulder, saying, “I’m sure it’ll come in handy someday.” He’ll only explain what it is by saying it’s “a trinket of historical value,” and that he was more interested in seeing how the characters performed...then he gets down to business.

The sage waves around a blue book during the ensuing role playing encounter. Alfgeirr is a sage with certain magical powers. He’s also far too old to be traipsing across the world gathering artifacts and information. That’s a game for the young. Which brings him to his current need.

There is a key, he tells the characters, that is located on an island just south of the Aquabar coasts. This key, large and brass with a blue head depicting a demon’s head swallowing the head of a dragon, is hidden somewhere within the ruin. He believes it to be the first step in uncovering some knowledge that could be valuable not just to him, but to the whole world. He’s willing to pay the characters 100 gold pieces to undertake the journey, plus any treasure they find, if they bring the key back to him safely.

WHAT ALFGEIRR KNOWS

If the PCs ask him what this information is, he gets a bit grumpy and says, “If I knew that, I wouldn’t need this key, now would I? Try and keep up!”

He’s being largely honest about his lack of knowledge regarding the information; prophecies and portents are often vague and come in shadows, signs and stages. Right now, only the key has been revealed to him. Once he has the key he can unlock further secrets.

Regarding the White Sash, he knows that they are a local gang of toughs and mercenaries who cause a lot of trouble around these parts, but stick to certain unsavory areas of town so the town guard gives them some leeway. He’s always suspected there was more to their activities than meets the eye, but he’s has no proof of that.

As a sage, Alfgeirr has a wealth of knowledge about the city, the surrounding lands, and the history of the region, as well as a great deal of magical knowledge, including how to brew and use salves, unguents, oils and potions. He’ll be happy to answer any questions the PCs have that is relevant to their quest, but anything else costs money that they don’t have. Information is wealth and power to a man like Alfgeirr and he doesn’t give it away for free.

He’s not a wizard, but does have a fairly extensive collection of magical items which gives him the appearance of having magical abilities. He naturally isn’t willing to reveal this information, or share any with the PCs; he knows they’re still green and aren’t ready for that kind of power, which has to be earned.

ROLE-PLAYING ALFGEIRR

Alfgeirr is a wise sage, chaotic good in alignment, but quite mischievous. He’s also not 100% honest, but circular-talks his way out of lies as quickly as he stumbles into revealing them. For example, he first says that he was warned about a trap, then implies it was, in fact a test that he wanted to put the PCs through to “see how they performed.”

He’s good natured and wry, but can also be impatient with what he views as dim-wittery. He expects people to think before they speak, while at the same time appearing himself to be somewhat absent-minded.

He’s convinced the PCs are the right heroes for the job, as he has had a dream that shows them undertaking a great journey beginning with the search for this key, but he won’t reveal what

he knows about their future. After all, no one should know too much about what their future holds. He has been down that road and it left him a bit less than sane.

ATTACKING ALFGEIRR

Statistics are not provided for Alfgeirr, as he is not intended as an enemy for the PCs to fight. Should they attack him, assume he can soak up the best they can dish out, and then he simply vanishes, activating one of the many dimensional gates he has secreted throughout his study, to another study somewhere else in the city. He'll later send his owl with a message for the heroes to contact him whenever they're ready to talk instead of stabbing an old man in his own living room. Such a message would also include the means by which they can contact him.

JOURNEY TO AQUABAR

Alfgeirr gives the heroes a crude map with instructions as to exactly where they're headed and what to look for when they get there. Their journey is a few days' sail across the open sea from the Loston harbor to an island off the southern coasts of Aquabar. The island is small, mountainous and reputed to host a lost watchtower beneath which is a vault containing the key they seek.

Alfgeirr presumes the key will be guarded, but he knows not by what. It's taken him decades to track down the information himself, so he is operating on the assumption that the guards will be few. He assumes the Keepers of the Key are likely counting on the hidden, remote location to keep their treasure safe. As to who these Keepers are, Alfgeirr cannot say for certain. He needs the key before he can determine which treasure it guards. He'll reveal that according to ancient legends there are many such keys—at least seven—and all grant access to vastly different troves of information. They key itself should contain clues not only to the information it guards, but where that information may be.

So it is that the heroes find themselves at the docks, seeking passage to the southern coasts of Aquabar. It is left to the CK to determine how difficult the task becomes of booking passage aboard a ship, but there are various kinds of merchant vessels that travel between Loston and Aquabar. The cost of passage will vary based on the size of the vehicle, its crew, and any services the PCs can barter.

The largest merchant vessels will be equivalent to 3-mast galleons, which will get them to their destination in 3 days at normal sail. Galleys will take about 5 days of sail, while ships like brigantines will take about 2 weeks of sail. For those interested, the **Castles & Crusades Castle Keeper's Guide** has complete information about waterborne travel. Alfgeirr has given the PCs 20 gp to barter passage; getting aboard a galleon will cost 10 gp passage per character unless the PCs can barter a lower rate.

For those new to running a role playing game, this can be a good opportunity to practice your role playing skills. Give the captain and/or first mate a personality and play it to the hilt. Are they friendly and easygoing, or are they gruff and drive a tough bargain? It's up to you!

ATTACK ON THE HIGH SEAS!

The route to Aquabar is well-traveled, but there have been reports of recent attacks by monsters, and the crew warns the heroes to be prepared for just such an eventuality. Indeed, just such a thing happens—about halfway through their journey, the boat jars, shudders, and violently rocks, and the lookout pitches out of the crow's nest, screaming the entire way down. Just as the crew reacts, trying to keep the ship under control, a gigantic, serpentine form rises up out of the water, its long, scaly body leaping forth to catch the ship in a tight grasp and hold it steady.

"Sea serpent!" cries the captain. "To arms! All hands on deck!"

Just then, a swarm of fish-like humanoids swarm over the sides and onto the deck. The ship is being boarded!

RUNNING THE COMBAT

This combat alone is far more than a group of first-level PCs could handle. Castle Keepers are cautioned to remember that they are not alone, here. The entire ship's crew is fighting alongside them. Do not waste hours of time rolling every attack for every crewman and locathah (fish-man) aboard the ship. Rather, run a regular combat round for the PCs, and then roll 1d8 on the **Ongoing Battle Table** below to determine what happens for the rest of the round around them.

TABLE 1.1: THE ONGOING BATTLE

D8	EVENTS
1	Crew in trouble! 4 crewmen lost; no foe casualties; sea serpent damages vessel for 5d6 damage
2	4 crewmen lost; 2 foes down; sea serpent damages vessel for 3d8 damage
3	3 crewmen lost; 3 foes down; sea serpent damages vessel for 2d10 damage
4	2 crewmen lost; 2 foes down; vessel undamaged
5	0 crewmen lost; 0 foes down; vessel undamaged
6	0 crewmen lost; 2 foes down; sea serpent suffers 2d10 damage
7	0 crewmen lost; 3 foes down; sea serpent suffers 3d8 damage
8	0 crewman lost; 4 foes down; sea serpent suffers 5d6 damage

CKs should describe the events resulting from the die roll to keep the action moving and dynamic.

Don't just say, "Four crewmen are lost and the vessel is damaged."

Rather, say something like, "In the chaos of battle, you witness two crewmen eviscerated by the tridents of the fish-creatures and the second mate goes overboard as a wickedly-barbed harpoon pierces his shoulder. A fourth crewmen is swallowed up by the monstrous jaws of the sea serpent, while its coils tighten around the ship, the timbers groaning and cracking as the stress damages the integrity of the vessel."

Add +1 for each locathah the PCs kill in the course of a round; their heroism rallies the crew. Subtract 1 for each PC that goes down in the course of a round, as the crew becomes demoralized.

There are a total of 50 locathah to the 30 crew on the ship (plus the PCs). To emerge victorious, the sea serpent has to be destroyed and the crew must outnumber the remaining locathah, at which point the locathah will all be slaughtered, or the few remaining ones will leap overboard, disappearing into the murky waters below. Each PC will need to defeat one locathah before they can battle against the sea serpent. Note also that there are enough crew members around that the sea serpent will not attack player characters until they attack it.

When the battle against the sea serpent is joined, any roll of 1 on the d8 for the round means one of two things occur at the CK's option: one of the characters is attacked by the sea serpent; or one of the characters is driven back by a locathah, and must battle this new foe before they can rejoin the assault on the serpent.

SEA SERPENT (*This neutral beast has AC 13, 10d10 HD (55 HP), speed n/a. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks by bite (+5 to hit; 1d8). Victims who are bitten must succeed at a strength or dexterity save (CL 3) or be swallowed. Swallowed victims may attack the creature freely from within, striking automatically, but suffer 1d6 acid damage every round.*)

LOCATHAH (*These neutral humanoids have AC 14, 2d8 HD (10 HP each), speed 10ft, 60 ft swim. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by trident or harpoon (+2 to hit; 1d8).*)

LOSING THE BATTLE

If the 30 men on crew of the ship all die, the battle is lost. Likewise, if the sea monster manages to deal 100 points of

damage to the vessel, it breaks in half explosively, timbers flying everywhere, and the boat going down. The locathah, strangely, do not finish off the crew at this point, simply raiding the stores for what they can take, and disappearing back beneath the waves once more.

Regardless, losing the battle does not mean the end of the adventure (unless the PCs are all dead). The characters will eventually reach their destination, whether it's by boarding a lifeboat they discover floating nearby or by mounting pieces of driftwood they can lash together as a makeshift raft.

In any case, the map provided by Alfgerr is fine; it was securely wrapped and bound in oilcloth and a waxed scroll case to protect it from water.

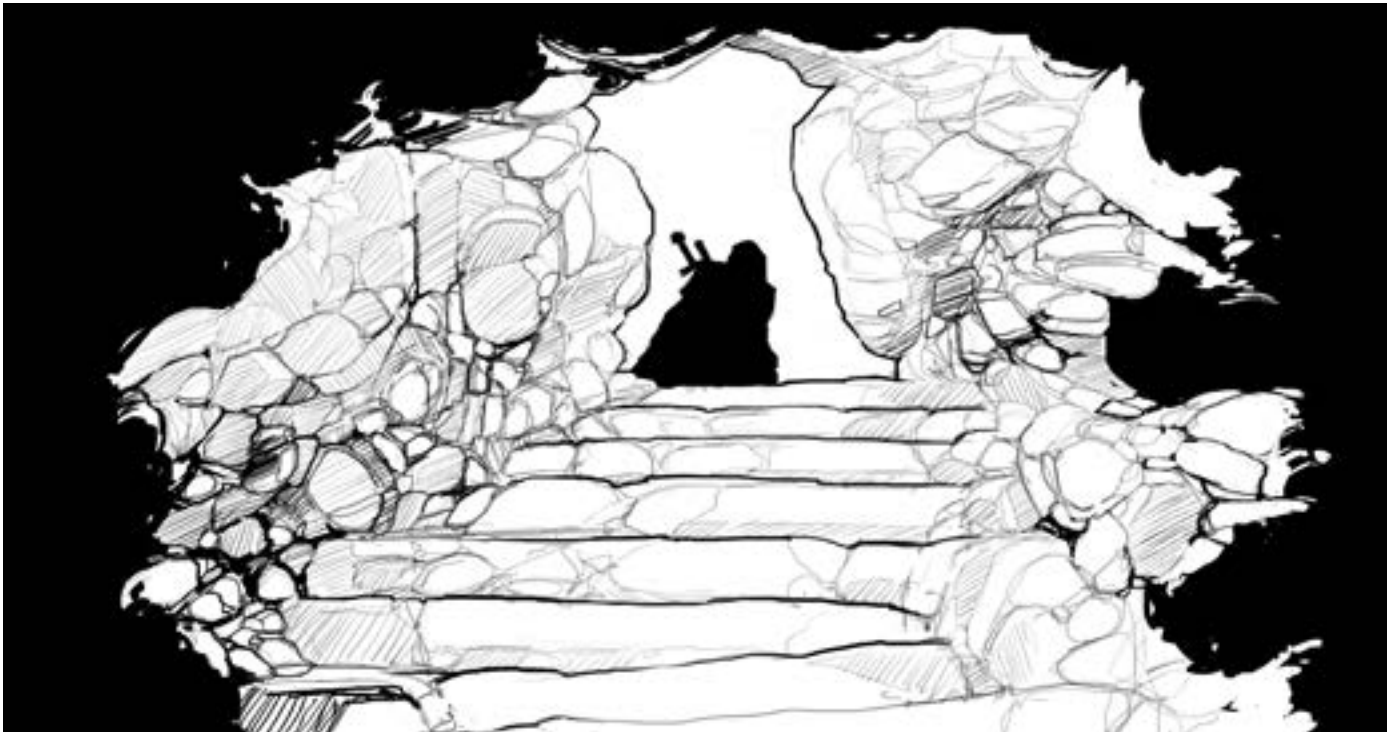
EXPERIENCE AWARDS

If the heroes win the battle, they gain 30 XP per locathah they (not the crew) vanquished, plus 300 XP total (not each) if any took part in the battle against the sea serpent.

DEALING WITH DAMAGE

Win or lose, our heroes will have access to healing magic. In the ship's stores are a number of semi-magical salves which in the hands of a healer can be used to treat wounds (each application restoring 1d8 points of damage). In game terms, a wisdom check at CL 2 allows the application of 1 poultice; healing occurs over the next hour (at roughly 1 hp per 10 minutes, with an extra 2 points being gained at the tail end in the last 5 minutes of healing).

If the crew is victorious, there's plenty of treatment to get everyone up and running again. If the battle is lost, the heroes can, with a successful CL 1 wisdom check, recover 2d6 usable poultices from the wreckage.



ARRIVAL AT THE ISLAND

Eventually, the heroes arrive at Darrien's Isle; if they were victorious in their battle against the locathah, the ship drops them off in a lifeboat and the captain promises to return for them in seven days' time. If they are not back by then, he'll have to leave them behind. They are also each given one healing poultice in thanks for their service during the battle with the serpent.

If the heroes were vanquished by the locathah and the sea serpent, about 2 days later they wash up on the shore of a rocky, mountainous island, and with a CL 0 intelligence or wisdom check, notice a specific feature on their map—the gods have by whim or by fate seen fit to deposit them at their destination.

THE RUINS OF DARIEN'S GUARD

Following the map and directions they've been given, the PCs have little difficulty finding the footpath leading into the mountains. The way is treacherous and unstable; the path full of gravel and precarious passages. At times the characters have to squeeze through gaps that are barely wide enough to permit sideways passage. CKs may call for occasional wisdom or intelligence checks to allow the characters to remain on the path, granting bonuses to rangers, barbarians, druids, or other characters with nature-based backgrounds. In total, the journey takes about two days.

As they travel, the characters begin to get the sense that they are being watched. They don't spot anything concrete, although a few falling stones of gravel might suddenly occur off to the side, or a shadow might shift among the rocks. No amount of investigation will reveal the source of whatever is stalking them, until they finally emerge into a clearing which appears to be a leveled-off platform with what appears to be a dilapidated formation of menhirs (standing stones) arranged at the center. This, then, is the ruins of Darrien's Guard.

At this point, the stalkers are revealed, as a pack of starved and maddened wolves emerge, jaws slavering and ribs visible. There are 2 per hero.

WOLVES (These neutral animals have AC 13, HD 2d8 (8 HP each), and move 50ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by bite (+2 to hit; 1d8). Their special abilities are scent, twilight vision, tracking and trip (on a successful bite, victims must succeed at a CL 2 dexterity save or be pulled prone and lose initiative the following round).)

THE VAULT OF DARRIEN'S GUARD

After defeating the wolves, the PCs, with the help of the map, must succeed at a CL 2 wisdom check to find the hidden entrance to the vault. The entrance is hidden between a set of large boulders which reveal a staircase leading into the depths of the mountain. Somewhere inside is the key that they seek.

The Vault appears to be a sort of barracks and makeshift living quarters for those who took up their guard post on this island, protecting whatever ancient civilization once stood on these

lands. It is now in use by none other than the Order of the White Sash, whose duty it has become to guard the key from interlopers.

For generations they have resided here with only those guards assigned to this post even aware that the place exists, and new guards only being sent when old ones die. Their needs are provided for by a permanent *create food and water* sigil inscribed on the table in the mess hall.

To the heroes' advantage is the fact that the guards here have lived completely undisturbed for so long that they've become lazy and complacent. This makes even first-level adventurers a match for the dangers they'll find herein. Many of the guards are middle-aged or even approaching their elder years; their own combat skills atrophied to a level where they are no longer adept warriors, even if once they were. This is the first fatal error of the Abyss Walker cult, but they will become less complacent as the threat to their plans (in the form of the PCs) grows.

SECRET DOORS

There are a number of secret passages in Darrien's Vault. The two in the Entry Hall can be found, but cannot be opened except in the Beastmaster's Office (Area 10). Likewise, all doors in the passages behind those secret doors are operable via the elaborate lever system in the Beastmaster's Office. These doors are marked with an "X" rather than a rectangle. Forcing the Area 1 secret doors or doors marked "X" requires a CL 10 strength check—it is nearly impossible.

Unless otherwise noted, finding a secret door requires a wisdom check at CL 2. Other than those in Area 1, secret doors are simply hidden panels and operate on hinges much like regular doors.

VAULT ENCOUNTER AREAS

AREA 1: ENTRY HALL

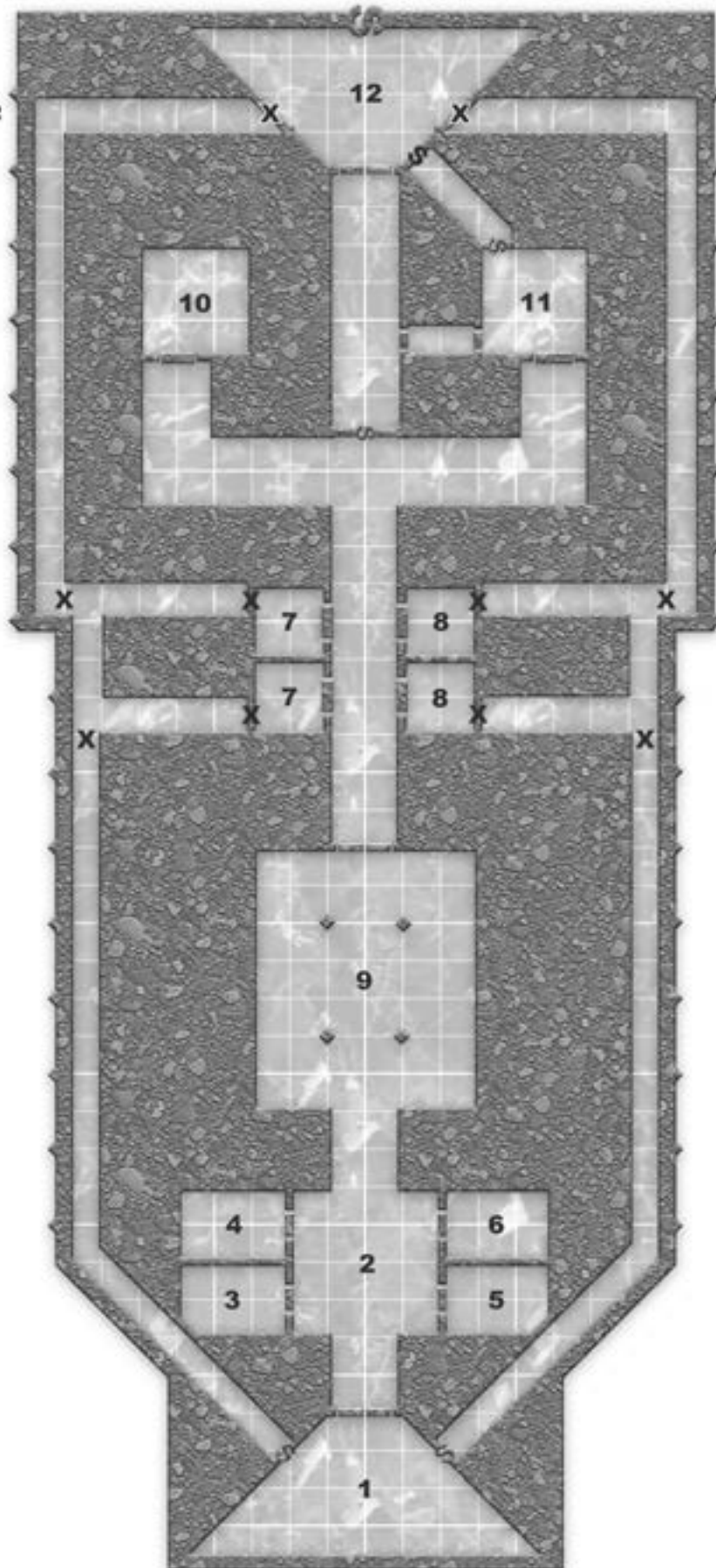
This area is a large stone chamber with two doors; one leading to the outdoors (from which the heroes enter) and one leading deeper into the complex. Hiding in the deep shadows of the chamber are a number of degenerate beast-men in the service of the White Sash. They are ape-like humanoids with jagged, broken teeth, long, grimy, claw-like nails, and leathery, tough hides. They carry broken, jagged blades that are far more effective than they appear, and they speak in a series of grunts and growls. Spotting them in the shadows requires a CL 3 wisdom check on the part of the PCs. Failing this check means that the beast-men gain surprise and automatic initiative.

There is one beast-man per PC, plus one.

DEGENERATE BEAST-MEN (These neutral evil humanoids have AC 13, HD 1d8 (4 HP each). Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with jagged, broken blades (+1 to hit; 1d6 damage). Their special abilities are darkvision 60ft., hide, move silently, light sensitivity (-1 to attack rolls in areas of bright light).)

The door leading deeper into the complex is locked; picking this lock requires thieves' tools and a CL 2 dexterity check. Secret

□ = 5 FEET
S = SECRET DOOR
X = OPENS FROM 11



doors can be found with a CL 3 wisdom check on the eastern and western walls. These doors lead directly to the beast men pens in areas 7-8, but cannot be operated from here (forcing them would require a CL 10 strength check). The operating mechanism for the doors must be on the other side or elsewhere in the complex (it is in Area 10).

AREA 2: COMMON AREA

This room is directly off of the main area and consists of a large room with benches, chairs, and tables and is generally a recreation area for those stationed here. At any given time there is a 25% chance of 1d6 soldiers being present, gaming or killing time.

VAULT GUARDS: *(These lawful evil human fighters are AC 14, HD 2d10 (10 HP each), move 30ft. Their primary attributes are strength 13, dexterity 14, constitution 12. They attack with long swords (+3 to hit; 1d8+2 damage). They wear studded leather armor and carry a long sword and dagger. As they have no need for money, they carry no coin, though each has a pouch with polished stones they use for gambling. The stones are worthless save as tokens and trinkets; they may fetch a few coppers on the open market.)*

VAULT GUARDS AND BEAST MEN

Guards or beast men may not simply sit in their rooms waiting to be killed. They might, if alerted by the sounds of battle, either move towards the fight as reinforcements, or could set up an ambush and lay in wait for the PCs. Remember that they are not utterly mindless, and are capable of using tactics.

They are not, however, unlimited in numbers. In total, there are 12 Vault guards and 12 beast men or 2.5 times the total player characters of each (whichever is greater). CKs should keep track of how many the PCs defeat; should they kill all their adversaries, their quest becomes far easier indeed!

Experience Awards: Guards and degenerate beast-men are worth 30 XP each.

AREAS 3-6: BARRACKS

These areas each house several beds and footlockers. At any given time there is a 25% chance of a barracks being occupied by 1-4 vault guards. The footlockers contain little of value; there are spare suits of clothes, boots, possibly a set of tinker's tools, leatherworker's tools, a gaming set, or something of the sort.

AREAS 7-8: PENS

These former jail cells form the pens in which the beast-men are kept when they're not guarding either the main entrance or the temple. Secret doors lead from the pens to one or both of the aforementioned areas, which are operated by levers in area 10. Likewise, the main doors can be opened by the levers, which will happen if the priests in Area 11 need aid.

Both the "front" and "back" doors of these cells have small windows through which passers-by can look to see the inhabitants (in this case, 2-3 beast men per cell), as well as slots

large enough to pass trays of food. Otherwise, they are bare rooms with no adornments or furnishings whatsoever.

AREA 9: DINING HALL

This large room has four long tables with benches. On each table a magical glyph is carved. Simply touching the glyph provides enough food and drink to feed up to 6 men. The food is of excellent quality, and the wine and ale very fine. Each table's glyph can be used 3 times per day, but cannot be removed from the hall. If the PCs think of cutting it out of the table, it loses its magic immediately upon being cut away. There is a 25% chance of 1d8 guards being present.

AREA 10: BEASTMASTER'S OFFICE

A single vault guard mans this small room at all times. His only duty is to control the movement of the beast men. The moment he is disturbed, he'll throw all the levers releasing the beast men into the complex. These in turn are trained, if released into the greater complex, to move to areas 11 and 12 in defense of their masters.

AREA 11: PRIEST'S ANTECHAMBERS

There is one priest of the White Sash in this room at all times; his duty is to sound the alarm to those beyond should the worst happen. If the guard in Area 10 was disturbed, the priest will be accompanied by half of the remaining beast-men (with the other half having moved into Area 12, beyond).

EVIL CLERICS (CHROMATIC MAGI) *(These chaotic evil human chromatic magi have vital stats AC 12/16 (mage armor), HD 2d4 (7 HP), Move 30. Their primary attributes are constitution 13, intelligence 16, wisdom 17. They attack by spell or by staff (+1 to hit; 1d6 damage). They can pull 13 threads per day, either colorless or black. Their spellcraft bonus is +3. Their known spells are: 0-level: dragon mark*, endure elements*, ghost sound*, influence*, prestidigitation*; 1-level: cause light wounds, mage armor*. They carry a ring of protection +2 and a staff.)*

*=Spells that are not Black and cost double the threads to cast, and have a CL 1 higher than normal.

MAGIC IN TERRIGAN

In the world of Terrigan, magic works by the manipulation of threads from a weave. These threads are only visible to mages and are of various colors which represent what we traditionally think of in fantasy as schools of magic. The evil magi above are necromancers, and focus on black threads (though at their current level, their existing spell list doesn't balance out the colors...yet).

For game rules on how magic in Terrigan works, see the Appendix: Magic in Terrigan, at the end of this work.

AREA 12: TEMPLE OF THE OLD GODS

This area was once a temple to the old gods, but has long since been desecrated and fallen into disrepair. Currently it is

occupied by the other cleric of the White Sash, the other half of the remaining beast men (if Area 10 was disturbed), and 1 large, carnivorous ape-like creature.

CARNIVOROUS APE (*This chaotic evil monstrosity has vital stats AC 16, HD 4d8 (20 HP); move 30ft. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with claws (+4 to hit; 1d8 damage.)*)

XP AWARD: The carnivorous ape is worth 80 XP.

TREASURE: In this chamber is the spoils of various adventurers who have stumbled here over the many decades. Visitors are rare beyond rare, but not utterly unheard of. As such, scattered around the room is 4d10 gold pieces worth of coin and gems, a suit of worn and rusted but repairable chainmail, and a +1 long sword. It is cast from brass, with a head of lapis lazuli, carved into the form of a demon swallowing the head of a dragon.

The characters must find the key, which is hidden in a secret panel at the feet of one of the dilapidated statues in the room. Since this key is the main object of the adventure, the PCs will find it if they search long enough. Call for wisdom checks, and use the results to base your judgement on how long it takes to discover the compartment.

The key, as described, resides in an ornate box gilded with gold and platinum. The box alone is worth about 50 gp in value. The key itself is about four inches long, and every bit as ornate as the PCs expected.

MURDER OF A MENTOR

Provided the characters make it back to shore within the requisite seven days, and were victorious in their battle against the sea serpent, their vessel is waiting for them as promised. Otherwise, they have a conundrum to solve. Fortunately, the waterways are fairly well-traveled and they shouldn't have to wait more than a few days or a few weeks at the outside before they can flag down a passing vessel. They could also, if they have the ingenuity, skill and foraging ability, craft a makeshift boat or raft on which they could cross to the mainland, and thereby find passage home.

Their return from Aquabar is largely uneventful. Unfortunately, when the heroes arrive back at Alfgeirr's home, they are in for a shock. The doors are wide open, hanging off their hinges. Upon entering, they first notice a smell of decay, which gets more powerful as they make their way to the study, where they discover the room completely ransacked and torn apart. As they don't know what was there or where anything was, it's impossible to tell what's been taken, but it is obvious that there is a great deal less here now than there was previously.

The worst, however, is when they discover the body of Alfgeirr himself, brutalized and slain. How exactly he was overcome is a

mystery (particularly if the PCs have seen him use his escape act earlier), but he is well and truly dead, his complexion gray and his corpse beginning to bloat with gas.

At this point, a CL 2 intelligence or wisdom check will note that the blue book which Alfgeirr held so closely to him on their first encounter is nowhere to be seen.

After a few moments of searching, which turns up no clues and nothing of value, the characters may be startled when a large brown horned owl makes its way down from the rafters, a scroll tied to its leg. It tilts his head curiously, gently pecks at the scroll a few times, then looks back at the heroes. It allows the letter to be removed, at which point it flies back up into the shadows, where it vanishes from sight.

Unrolling the letter reveals the following message:

My noble charges,

I fear all has come to darkness. Tonight, not two days after you left my home, I was assaulted. They came from everywhere, from out of the very shadows themselves. Assassins, serving the White Sash, all. The Cult of the Dragon. It must be the Cult.

I use this last spell to transmit my final thoughts to this parchment, which I will bid Sanf to keep safe until you return.

The Abyss Walker, my heroes. The Abyss Walker comes. I haven't the time left to give you all you need, so I give you this: Guard the key with your lives, and retrieve the Blue Book. Beware the White Sash and the Cult of the Dragon. They're everywhere. You must find the book, and you must stop the prophecy.

I am sorry, my friends.

Alfgeirr

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Thus we leave our heroes, with a mystery to solve and precious little to go on. This ending is designed to lead directly into the second adventure in our series, **Blood on the Stone**. Otherwise, Castle Keepers are free to invent their own threads to explore past this point. You could easily cook up your own approach to who and what the Abyss Walker is, who the Cult of the Dragon might be, how they serve him or her, and what exactly the key guards. It's your game ~ we're just the facilitators!

For those interested to see where this leads from here, keep your eyes open—there's a lot more to come, not just in this 8-adventure campaign, but in the **Abyss Walker Player's Guide**, which will give you a great deal more about the setting and world of the Hallowed Oracle!

2: BLOOD ON THE STONE

A Castles & Crusades Adventure for 1st-3rd level characters

THE PROPHECY OF THE ABYSS WALKER

In the world of Terrigan there is a prophecy that predicts the coming of the Abyss Walker, a creature of eldritch power who shall destroy the Mortal Realms. The prophecy is held by the Hallowed Oracle, a mysterious figure tied to a set of artifacts currently held by a group of young heroes.

In truth, many centuries ago, a group of evil priests imprisoned the oracle in a remote prison. This dark sect worships the Abyss Walker and will go to any ends to keep word of the end of days from spreading across the lands. For there is another prophecy as well, one that speaks of a great hero who will rise with the power and knowledge to stand against the Abyss Walker. They will do anything to keep the Oracle imprisoned and stop the rise of this hero...

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second part of our eight-part adventure series set in the world of the Abyss Walker: The Hallowed Oracle. This adventure, as you'll see, picks up right where part one left off, and together with the following chapters forms an epic campaign leading characters on a path to battle the rising Abyss Walker and potentially save the world.

Getting the characters into this adventure should be straightforward if you've played part one. If you haven't played part one this adventure could potentially still be played on its own, although some of the background will be lost. You'll need to either have the PCs returning to meet their patron, a sage named Alfgéirr, only to find him slaughtered and his dwelling ransacked, or they otherwise stumble onto the murder scene, and as such get thrown into the adventure head first!

Whichever path you take to involve the characters, here they take their first step into a dark and growing conspiracy that could threaten the entire world—unless, that is, they're willing to step up and stop it. Isn't that what heroes are for, after all?

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

The characters return from the Vault of Darrien's Keep to discover the sage Alfgéirr murdered and his shop ransacked and looted. They are followed and attacked that night by assassin-priests in league with the White Sash, and find an adventure battling wererats in the sewers beneath Lostom.

Eventually they discover that these assassins are indeed involved with the Cult of the Dragon and track them to an underground temple dedicated to the rise of the Abyss Walker. Here they unearth the knowledge that the Abyss Walker is an ancient, forgotten deity; the incarnation of chaos and war.

Within the temple, they discover a range of treasures, including the blue book Alfgéirr bade them recover.

On the way to the temple, they find themselves beset by more cultists and assassins, and run afoul of a wererat warren beneath the streets of Lostom that is in league with their enemies. Overcoming this, they will have their first encounter with the cult itself in the form of a hidden subterranean temple of darkness filled with all manner of horrors from degenerate beast-men to a small horde of undead and a huge monstrosity, all under the control of the priests of the Abyss Walker!

The trip is perilous, the dangers more deadly with each passing moment, but the rewards stand to be great. The heroes are now on their way to becoming embroiled in a plot which could mean the fate of the very world. Are they up to the task, or will they fall as so many before them have fallen to the machinations of the Cult of the Abyss Walker, and their minions the Order of the White Sash?

BACKGROUND

Blood on the Stone is an adventure for second- to third-level characters set in the world of the Abyss Walker. It is the second in our series of adventures which build to the characters taking part in a grand adventure, and in introducing this world as a setting for play. Those looking for detailed information on the world itself are encouraged to read the series of Abyss Walker novels written by Shane Moore, which detail a rich and intricate fantasy setting that is on par with many of the most classic fantasy novels written.

It is very possible that the heroes have not yet reached second level by the beginning of this adventure. If this is the case, it is recommended that the CK grant a story award whose experience will allow heroes to start this scenario at second level, as the challenge levels in this scenario are for heroes of second-to-third level and first level heroes will find the challenges herein quite deadly. Indeed, you may want to award an extra 500 to 1,000 XP to get heroes all the closer to third level, so that they are more survivable in the final battle.

If you choose to run this adventure with first- or second-level heroes, it is recommended that you carefully review the challenges within and adjust them accordingly, to give your heroes a fighting chance to defeat the adventure.

As part two of an ongoing quest, this adventure assumes that the heroes have played part one ~ as will future modules in this series assume the play of prior ones. It may be possible to adapt this module for standalone play, but it will likely require some work on the part of the Castle Keeper. More thoughts on this are to follow.

In part one, **Upon the Lonely Shores**, the characters are hired by the sage Alfgéirr to retrieve an item from a dungeon called "Darrien's Guard". The item is a key, large and brass, but the end is lapis lazuli and depicts the head of a demon swallowing the head of a dragon. The sage waves around a blue book during the role playing encounter, hinting that there are clues in his book

that indicate this key could be somehow valuable to the fate of the world in a forthcoming crisis of apocalyptic proportions.

Upon accepting, the heroes travel by sea from Lostom to an island off the coasts south of Aquabar, about a 40 mile journey. They battle sea monsters, rabid wolves, evil clerics and warriors in their quest. At length they recover the key and return to the city of Lostom, only to discover Alfgeirr brutally murdered, his study ransacked, and the blue book missing. Alfgeirr's owl familiar, Sanf, delivers to them a message from Alfgeirr, and the quest is off and running...

MAGIC IN THE ABYSS WALKER SETTING

One of the key aspects of the Abyss Walker setting is that magic is comprised of a series of colored "threads" which make up a sort of weave of magical energy, with each effect being tied to threads of a given color ~ black is necromancy, red is evocation, etc. Magi cast spells by pulling on and combining these threads, each tied to a given color.

Replace second paragraph with "Further rules for magic are found in the forthcoming **Abyss Walker Player's Guide**. For purposes of this adventure, see the guidelines in Appendix C: Magic in Terrgian."

MURDER OF A MENTOR

Our adventure begins where Episode 1 of the story left off ~ our heroes are standing over the body of their mentor, Alfgeirr, his home ransacked, a letter from the sage delivered by his owl familiar, Sanf. The letter reads:

My noble charges,

I fear all has come to darkness. Tonight, not two days after you left my home, I was assaulted. They came from everywhere, from out of the very shadows themselves. Assassins, serving the White Sash, all. The Cult of the Dragon. It must be the Cult.

I use this last spell to transmit my final thoughts to this parchment, which I will bid Sanf to keep safe until you return.

The Abyss Walker, my heroes. The Abyss Walker comes. I haven't the time left to give you all you need, so I give you this: Guard the key with your lives, and retrieve the Blue Book. Beware the White Sash and the Cult of the Dragon. They're everywhere. You must find the book, and you must stop the prophecy.

I am sorry, my friends.

Alfgeirr

Sanf hoots quietly once or twice, vanishes into the rafters, and returns after a moment with a pouch dangling from its beak. It ruffles its feathers and drops the pouch at their feet. Inside the pouch is 100 gold pieces ~ their agreed-upon payment for retrieving the key. Also within is another small note. The owl

then takes off, apparently vanishing into the shadows. It cannot be found, no matter what efforts the PCs make.

The note reads as follows:

P.S. I am a man of my word. Should you decide not to pursue this quest, I understand. I fear for the fate of the world, though, should you choose to walk away. And remember, my friends. We don't find fate. Fate finds us.

Where the heroes go is up to them. Most likely, they'll want to get out of there and find a place to hole up and discuss their options. Regardless of whether they find rooms at an inn or try to shore up Alfgeirr's study, that night they will be targeted for assassination. They have been followed since they returned to Lostom by an assassin of the White Sash who has been ordered to see to their destruction.

This lead assassin will not take part in the attack, but will observe from the shadows and run away if the battle begins to go badly. This will afford the characters an opportunity to give chase and discover the source of their troubles.

The attack comes in the dead of night. Whichever character happens to be on watch (if any) must make a wisdom check at CL 1 to avoid surprise. If they exceed this check by 5 or more they have time to rouse their comrades before the assault begins. Otherwise, the character on watch will be the only one that may act on the first round of combat. Failure means the assassins get a full surprise round before the PCs can respond. Sleeping characters may also make a wisdom check to hear the assassins, but for these the check is CL 3.

Attacks against surprised/sleeping PCs see the defenders lose their dexterity bonus to AC, and are subject to backstab damage. In addition, no PC can be assumed to be sleeping in armor unless they're wearing leather armor; anything heavier is far too uncomfortable to sleep in.

There will be one assassin for each player character.

ASSASSINS (These chaotic evil 1st level rogues vital stats are HP 4 and AC 13. Their primary attributes are dexterity, wisdom, and intelligence. Their significant attributes are dexterity 14 and intelligence 13. They back stab for double damage. They attack with short swords (+1 to hit) for 1d6 damage. They wear leather armor, and carry 10-60gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

The assassins each wear the dirty white sash that marks them as members of the Order of the White Sash. They also carry poison pills and if taken alive will consume the pills, secreting the pills into their mouths and biting down as their last act before falling unconscious or being bound, and die rather than be questioned.

It is possible that the PCs come up with a means by which they are able to stop a potential assassin from consuming their pill. In this case, the assassin will refuse to answer any questions put to them, gleefully resisting any amount of torture and going to their death without revealing anything.

14 CASTLES & CRUSADES



CHASING THE ASSASSIN

At some point during the battle call for wisdom checks. Any successful check will note another figure hiding in the shadows, who takes off running as soon as he is spotted. This should enable the PCs to give chase through the streets. Describe the chase as a wild dash through alleyways: the PCs and their quarry tearing through hanging laundry; dodging falling sludge from city dwellers emptying chamber pots; plowing through marketplace stalls and the like as their target stays always a few steps ahead ~ just down the road, rounding the next corner, etc.

Call for dexterity checks on occasion, adjudicating the effect of success or failure as you see fit. A player stumbles or overruns a turn, crashing into a shed or market stall. They deftly leap over falling barrels or slide under an oncoming wagon to come up with the grace of a gazelle, gaining ground on their quarry, etc. Keep it fast-paced and exciting. Give opportunities for heroism ~ perhaps on an exceptional success they're able to scoop a child out of the way of disaster resulting from the chase.

Eventually the assassin will dive into a storm drain in the streets, heading for the sewers. If they're to discover the root of their problems, the characters will have to follow...

WARRENS OF THE WERERATS

The sewers and service tunnels beneath Lostom are vast, maze-like and filled with perils. Each turn looks the same, and the whole place is filled with the stench of rot, human waste, and death. They are also home to a pack of wererats who prey on unsuspecting vagrants who stumble beneath the streets. Also down here is one of the bases of operation of the White Sash, with whom the wererats have an agreement. Indeed, the temple of the Cult of the Abyss Walker can only be reached by passing

through the wererat warren itself, a highly dangerous prospect for those not of the white sash.

Rather than providing a map of the Lostom sewers, CKs are encouraged to create one as the PCs go by rolling on the following tables. These tables are measured in "squares," indicating squares on a piece of graph paper, with each square representing five feet of distance.

This section of the adventure can go on as long as the CK desires, or until the PCs randomly encounter the wererat warren. Unless the characters take careful precautions to map their progress, they will become lost after a few twists and turns. However, it is recommended that the CK keep track of the map as it is created, and re-roll as necessary in case of random results delivering improbable solutions (a passage that doubles back on itself, or a "loop" result, for example).

TABLE 2.1: PASSAGEWAYS A

D10
1. 1d4 squares long, ends in right turn
2. 1d4 squares long, ends in right turn
3. 1d6 squares long, ends in right turn
4. 1d6 squares long, ends in left turn
5. 1d8 squares long, ends in right turn
6. 1d8 squares long, ends in left turn
7. 1d10 squares long, ends in right turn
8. 1d10 squares long, ends in left turn
9. Chamber (roll on table 3)
10. Junction or exit (roll on table 2).

*Passage turns need not be 90 degrees ~ they can be 15 degrees, 45 degrees, whatever angle the CK chooses.

TABLE 2.2: PASSAGEWAYS B

D6
1. Passage continues, roll on table 1 again.
2. Passage ends in room, see table 3.
3. Passage ends in junction, 1d4+3 squares across, shape at CK's discretion, 1d6 passages (or as many fit).
4. Exit to streets (ramp, ladder, stairs, limited access, at CK's discretion)
5. Passage turns left and continues (roll on table 1 again)
6. Passage turns right and continues (roll on table 1 again)

TABLE 2.3: CHAMBERS

D8 (each room has 1d4 exits)
1. Square, 1d4+1 squares to side
2. Square, 1d6+1 squares to side
3. Square, 1d8+1 squares to side
4. Rectangle, 1d4+1 x 1d6+1 squares
5. Rectangle, 1d4+1 x 1d8+1 squares
6. Rectangle, 1d6+1 x 1d8+1 squares
7. Octagonal, hexagonal or round (CK's choice), 2d6 squares in diameter
8. Unusual or irregular shape (CK's choice), 2d6 squares across at its widest point, 1d4 at its narrowest.

DESCRIBING CHAMBERS: Most chambers in the sewers will be glorified junctions, barren of furnishings, but remember that the White Sash and the wererats use these tunnels as their home and operations as well; CKs should feel free to describe and outfit them as they see fit. One junction could be bone dry, while the next could find the PCs wading in knee-deep water or sludge under which a crocodile lurks. It's even possible that characters could uncover a barracks' area, a leisure room, a broken entrance into a natural cave complex, or even burial catacombs beneath the city as they travel the various tunnels beneath Loston's streets. Be creative and run with it ~ you could create an entire labyrinth with different sections ranging from underground hideouts to burial chambers to sewage systems and even natural caves.

TABLE 2.4: TRAPS & ENCOUNTERS

D10 (Roll at CK's discretion)
1. Trap! CL 3, 2d6 damage on trigger, dexterity save for half (CK's discretion on specifics).
2. Trap! CL 2, 1d6 damage on trigger, dexterity save negates (CK's discretion on specifics).
3. Assassins! Use stats from initial attack; 1 or 2 per character. 50% chance of one or more chromatic magi in the group.
4. 1d4 wererats!
5. Wererat warren! This result only applies if the room is at least 5 squares to a side. See below.

6. 1d4 Giant centipedes, giant spiders or giant rats; CK's choice
7. Gray ooze, green slime, or yellow mold; CK's choice.
8. Albino crocodile or giant frog; CK's choice.
9. Empty
10. Roll twice; combine results

MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

ALBINO CROCODILE (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 14, HP 24. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite for 2d4 points of damage or a tail slap for 1d12 points of damage. Upon a successful bite the victim is allowed a strength check or suffer being dragged underwater and drowned, or rolled for an additional 1d8 damage if on land.*)

GIANT CENTIPEDE (*These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 1d6, HP 4, AC 14. Their prime attributes are physical. They attack with a bite that inflicts 1d4 points of damage plus a poison that requires a constitution save or become incapacitated for 1d4 turns.*)

GIANT SPIDER (*These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 1d6, HP 4, AC 14. Their prime attributes are physical. They attack with a poison bite that does 1d4 points of damage and requires a constitution save or the victim takes an additional 2 points of damage for the next 3 turns.*)

GIANT RAT (*These small-sized neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 1d4, HP 3, AC 13. Their prime attributes are physical. Their movement is 30 feet per round on the ground, 15 feet per round climbing, or 10 feet per round swimming. They attack with a bite that inflicts 1d2 points of damage and may carry a disease.*)

GIANT FROG (*These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 10, AC 12. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a lashing tongue for 1d4 points of damage. They have twilight vision and can camouflage themselves, granting +5 to hide and +10 to surprise. They are able to swallow their victim. Upon a successful strike the victim takes damage and if small is swallowed, if medium it takes two full rounds for them to be swallowed. A strength check allows the target to escape. Any creature swallowed suffers 2d8 points of damage a round.*)

GRAY OOZE (*This creature's vital stats are HD 3d10, AC 5, HP 21. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with an acid attack for 1d8 points of damage. They move slowly at 10 feet per round. They are very difficult to see and if it is lying still it cannot be seen by any creature over 5 feet distance. If a creature approaches an ooze it is allowed a wisdom save to spot it at a -6 penalty.*)

GREEN SLIME (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 31, AC 10. They have no primary attributes. They do not attack, only react to being contacted. When touched they convert any organic material into green slime within 1-4 rounds or 10 turns for wood or metal; stone is unaffected. It can be killed by fire, cold, or a cure disease spell.*)

16 CASTLES & CRUSADES

WERERATS (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 17 and HP 13. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon or by bite for 1d4 points of damage. They are able to alternate their form, changing into a rat or human. They can cause disease, regenerate 1 hit point per round, and have rat empathy.*)

YELLOW MOLD (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 0, HP 0, AC 10. It has no primary attributes. It attacks by discharging a spore spray; any within its range must save vs. constitution at -3 penalty or take 1d6 temporary constitution damage. No other attacks.*)

THE WERERAT WARREN

Eventually the heroes will lose sight of their quarry, although exceptional trackers may be able to follow signs of his passage through the mazelike sewers. The end game of this particular section of the adventure is for the heroes to come to the wererat warren. This area consists of a large central chamber, at least 5 squares (25') to a side, with several (1d6+2) side chambers connected by brief tunnels, ranging in size from 10' x 10' to 30' by 30' in various configurations.

The wererats are employed by the Cult of the Dragon to act as guards for the hidden temple located behind their warren. In exchange, they promise not to accost those wearing the white sash or the robes of a cleric of the dragon, and they get free run of the sewers and access tunnels.

There are a number of adult wererats spread among the various rooms at any given time as indicated in the keyed areas. Half of these are male and half female, with an additional 1d12x10 infants and children. In addition, there's a 50% chance of 3d6 giant rats or swarms of regular sewer rats being present, either of which will attack anything the wererats perceive as threats. The CK is free to summon these as needed if the fight goes too one-sided in favor of the PCs.

There are several ways to approach this situation. First, the characters could try to hack and slash their way through. This isn't the brightest solution as there's a lot of wererats around. Also, assume they kill all the adults; what do they do with the children, who are arguably innocents? Philosophical lines aren't for this module to discuss; the consequences (if any) of those actions are left to the CK to determine.

Second, they could try to stealth their way through by observing and scouting for a time there are few wererats present or most are sleeping, and they can sneak past. Again, the success or failure of this effort is left to the CK, but stealth checks against a wererat warren are going to be at minimum CL3 and possibly higher depending on how alert the wererats are, and how many are present.

Finally, PCs could try to slip through by donning white sashes and masquerading as members of the Order. Such a ruse will require passing a charisma check; bards gain +2 to this check, as do characters with particularly convincing disguises or who do an outstanding job role playing the encounter.

WERERATS' WARREN: KEYED LOCATIONS

AREA 1: ENTRYWAY

This large, roughly-circular room reeks of garbage and sewage. The ground is littered with garbage, and the sounds of squeaking and shuffling movement can be heard in the distance. It's nearly pitch-dark in here (characters without at least twilight vision will be blind, and those without darkvision will be at -2 on all wisdom checks to see and to avoid surprise without light). At the north there's a passageway, but it's piled with rocks and debris. Moving through it is possible, but not stealthily (characters are -3 to all checks to move silently), and anyone moving through sees their movement halved due to the difficult terrain. Only one character can pass through at a time.

AREA 2: MAIN WARREN

This huge natural chamber is marked by two massive columns at the center supporting the roof. It's the main "common area" (if one could call it such) for the wererats. At any given time there are 2d6 wererats milling around this area. They will viciously attack intruders, but will let anyone wearing the white sash pass through unmolested, even though they're still always suspicious of surface-dwellers and will hiss, snarl and keep their distance. The smell of garbage is even stronger here, requiring all characters to succeed at a constitution check or suffer -2 to all actions from the sheer distraction and stench.

If combat commences, any wererats in the other rooms will enter the fray within 1-3 rounds.

AREAS 3-4: BEDDING AREAS

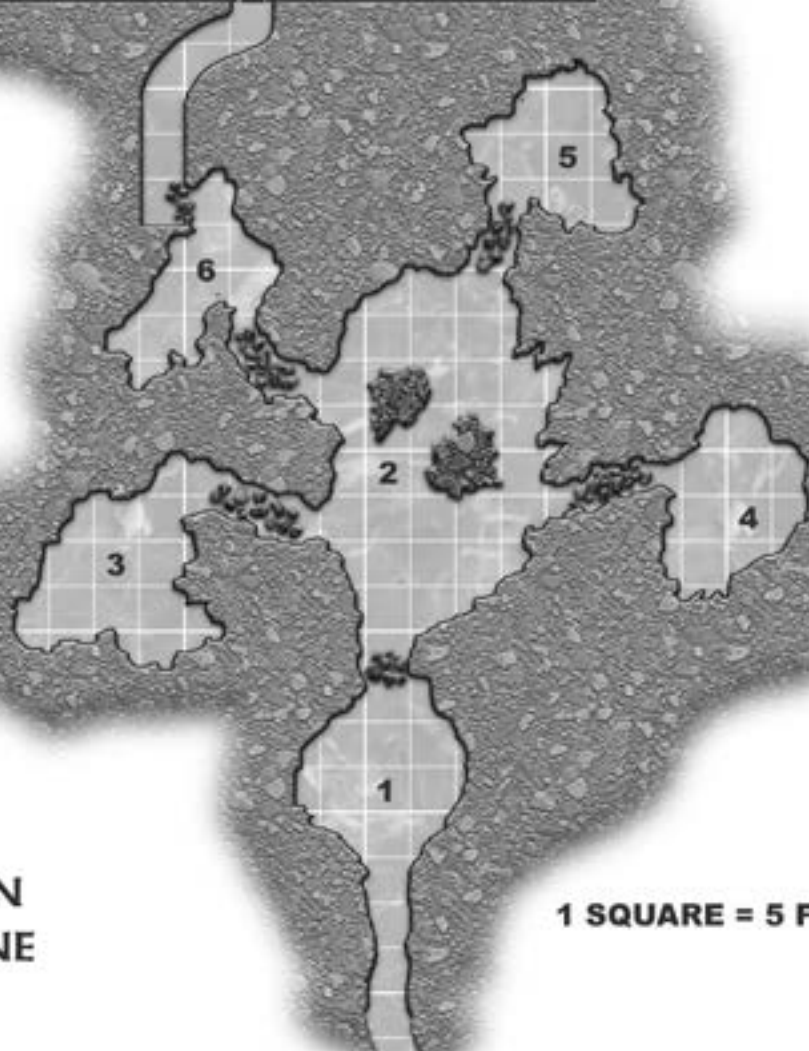
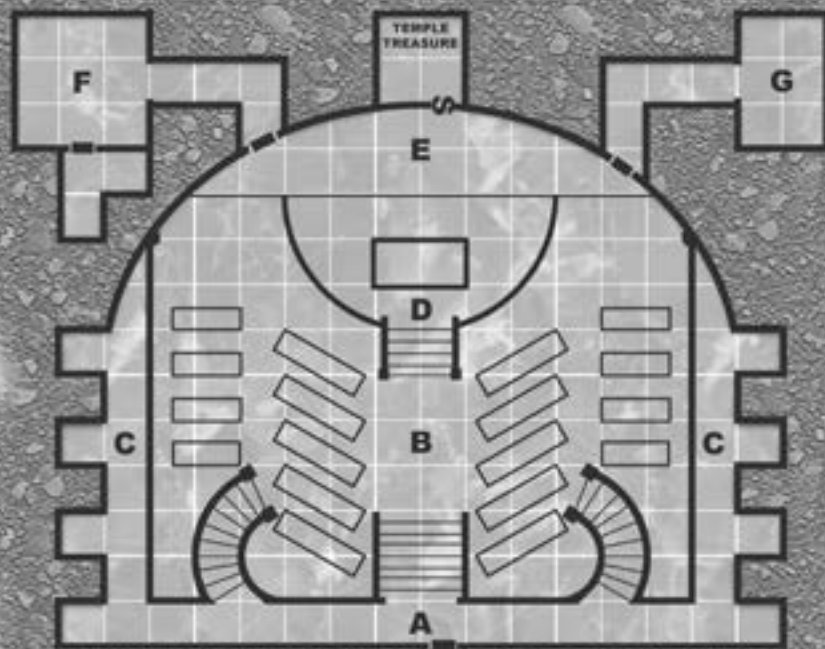
These three chambers serve as bunks, bedding, breeding and nursery areas for the wererats. There are an additional 2d6 wererats spread among these rooms, as well as 3d6 children. All children are also wererats. Some may be in rat form, some may be in humanoid form. Some have been born as wererats, while others were bitten and kidnapped. Either way, deciding what to do with them could pose a moral challenge for the PCs.

Also scattered among these rooms is 3d6x10 gold pieces worth of trinkets, jewelry and other bits and pieces the wererats have collected and kept as "shinies."

AREA 5: SUPPLIES

This is the area where the wererats keep their provisions and treasure hoard. In here can be found heaps of meat (much of it rotted and maggot-ridden, nuts, berries, old and rotting food, rancid water and the like). Also here are 3 casks of fine wine and 2 of dwarven ale that the rats pilfered from a tavern above; these have a value of 60 gp total. A sack in the corner contains 150 copper, 50 silver, and 30 gold pieces. A crystal vase on a shelf in the corner is worth 15 gp.

Finally, hanging in a sheath on the wall is a finely-crafted falchion with an amethyst inset in the pommel. The grip is leather-wrapped and inlaid with gold filigree, and the shining blade which



**BLOOD ON
THE STONE**

1 SQUARE = 5 FT

is exceptionally balanced is etched with ancient runic writing that, if someone with the right skills succeeds at an intelligence check, reads "Guardian." The sword is a +3 *Defender*.

AREA 6: ENTRY TO THE TEMPLE OF THE ABYSS WALKER

This area contains a secret door in the northwest wall which leads to the Abyss Walker Temple. It is guarded by two guards, one cleric, and two wererats. Unless engaged in combat, the goal of the cleric is to escape and warn his brethren. He will not flee through the secret door, for fear of giving it away. Rather, he seeks to flee out through the warren and warn the White Sash, whose network can further inform the Cult of the Dragon. The effect this will have on future adventures (or even the future difficulty of this one) is left to the CK to determine, but it could make for a great deal of difficulty for the PCs moving forward as people expect them to come.

Aside from the guards, the room itself is outfitted with a table and a few stools. There's a crude gaming set (dice, chits, and a few beat-up playing cards) scattered across the table as well as a few half-empty flagons of good wine. Incense burns in decanters which helps somewhat to ward off the stench of garbage in the rest of the area.

GUARDS (*These lawful evil human fighters are AC 14, HD 2d10 (10 HP each), move 30ft. Their primary attributes are strength 13, dexterity 14, constitution 12. They attack with long swords (+4 to hit; 1d8+2 damage). They wear studded leather armor and carry a long sword and dagger.*)

EVIL CLERIC (CHROMATIC MAGI) (*These chaotic evil human chromatic magi have vital stats AC 12/16 (mage armor), HD 2d4 (7 HP), Move 30. Their primary attributes are constitution 13, intelligence 16, wisdom 17. They attack by spell or by spear (+1 to hit; 1d8 damage). They can pull 13 threads per day, either colorless or black. Their spellcraft bonus is +3. Their known spells are: 0-level: dragon mark*, endure elements*, ghost sound*, influence*, prestidigitation*; 1-level: cause light wounds, mage armor*. They carry a spear.*)

*=Spells that are not Black, cost double the threads to cast, and have a CL 1 higher than normal. See rules for chromatic magic at the beginning of the adventure.

WERERATS (*These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 17 and HP 13. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon or by bite for 1d4 points of damage. They are able to alternate their form, changing into a rat or human. They can cause disease, regenerate 1 hit point per round, and have rat empathy.*)

THE TEMPLE OF THE ABYSS WALKER

A hidden door off of one of these antechambers leads to the Temple of the Abyss Walker. Nominally, this door is a CL3 to discover, however CKs are encouraged to come up with a way by which the PCs can access the temple regardless of the success or failure of a wisdom check.

After traversing a solidly-hewn hallway and a downward set of stairs lined with burning torches, the PCs will find themselves on a balcony overlooking a temple nave and sanctum sanctorum. The temple is large, but not vast, and is sparsely populated by clerics, cultists, and guards. This is a relatively new temple established in secret to form a base of operations for the cult in Lostom.

Aside from the monsters mentioned below, there are up to ten guards and cultists scattered throughout the temple. Their disposition can be as the CK desires.

GUARDS (*These lawful evil human fighters are AC 14, HD 2d10 (10 HP each), move 30ft. Their primary attributes are strength 13, dexterity 14, constitution 12. They attack with long swords (+4 to hit; 1d8+2 damage). They wear studded leather armor and carry a long sword and dagger.*)

THE TEMPLE KEY IS AS FOLLOWS:

A. MAIN TEMPLE ENTRANCE

The temple itself is semi-circular in form, with a balcony at the top where the entrance from the wererat warrens opens up. There are three staircases going down: a large central staircase, and two narrower side staircases which lead into alcove areas in the lower temple. When the PCs enter, there is a 50% chance of 1d3 guards manning the balcony.

B. NAVE

This main worship area is dotted with old benches (pews) set in angles facing the front, with a central aisle approaching the chancel and sanctuary. The vaulted ceiling is held aloft by stone pillars set at regular intervals.

C. AMBULATORY

This covered walkway contains alcoves containing effigies and statues of ancient, long-forgotten gods. All have been defaced, painted over, their faces knocked off, some smashed to pieces in the cult's efforts to repurpose the temple. It is obvious, however, that the gods represented here were not of the goodly variety. Any priestly character making a successful wisdom check notes that these are clearly forgotten deities of darkness, shadow and death.

D. CHANCEL/SANCTUARY

The chancel includes a short set of stairs which lead to a low platform, surrounded by waist-high railings. The center of the area is dominated by an altar ~ a plain marble table. At the left is a pulpit, with benches at either side. At the back of the sanctuary is a large rood screen which leads to the sanctum sanctorum. A crude statue of a demonic figure flanked by a white dragon has been erected before the screen. This is a base representation of the Abyss Walker, or the cult's impression of it.

E. SANCTUM SANCTORUM

This area forms a private prayer and preparation area for the priest. There are two doors, one to the left and one to the right.

A secret door at the back of the Sanctum (CL 2) holds the treasure (such as it is) for the temple, though the book the heroes seek is not present.

TEMPLE TREASURE: 100 pp, 200 gp, 150 sp, 1 silver holy symbol from an ancient, forgotten deity of death and ruin (250 gp value), 1 relic (bone shard of an ancient, evil saint encased in a silver and gold coffer worth 500 gp; radiates necromancy and evil and grants +2 to Spellcraft rolls related to black magic), 1 *potion of remove disease*, 1 pair of magical swords, a +2 *flaming rapier* and a +2 *ice blade main gauche* (matched) named Flare and Frostbite, respectively.

FLARE AND FROSTBITE: These matched dueling weapons share an enchantment, and as such are most effective when used in tandem; while they may be used separately, in such a state they are greatly weakened. They are also good-aligned, and anyone of evil alignment who attempts to wield them suffers 1d4 damage from each, the damage being fire and cold, respectively, for every round they are held, with no saving throw allowed.

When used as a pair, the wielder may attack with each weapon every melee round at no penalty. Flare is a standard +2 flaming rapier; Frostbite is an ice blade, a +2 main gauche which appears to be made of thin crystal. At its wielder's command (whenever used with Flare and Flare is activated) it glows faintly with bluish light and becomes ice cold. This cold does not harm the wielder, but deals an extra 1d6 cold damage on each successful hit, or 2d6 against fire-based creatures.

When separated, these bonuses and bonus damage from fire and frost are halved, and there is no additional attack ability granted.

F. RECTORY

This suite of rooms to the left of the Sanctum Sanctorum serve as private apartments for the clerics of the temple. Currently they are used by three clerics of the Abyss Walker. 1-3 will be present at any given time. It is in these rooms that the Blue Book is located.

EVIL CLERICS (CHROMATIC MAGI) (*These chaotic evil human chromatic magi have vital stats AC 12/16 (mage armor), HD 2d4 (7 HP), Move 30. Their primary attributes are constitution 13, intelligence 16, wisdom 17. They attack by spell or by spear (+1 to hit; 1d8 damage). They can pull 13 threads per day, either colorless or black. Their spellcraft bonus is +3. Their known spells are: 0-level: dragon mark*, endure elements*, ghost sound*, influence*, prestidigitation*; 1-level: cause light wounds, mage armor*. They carry a spear.*)

*=Spells that are not Black and cost double the threads to cast, and have a CL 1 higher than normal.

TREASURE: Here the heroes find the blue book of Alfgeirr's which they have come to retrieve, which is detailed at the end of the adventure. In addition, they find missives from other members of the Cult of the Dragon that mention this same sage at Torrent Manor, painting him as a target and Torrent as a strategic staging point for their future plans. Other missives indicate that a siege of the manor is in the planning stages.

20 CASTLES & CRUSADES

There are orders issued to seek out and kill the heroes, as they now present a threat to the rise of something called "the Abyss Walker" and must be taken care of before they grow in power and knowledge to the point where they could ruin everything...

Finally, here they find 10 *potions of extra healing* (2d8 hit points each), 500 gold pieces worth of gems (rubies, emeralds, diamonds) and jewelry, and 200 platinum pieces in coin.

G. TEMPLE STORES

This is a pantry and storage area for the temple. Currently it holds several barrels of moderately good wine, a few weeks' worth of dried meats, nuts, cheeses and bread, extra vestments for the clerics and general tools and such.

THE HERALD OF THE ABYSS WALKER

As the PCs approach the chancel, they will be greeted by the high cleric of the local cult ~ a chromatic mage whose ego exceeds his skills, but who believes wholeheartedly in his cause. At his side is the very same assassin who escaped the group at the beginning of the adventure.

It is from the assassin that the high cleric has divined the identity of the heroes and challenges them from behind the altar, proclaiming that there is nothing they can do to stop the rise of the Abyss Walker, and that they have come here only to meet their doom. He concludes his speech by admonishing unseen forces to "Rise, my children! Rise and defend your church!"

At this point, from beneath the various pews in the nave, rise a horde of zombies!

ZOMBIES (10) (*These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 8, 9, 11, 13, 12, 11, 9, 8, 8, 10; AC 11. They have no primary attributes. They attack with one claw that does 1d8 damage plus possible rot grub infestation. For each extra zombie attacking they collectively gain a +1 to hit. So if there are three zombies attacking one target they all get +3 to hit.*)

On the second round of combat, the priest summons forth a creature he deems the "Herald of the Abyss Walker, the Sign of Things to Come!" and from behind the rood screen emerges a hideous monstrosity who shambles forward with murderous intent.

MUTANT HERALD (OGRE) (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 16, HP 20. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack three times, twice with vicious claws for 1d10+3 points of damage and once with a bite for 1d6+3. They have dark and twilight vision.*)

In addition, the PCs will eventually have to deal with the lead assassin and the high cleric, unless these two escape to fight another day...

LEAD ASSASSIN (*This chaotic evil 4th level rogue's vital stats are HP 18 and AC 14. His primary attributes are dexterity, wisdom, and intelligence. Their significant attributes are*

dexterity 16 and intelligence 13. They back stab for double damage. They attack with short sword (+4 to hit) for 1d6 damage. They wear leather armor, and carry 10-60gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

CHIEF CLERIC (CHROMATIC MAGE) (This chaotic evil human chromatic mage has vital stats AC 12/16 (mage armor), HD 4d4 (14 HP), Move 30. Their primary attributes are constitution 13, intelligence 16, wisdom 17. They attack by spell or by staff (+2 to hit; 1d6 damage). They can pull 19 threads per day, either colorless or black. Their spellcraft bonus is +3. Their known spells are: 0-level: dragon mark*, endure elements*, ghost sound*, influence*, prestidigitation*; 1-level: cause light wounds, command*, daze*, mage armor*; 2-level: enhance attribute*, dark chaos*. They carry a spear.)

*=Spells that are not Black and cost double the threads to cast, and have a CL 1 higher than normal. .

EPILOGUE

After the heroes clear out the temple of the Abyss Walker in Lostom, they have but to retrieve the Blue Book, which will take them to the next stage of their journey; across the wastelands of Aten and to a mysterious far-off place called Torrent Manor, where a new potential ally awaits the very book they now hold in their hands.

THE BLUE BOOK OF ALFGEIRR

The Blue Book itself, much to the PCs' chagrin, is written entirely in code. Even for the wisest and most intelligent code breaker, it could take months at best to break it, as there is no key to decipher it. However, it contains all manner of cryptic notes: jots about the Abyss Walker, the gods of the Mortal Realms, history of the world and more. It mentions a hidden magic that lies "beyond the reach of the vale." It is also filled with doodles of war machines and contraptions, and what

appear to be alchemical formulae and references to locations that cannot be deciphered. There is, however, yet another letter tucked in the back of the book, this one addressed to Alfgeirr himself:

My Dearest Lord Alfgeirr,

These are dark times indeed, and I fear for what may be coming if your suspicions regarding the prophecy prove correct. As for me, I spend my days here at Torrent Manor, preparing for the oncoming siege by the forces that move across the land. My knowledge at machines and the sciences are valued by my Lord here, and I stand ready to ply them to your service, should you be hale enough to undertake the journey when your charges return with the key.

I encourage, nay, I beg of you to make the journey to Torrent with the book and the key. It may be that with the key and my knowledge of the stars and engineering, we can further decipher the book and take steps towards turning the tide against the Walker's cult. It may be that there is time, time enough still to save us all.

Of course, it shan't harm us to see one another again, though the reason may be grave. It has been far too long.

I wish you all the luck in Terrigan, my friend, and I eagerly await your response.

Yours forever in time,

-L

This letter gives the characters their next clue for their adventure. The road to Torrent Manor is a dangerous one, which will carry them far to the east, across the wastelands and into another civilization halfway across the continent. Who knows what awaits them along the way?

3: THROUGH THE WASTELAND

There is a prophecy that predicts the coming of the Abyss Walker, a creature of eldritch power who shall destroy the Mortal Realms. Our heroes have recovered a mysterious key and book at the behest of their deceased patron, the Sage Alfgeirr, and now they cross a continent on the world of Terrigen, seeking to bring these items to someone they believe to be a close friend of Alfgeirr, another sage who plies their trade at a place called Torrent Manor.

Their journey is long and fraught with peril, but they stand alone against a growing threat from the distant shades of history. If they do not succeed in their quest...who will?

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the third chapter of our epic adventure in the world of the Abyss Walker: The Hallowed Oracle. Of all the adventures in our series, this particular one may be the most apt to transplant into any campaign world you like as it isn't tied directly to the overall storyline, but rather represents a few loosely-connected encounters during a long overland journey that spans a continent.

In essence, this particular scenario will consist of a series of "two mini-adventures" and mini-encounters that the CK can use as they like; intertwining them with scenarios of their own to inject excitement, adventure, and a sense that the characters are indeed adventuring in a broad, wide world into the journey from Lostom to Torrent Manor. It can be used to allow the PCs to gain experience, to explore other areas and cultures, and to take a break from the overall serious nature of their quest.

On the other hand, if the CK desires, these adventures can be bypassed entirely, jumping straight to Episode 4 of the series Ramparts High. The encounters herein can also be injected at any point into any campaign desired, adding extra adventure wherever it's needed. In the end, it's up to you!

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

This is a simple overland adventure with several large encounters. It carries the heroes across the wasteland and into the woods west of Torrent Manor. As they travel, they will have to deal with issues of survival, cultists and assassins that are hot on their tail, and locals in desperate need of aid from heroes. They will encounter bandit encampments, abandoned ruins, deadly monsters, deadlier traps, and further signs of the coming danger. Along the way they will gain experience and find treasures that will help them in their quest.

Eventually, the heroes will reach their destination as their road takes them through the forests and into a small village and crossroads just west of Torrent Manor. There the characters will learn the situation surrounding the Manor, and around the Manor will hear rumors of war. It seems that their quest is truly just beginning.

THE CALL OF THE ROAD

The journey from Lostom to Torrent Manor is roughly five weeks' ride through forests and across the blasted Wasteland of Adoria. It's a road that is fraught with peril and will likely take around a hard month of travel. The PCs have as much time as the CK wishes to grant to prepare for their journey; however, they may be hunted by the White Sash and their wererat allies as long as they remain in Lostom.

Indeed, the White Sash is equally concerned with stopping the PCs and with discovering their next step. If they can stay one step ahead of the heroes by assassinating their contacts and limiting their aid, then all the better ~ they will render these upstart adventurers impotent to stop their schemes. The Cult of the Dragon believes the heroes are but hands for their enemies, and they seek to cut off the head and pierce the heart. They've already taken out Alfgeirr; now they need to know to whom the heroes will turn next.

To this end an assassin has been sent to track the heroes, gather allies for the Abyss Walker Cult, to capture the book and key they carry, as well as destroying any more powerful or knowledgeable allies they might have. As the White Sash had the book before, they've already sent agents ahead to Torrent Manor, which is soon to be under siege, a situation of which the cult intends to take full advantage.

The heroes have now wandered into the Queendom of Aten. It's important to remember that if there are any males in the group, they have no rights whatsoever and are viewed as second-class citizens at best. If they encounter any of the Queen's guards, they will likely be arrested and imprisoned for daring to wander around armed and so blatantly. Stealth is essential while in this area. It is presumed that the heroes will exercise proper caution, and no specific adventures in Aten are presented herein, as the heroes are simply cutting through the area to get to the Wastelands. It is left to the CK if they wish to explore this element of the setting, and offer the heroes opportunity for more experience.

Allow the PCs to visit any provisioners they need to obtain horses, pack animals, carts, or anything else they can afford, and to plan their journey. It is a fairly straightforward southeasterly path ~ about two weeks' journey through forested land, then due east across the wastelands of Adoria, followed by another week's ride through forested country to Torrent manor. The time of year is early spring, so the temperature varies between cool and warm, and the weather in the forested areas vacillates between dry and rainy. Once the characters enter the wastelands, they are in arid desert country; however, being in the temperate geographic region, the temperature is still cool.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS ON THE ROAD

During their travels the heroes will encounter random wandering bandits, monsters and the like. Every day there are two 10%

chances for a random encounter, once during the day and once at night. Roll a d12 for the hour of the encounter if one is indicated during the day, and a d8 if during rest at night (a 1 being the first hour of travel or rest, a 4 being the fourth hour, etc.). This allows for about four hours' time to account for setting up and breaking down camp, eating meals, etc., though if the GM wishes to allow for encounters during camp setup and the like, simply roll a d12 for daylight hours or a d12 for nighttime hours.

The encounter tables are different for the forest and the wastelands. Note that, especially in forests, not all encounters need to be "Fight to the death" scenarios or even hostile. An encounter with a bear or even a hungry pack of wolves can end by letting the creature go its way, or by scaring them off. Dryads and nymphs are not necessarily hostile creatures, nor are satyrs. It is left to the CK to run these encounters as they see fit.

Also, these tables are but suggestions. The range of encounters possible during wilderness travel is vast, with hundreds of possibilities. See **Monsters & Treasure**, **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**, and **Classic Monsters & Treasure** for more options with which you can play. Finally, some of these encounters would be far more lethal to second-level characters than to third; CKs should keep this in mind and re-roll or lower the capabilities of more powerful foes (along with associated XP awards), if necessary.

Statistics for these creatures can be found in the **Castles & Crusades Monsters & Treasure** and **Classic Monsters & Treasure** sourcebooks.

TABLE 3.1: FOREST ENCOUNTERS

2D8	
2.	Ankheg
3.	Bandits (human; 1d6)
4.	Bear (black) or herd animals
5.	Grayshalks (2 or 3)
6.	Dryad
7.	Giant Ants, Centipedes, Beetles, Spiders, etc. (CK's choice; 1d6)
8.	Goblins (1d8; may include worg riders)
9.	Nymph
10.	Orcs (1d6)
11.	Ogres (1-2; possibly with an Ogre Mage)
12.	Satyrs (1d6)
13.	Shambling Mound
14.	Troll (1 hill or 1-2 river)
15.	Starved wolves (1d8)
16.	Dire wolves (1d6)

TABLE 3.2 WASTELAND ENCOUNTERS

D20	
1.	Barghest (1d6)

2.	Belker
3.	Bodak
4.	Djinni
5.	Ettercap
6.	Ghoul (1d6)
7.	Ghast (1d4)
8.	Gibbering Moulder
9.	Kriels (2d4)
10.	Harpies (1d6)
11.	Hellhounds (4HD; 1d6)
12.	Imp
13.	Giant insects – Ants, beetles, scorpions, spiders, centipedes; CK's choice; 1d6)
14.	Jackals or Hyenas (2d6)
15.	Giant Lizard (1d4)
16.	Lizardmen (2d4)
17.	Manticore
18.	Giant Toad
19.	Skeleton (1d8)
20.	Zombie (1d8)

As with any random encounters, CKs are free to use, modify or ignore any results as they see fit. Nor should CKs feel required to roll every so many hours for the chance of an encounter. If things are slowing down and an encounter would get everyone back into the game, drop one in. Alternately, if the characters are struggling and in need of healing after the last encounter, skip one to allow them to heal back up. The point of a random encounter is to keep the story fun and moving, not to kill off the party!

THE FORESTS OF ATEN

THE WYVERN'S LAIR

The first major encounter the characters come across in their journey through the Forests of Aten is the ruins of a long-abandoned village. They should be somewhat tired and in need of shelter, or have another reason to explore this area, despite the potential signs of trouble.

It begins as the forest canopy begins to grow heavy, thick and tight above them, shutting out the light overhead. Upon the ground lies a thick, yellow-green miasma which burns the eyes, nose and throat. Characters should make a constitution check (CL 1) or suffer -1 to all actions from the mist as long as they are inside of it. Those who think to cover their mouths and nose gain a +3 to the check, but the mist still stings the eyes. Unless one wants to cover nose and mouth and proceed forward blindfolded, a check is necessary.

The mist seems to roll in overnight while they are camping, and extends as far as the eye can see in every direction. In addition, an oppressive sense of heaviness seems to have fallen over the

entire forest. Try as they might, the characters cannot find their way. Even a ranger making a successful tracking roll will find themselves hopelessly turned around.

Still, there are clear trails through the mist, and tracking characters will think they can find the trail forward.

A few hours into the evil-feeling woods, they come upon the ruins of a village. Most of the stone buildings are crumbled and in utter ruins, but a few still seem largely intact. All are overgrown with vines and moss. What they're looking upon is decades upon decades of ruin ~ possibly even a century's worth.

What the heroes are about to discover is that the village has been taken over by a necromancer and his compatriots: a succubus he has taken as his lover, and a wyvern. The wyvern is the cause of the miasma covering the area ~ it has lived here long enough that its unnatural evil and poison has infected the surrounding lands. It is also populated by zombies and skeletons ~ the undead remnants of the souls who once lived here.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE VILLAGE

It's unlikely the PCs will ever find out the truth behind what happened here, but here is the story for the sake of CK background ~ over 100 years ago, a then-kindly wizard named Mattias lived in this town, then called Greyhelm, with his beloved wife Tabitha, a stunning beauty who was the desire of all who looked upon her. Unfortunately, a plague fell upon the village. Nobody knew from where this plague came. It could have been from rats. It could have been from infected grain or fish. The population, however, blamed the wizard and his wife, and turned on them in their fear and panic.

It was, strangely, Tabitha who was blamed in the end, because the burgomaster's son desired her and she shunned the boy for her wizard husband. So it was that she was dragged to the town square and strapped to a pole and burned, while the wizard Mattias was bound and gagged, lashed to a stone and forced to watch, as punishment for alleged trafficking with dark forces. As the flames consumed her, Tabitha's dying words were to scream a curse and pox on the town and to swear to become the very death which they all unjustly blamed her to be.

The wizard was exiled from the village, dragged deep into the forest and left, still bound and gagged, to die from exposure. He was, however, able to call upon minor magics to free himself and fled into the forest. He knew that his meager powers would not be enough to dole out the punishment the village deserved, but at that moment he dedicated himself to the study of the dark arts, swearing, like Tabitha, a dark vengeance upon the people.

His soul forever tarnished, Mattias became the very thing the townsfolk had feared. He uncovered in the woods a hidden cache of books, in a retreat for a long-dead sorcerer and necromancer named Archon, and these became his new instruction. In Archon's cache he discovered a golden ring, which has unnaturally extended his life for all these years, and given him certain other necromantic powers.



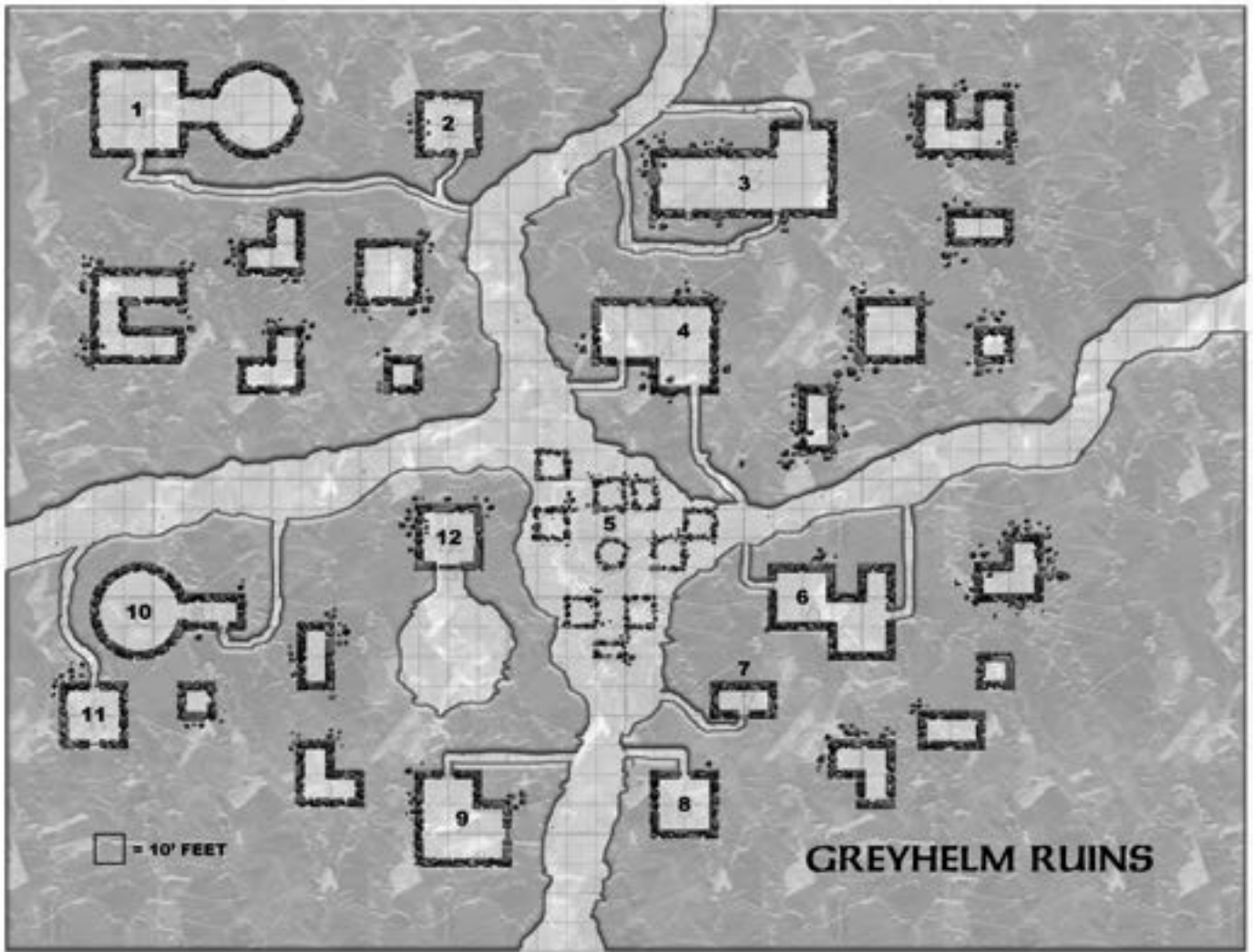
And so it came to pass that the doom of the village was sealed. Upon her death, Tabitha was transformed into a succubus. Five years later to the day she returned to the town with the wyvern, wreaking her unholy vengeance upon the people. Hearing the screams even from his hovel, Mattias made his way to the village where he was astonished to see his beloved wife, demonic in visage bit undoubtedly Tabitha, astride a wyvern, raining devastation upon the town.

Overwhelmed with dark glee, Mattias unleashed his own powers, raising the townsfolk under his command almost as soon as Tabitha could lay them to waste, and together they destroyed every last man, woman and child in the village of Grayhelm. The trio have here remained to this day, preying upon unwary travelers who stray too close, their souls sustaining Mattias and Tabitha as the two undertake studies of dark prophecies yet to come.

Both are in league with the Cult of the Dragon.

EXPLORING GREYHELM

There is no grand goal in the PCs' exploration of Greyhelm; merely that they defeat the evil and survive to continue their quest. There is, however, some information to be learned here, and they may also run afoul once more of the White Sash. They have a small contingent here working under Mattias serving as a priest of the Cult of the Dragon. The entire time the party has been traveling, they've been trailed by a White Sash assassin, biding her time to strike. This village, known to the White Sash, provides a prime opportunity.



There are four primary ways from which the PCs can approach the ruins, trails that once served as roads enter the village from roughly each of its compass points. As such, there is no set way the characters might explore the ruins. Any buildings not indicated by a keyed number could be anything the CK desires ~ just a pile of ruined rubble, or populated by cultists, zombies, skeletons, or other undead. If the players are clever and cautious, they may well be able to catch Mattias and Tabitha separately; indeed, this is likely their best chance at survival, as both together would present a severe challenge to a third-level party. There are, however, times when Mattias or Tabitha take meetings with White Sash cultists, when Mattias is out gathering components for spells in the forest, or when Tabitha is hunting for travelers upon whose souls she can feed.

In addition, the heroes are far from the first wanderers to come into the village. Even if they run afoul of White Sash cultists, or have encounters with zombies, neither the bodies they leave behind, nor the sounds of combat, will necessarily raise an alarm, as undead are notoriously unreliable and occasionally cultists find themselves needing to put down particularly voracious zombies.

This means they can make several forays into and out of the village ruins as needed, hiding in the forest to heal up and bind

their wounds, as well as scouting to get a feel for the village. Spending more than two days doing so, however, will result in alarms being raised as their assassin catches up with them and takes the opportunity to warn the village. At this point, hunting parties sally forth, scouring the woods for our heroes, and the hunters become the hunted.

WHITE SASH ASSASSIN (These chaotic evil 4th level rogue's vital stats are HP 18 and AC 14. Their primary attributes are dexterity, wisdom, and intelligence. Their significant attributes are dexterity 16 and intelligence 13. They back stab for double damage. They attack with short sword (+4 to hit) for 1d6 damage. They wear leather armor, and carry a magical cloak of stealth that grants +5 to hide and move silently checks plus 10-60gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

The party's only hope to escape with their lives is to defeat Mattias, Tabitha and the wyvern. Specifically, within a few days of defeating the wyvern, the miasma will begin to dissipate from the forest and the sky will open once more. Should they fail to defeat Mattias and Tabitha, either or both could survive to become deadly enemies to the party in their adventures to come, shaken out of their complacency and driven to hunt those who have disturbed their lives, growing in power alongside the PCs. This, however, is left entirely to the discretion of the CK.

KEYED ENCOUNTER AREAS

AREA 1: BURGOMASTER'S TOWER

This building consists of a cottage attached to a tower once used as a watchtower for the village as well as containing a study and private chambers for the burgomaster. Now the tower has largely been hollowed out, the floors giving way first to age, then to the work of the wyvern, who uses it as a roost. The top of the tower is blasted out, allowing the creature to fly free when needed.

The cottage itself has been mostly untouched, though rot has gotten to most of the furniture and rust has taken the iron. Contained herein is the wyvern's treasure hoard, which is accessible by Mattias and Tabitha alone ~ the cottage's exterior door is mage locked and magically trapped (CL 7 to bypass the traps) to deliver a 4d6 electrical jolt to anyone attempting to enter without the password that only Mattias and Tabitha know.

Alternately, the cottage can be entered through the tower, which is open to entry, as the wyvern itself guards that passage.

WYVERN (*This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 7d12, AC 18, HP 46. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with 2 claws for 1d4 and a bite for 2d8, or a sting for 1d6 plus poison. Those who are struck by the stinger must make a constitution save or suffer 2d6 damage and be paralyzed for 4d6 rounds. A successful save halves damage and negates paralysis. They have darkvision 60 feet, twilight vision, and are immune to sleep and paralysis.*)

The Wyvern's Horde contains 100 pp, 500 gp, 1,000 sp and 500 cp in coin, a golden harp (500 gp value), a silver tiara with gold inlay (150 gp), a finely-crafted scimitar with a silvered blade, gem-inlaid grip and a sapphire in the pommel (worth 1,000 gp, nonmagical +1 to hit and damage and silver), and a bone relic inset with aquamarine and dedicated to one of the gods of light (CK's choice; valued at 150 gp), a magical scroll containing 3 castings of *cure light wounds*, a +2 oathbow and 20 silver-tipped arrows, a suit of +2 scale mail, and a pair of friend shield rings, both ivory and inset with rubies and emeralds (worth 250 gp each in raw materials; far more as magic items).

2. GENERAL STORE

Once the provisioner for the village, it's now used for storage. Most forms of provisions can be found here, including dried meats, trail mix, rope, tools, and general supplies that might be needed for day-to-day life. A few suits of studded leather armor and a worn suit of chainmail can also be found among the provisions here, stripped from prior victims and tossed in a corner. Magical wards inscribed on the inside of the door (CL 6 Find/Remove traps to bypass) will summon 1d8 zombies and skeletons to take care of anyone who enters without speaking a password that Mattias changes daily.

SKELETONS (*These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 1d12, HP 7, 8, 8, 10, 12, AC 13. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with long swords doing 1d8 points of damage.*)

ZOMBIES (*These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 8, 9, 11; AC 11. They have no primary attributes. They attack with one claw that does 1d8 damage plus possible rot grub infestation. For each extra zombie attacking they collectively gain a +1 to hit. So if there are three zombies attacking one target they all get +3 to hit.*)

3. TOWN GUARD BARRACKS

Currently used as the bunk area for White Sash cultists that operate in the town. At any given time there is a 50% chance of 1d10 White Sash being present, and a 50% chance of them being awake or asleep. Each has a footlocker with their meager personal possessions, which include 1d6 cp, spare clothes with sash, and potentially an unholy symbol related to the Abyss Walker cult.

WHITE SASH CULT (*These lawful evil human fighters are AC 14, HD 2d10 (10 HP each), move 30ft. Their primary attributes are strength 13, dexterity 14, constitution 12. They attack with long swords (+4 to hit; 1d8+2 damage). They wear studded leather armor and carry a long sword and dagger.*)

4. TAVERN

This tavern is one of the more well-kept buildings in town and is generally kept free of undead. It's sparsely populated during the daylight hours and late at night, but in late afternoon into early evening there are usually up to 2d6 White Sash cultists reveling here; Mattias and/or Tabitha can sometimes be found here as well, meeting with cultists or enjoying a quiet drink together in the corner.

5. TOWN SQUARE

This was once the center of the town's social life. Currently, the well-rotted remains of a festival can be seen here. There are the ruins of booths and what remains of tent-frames ~ the fabric has long rotted away, but vines and ivy have grown over them and replaced fabric. At the center of the town is a well that long ago was fouled.

There are dangers here for the unwary; those who do not know the specific path to take through the maze of wreckage are subject to attack. The vines that cover the tents are assassin vines, and there are patches of green slime scattered throughout. Spotting the green slime before accidentally contacting it requires a successful wisdom save.

ASSASSIN VINE (*These neutral creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 29, AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with vines doing 1d4 damage each, with a failed strength save by the victim indicating constriction. Constriction means the victim blacks out in 3 rounds and will be strangled to death in 3 more if not freed. Their special abilities are constrict, improved grab, camouflage and resistance to cold and fire.*)

GREEN SLIME (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 31, AC 10. They have no primary attributes. They do not attack, only react to being contacted. When touched they convert any organic material into green slime by dealing 2d6 damage per round until washed or scraped off, which takes one*

round. Within 10 turns wood will be converted, while metal takes only 2 rounds to be assimilated; stone is unaffected. It can be killed by fire, cold, or a cure disease spell.)

In addition, at any time 1d6 zombies and/or skeletons may wander through the area; these also may be infected with green slime. White Sash cultists move through here regularly and know the safe paths to take to avoid the dangers. If combat ensues, wise heroes who have figured out or survived the dangers could easily use patches of green slime or assassin vines to their advantage.

6. BOARDING HOUSE

The boarding house has been empty for roughly 100 years... at least, of human occupants. The second floor is unstable and unsafe. Ascending the stairs requires a CL 2 dexterity check for every 10ft traveled. Failure means the floor collapses beneath the hero, dropping them to the floor below and dealing 1d6 points of falling damage (dexterity save for half). The only occupants of the boarding house currently are 8 zombies, spread among the various rooms, and the former matron of the house who now exists as a wight.

She will be puttering around the house, engaging in housekeeping duties when they enter. She's instantly recognizable as an undead creature, and exudes hatred, but instead of attacking, she demands to know what the PCs want and what their business is. She is supposed to be left alone, she insists.

Clever PCs might decide to speak to the wight, whose name is Tia. If they do, she is more than willing to bargain with them, provided that they swear to her their intent is to kill Mattias and



Tabitha. She despises the two of them for what they've done to her and her people and may even regale the PCs with what she remembers of the history of the town (though her own story and memory are warped and the party will get the, "They were a witch and necromancer who brought a plague upon us and then visited a curse when we burned them," version). If the party is nice enough to her, she might even offer to feed them. She does keep a store of edible foods and, though it's been awhile, she's a rather decent cook. If they're nice to her, she'll advise against going upstairs, telling them about the zombies that roam the halls and the unstable woodwork.

She is even willing to help as much as she can. While she cannot defy Mattias directly (he is her controller), she can try to separate the two, serving as a distraction to allow the PCs a better chance to conduct their assault. She is a miserable creature who wants to die and be with the souls of her family, and will even submit to being killed if (and only if) she sees proof that both Mattias and Tabitha are dead.

Of course, if the PCs attack or threaten her in any way, Tia will attack and fight to the death, calling forth the zombies from upstairs, who plummet through the floor to help her fight.

WIGHT (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d12, HP 32, AC 15. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by slam for 1d6 points of damage plus energy drain. Anyone who is struck by a wight's attack loses a level of experience and the wight heals five hit points of damage. Those reduced to 0 levels are killed. Any who are killed by a wight are raised as a new wight under the original's control, though these spawn are at half hit dice and cannot create spawn of their own. They have darkvision 60ft.*)

7. PRIVATE HOME

This is a two-room hut occupied by a mother, father, and child zombie. There's a cask with meager savings of 2d6 copper pieces hidden under a rotting floor board (+3 on wisdom checks to notice the board).

8. PRIVATE HOME

This cottage was apparently kept by someone of middle means; it's still rotted and largely unsafe, but it has two floors, with small bedding areas upstairs. There are five zombies within; two adults, two youngsters (younger teens, perhaps?) and one infant. The zombies shamle about the home in a grotesque mockery of their former lives, but the moment interlopers cross the threshold, they attack while the infant issues such horrific and inhuman wailings that all who hear them must make a charisma check at CL 2 or be stunned as per Hold Person for one round, and thereafter suffer -2 to all attacks, checks and saves until the abomination is destroyed.

9. MATTIAS AND TABITHA'S HOME

This was Mattias' and Tabitha's home when they originally lived here, and Mattias works to keep it up. As such, it is one of the very few buildings in town untouched by the ravages of time. It consists of two floors. Downstairs there are three rooms: a

sitting room, a kitchen and a dining area. Upstairs there is a master bedroom and a private study for Mattias.

Most days, Mattias and Tabitha play house and live their lives as husband and wife while pursuing their separate (but related) and thoroughly evil ends: dealing with cultists, making nebulous plans for the day when the Walker rises, and working their machinations towards returning to civilization. There are basic plans underway to go to Loston, but little is written in stone. You see, Tabitha and Mattias are generally happy where they are and are ready to simply swear their allegiance to the Abyss Walker when it arrives. As it stands, their little cult here is degenerate and ineffectual, preying upon travelers (Tabitha feasts upon the flesh and bones of some, while others are raised as zombies or other undead through Mattias' experiments). So far nobody has presented a true threat or challenge, but when the PCs show up at their doorstep, they'll pull out all the stops ~ especially if the White Sash Assassin arrives to warn them.

MATTIAS (CHROMATIC MAGE) *(This chaotic evil human chromatic mage has vital stats AC 12/16 (mage armor), HD 7d4 (24 HP), Move 30. His primary attributes are constitution 13, intelligence 16, wisdom 17. They attack by spell or by rod of thunder and lightning (+2 to hit; 1d6 damage). Once per day he can strike at +3 and victims must save vs. strength or be stunned from a deafening thunderclap. Once per day he can deal an extra 2d6 electricity damage. Once per day he can use the effects of a shout spell. He can pull 45 threads per day. His spellcraft bonus is +10. His known spells are: 0-level: dragon mark*, endure elements*, ghost sound*, influence, prestidigitation*; 1-level: bane, cause light wounds, command, daze, mage armor*; 2-level: enhance attribute*, hold person, dark chaos*; 3-level: animate dead, inflict serious wounds. He carries a rod of thunder and lightning, a +2 dagger of poison and a Cursed Ring of Immortality ~ see New Magic Items.)*

“* = spells that cost double threads and +1 CL to cast. See Appendix C.

TREASURE: In Mattias' study upstairs can be found his notes and spellbooks. These contain references to the Abyss Walker prophecy, as well as journal entries dating back well over 100 years that detail he and Tabitha's side of the story and the tale of his own tragic descent into darkness. The notes detail decades of bargains with dark powers; the corruption of his own soul, mind and heart; and a gut-wrenching tale of terror, sadness and tragedy, all in the name of desperate love. His spellbook contains all of the spells he currently has prepared (see his statistics), plus up to 1d6 more spells of the CK's choice. He has little else, as right now he doesn't have need for money, and when the day comes to return to civilization he intends to raid the Wyvern's treasury.

10. GRANARY

Once a major resource for the town, where the townsfolk stored all of their important grain to get them through difficult winter months, the grain stored in here has long since gone rancid and befouled. Indeed, entering the granary issues forth a stench that requires a constitution save at -2 or anyone in the

immediate vicinity spends 1d4 rounds retching and unable to perform any actions.

Currently the granary is avoided by all of the White Sash cultists and many of the zombies in the area, as it has become the den of an owlbear who feasts upon the hundreds of rot grubs crawling through the grain. The owlbear itself has developed a natural defense mechanism against the grubs by secreting a pheromone that is distasteful to the creatures. They do not burrow into the owlbear, though they do crawl through its feathers. Anyone successfully attacked by the owlbear has a 20% chance of being infested by rot grubs as well.

The owlbear is an animal and largely wants to be left alone, but it will attack viciously if disturbed, and will flee at the first available moment. If cornered, of course, it will fight until dead.

OWLBEAR *(This neutral beast's vital stats are HD 5d10 HP 27 AC 15. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks by 2 claws for 1d6 damage and a bite for 2d6 damage. Each successful claw attack carries a 20% chance of rot grub infestation. If it strikes with both claws, it grapples the opponent, crushing it for 2d8 additional damage unless a successful strength save is made. Each round a new strength save can be made to escape. The owlbear can automatically bite a victim thus hugged.)*

11. MILL

This was once a mill for the town, where grain was ground and mashed into flour for use in baking and cooking. It's currently in rotted disrepair, but is occupied by the former miller, now a ghast, and his family ~ wife, two sons and three daughters, who have all been turned into ghouls by Mattias. They are mindless and voracious and will attack interlopers savagely.

THE MILLER (GHOST) *(These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 18, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d4 damage and a bite for 1d8 damage. Victims of attacks must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. They have darkvision 60ft. Any creature within 30 ft. must make a constitution save or take 1d4 subdual damage and -2 to all attacks for 2 rounds from the stench. Creatures killed and not eaten by ghouls will rise as ghouls within 2d4 days unless bless is cast upon them.)*

GHOULS *(These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 12 each, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d3 points of damage, and a bite for 1d6 points of damage. Victims must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4 minutes. Remove curse or remove paralysis negates the effect and elves are immune. They have darkvision 60ft.)*

12. CHAPEL

The chapel is a small building, once dedicated to the goddess of mercy. It is simple and humble and has a fenced churchyard in the rear. This churchyard is currently haunted by zombies and ghouls.

Inside, the once-holy place is a haunting mockery of what it once was. In life, Tabitha was (ironically) a very pious woman,

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and her conversion to a succubus has made her the exact opposite of what she once was. Thus, she spends her days here in this place which she has defiled in every way she can think of, but has done so in an artistic fashion. Thus, rather than simply defacing the ancient statue of the patron goddess Panoleen, goddess of Mercy, at the front of the chapel, Tabitha has carefully and meticulously turned it into a demonic version of itself (in much the same way as she has become a demonic mockery of her former self), so that it now resembles Kobli, goddess of pain and torture.

A bloodstained altar sits before the statue, the site of many a human “sacrifice,” or meal for the succubus, who kisses her victims to sleep and then devours them alive. Dual rows of pews bookend the center aisle and broken stained glass windows allow greenish light, filtered through the acidic miasma, to lend a sickly, eerie light to the scene.

This place is where Tabitha holds court with the White Sash, many of whom look upon her with absolute devotion as a high priestess, almost as though she were a goddess herself. She relishes the attention and occasionally feeds upon their blood when innocent victims aren’t available. Her ministrations towards them, however, never stray into intimacy. She loves her husband with a burning passion that quite literally causes her pain all the time (the result of her pact with the dark powers who transformed her), and any attempt to stray from being utterly faithful to him weakens her and can even kill her.

Tabitha is not an easy creature to kill ~ in many ways she is more powerful than her husband. She maintains two special guardians within the chapel ~ shadow mastiffs who will obey her every command and defend her to their last. These are the transformed souls of two White Sash cultists who gave themselves to her utterly.

SHADOW MASTIFFS (*These neutral evil creature’s vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 23, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a single bite for 2d4 points of damage. They have a bay attack that can cause fear for those who fail a wisdom save, and can also trip their opponents, causing loss of initiative. They can blend into shadows, becoming invisible, and are incorporeal, being affected only by magical weapons. They have darkvision 60 feet and are instantly destroyed by sunlight.*)

TABITHA, SUCCUBUS (*This chaotic evil creature’s vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 18, HP 26. Her primary attributes are mental. She attacks with one claw for 1d4, a +2 scimitar for 1d8+2, a tail for 1d2 and a bite for 1 point of damage (which she can combine with a kiss). She can fly for 60ft, speaks all languages, and takes half-damage from fire and cold. She can assume the form of a beautiful woman and hold that form indefinitely, though in death she reverts to her natural demonic form. She is immune to spells that force her to change her shape. She can cause insanity; victims must succeed at a wisdom save when she opens her wings or be affected as a hold person spell; a new save is required every round and four failed saves result in permanent, crippling madness unless remove curse is cast. Her kiss can put victims to sleep unless they succeed at a charisma*

save; sleeping victims can only be awakened by dispel magic, remove curse, heal or a more powerful similar spell. Her spell-like abilities are: emotion (1/day), hallucinatory terrain (3/day), hypnotic pattern (1/day), all as a 10th-level caster. She carries a +2 magical scimitar.)

THE WASTELANDS

VENGEANCE OF THE HYENA-GOD

Our heroes’ next major encounter en route to Torrent Manor comes well into their journey across the Wastelands. This legendary desert is barren, but not devoid of life. It is, however, a deadly and dangerous place to travel, and legends abound as to what caused the place to be the blasted waste it is.

The area is a dry, arid and rocky desert that gets very little precipitation, but is temperate in climate as it is in the northern central region of the continent. The trails are rough and rocky, with vast open stretches suddenly giving way to narrow pathways between towering, jagged rock walls. There are small pockets of civilization here and there; mostly nomadic villages that follow roaming herds of reptiles that serve as food and leather for their needs. Some settlements pop up around oases, but these are constantly in danger of losing their position to roving bands of raiding lizard men and Kriels.

Traveling across the desert opens the door to a range of horrors from beasts ranging from gigantic scorpions to bulettes, ghouls, harpies, hellhounds, and more. Adventuring in the Wastelands should be a combination of: tracking to keep to the path towards Torrent Manor; foraging for food and water in a hostile environment; and fending off roving raiders and dangerous creatures. A ranger will be very useful on such a journey, but the difficulties it can present could be an excellent hook to guide the characters into their next adventure ~ the offer of a guide might seem very tempting.

The encounter begins when they come across a rather large settlement around an oasis. Entering the settlement, the characters are welcomed and indeed, celebrated by the inhabitants. They are immediately taken to the tent of an elder, a wizened old man sitting cross-legged by a fire, who seems overjoyed at their appearance. He bids them sit and welcomes them enthusiastically.

“Come, come!” he says, “Sit down! We’ve been waiting for you!”

His name is Filus and he believes that the PCs have been sent by the gods as part of a prophecy to restore prosperity to their village. No amount of denial will dissuade him from his insistent belief that the heroes have been sent to deliver them from a great evil. He even points to the fact that the prophecy says that the chosen deliverers will arrive in the midst of a great journey and will find aid that will change the fate of the world in delivering these people.

HIS STORY IS THIS: For generations Filus’ tribe has held this oasis against many marauders and dangers, living largely in peace with the surrounding area. They even have welcomed Kriels

and lizardmen into their village and shared their water. It was this very stability that kept the land solid. The prosperity of the region hinged upon four sacred idols that were held at the center of the village ~ idols to the elemental gods: Flunt, God of Fire; Leska, Goddess of Earth; Surshy, Goddess of Water; and Whisten, God of Air.

Two weeks ago, the unthinkable happened. A stranger, a massive Kriel dressed in furs and armor made of bone, stepped into their oasis in the dead of night and demanded that they surrender the entire town to him. When they refused, he stomped his feet and the encampment was overrun by a pack of werehyenas. Many of their best warriors were killed before the monsters carried off their idols...and every last one of their children. As he backed away from the battle, the huge Kriel announced that he would be back in one month, at which time they would be given another chance to surrender.

Since the removal of the idols the oasis has dried up. With their best warriors defeated, the villagers are unable to mount an effort to retrieve them. He begs the heroes to rescue the village children, return the idols and defeat the werebeasts so that peace and prosperity may return to the region. In return, he offers a tome that he promises will help in the coming battles, and a guide to lead them across the Wastelands and to their eventual goal at the manor in the West (he mentions this regardless of whether the heroes have told him of their own quest). If they balk at how he knows where they're going, he gives a sad smile and reminds them that it's all part of the prophecy.

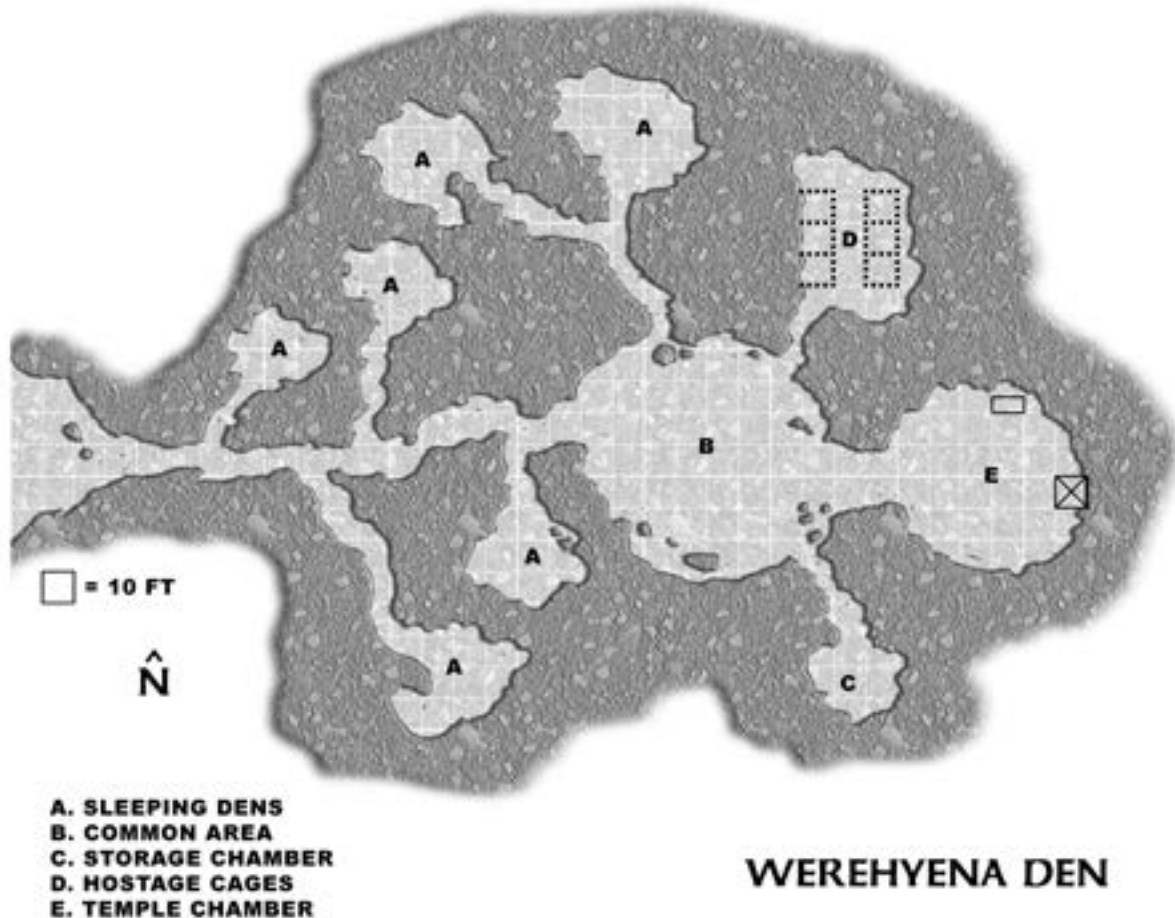
TRACKING THE PACK

If the heroes have a tracker among them, it's not difficult to find the lair of the werebeasts. A roving clan of werehyenas isn't subtle and tends to leave a trail. If they don't have a tracker, Filus can provide them with one ~ a scrawny young man by the name of Elus who has already bravely tracked and scouted the pack.

The hyenas are holed up in a series of shallow caves among the rocks just a day's ride out of the oasis. Their lair consists of several large chambers where they sleep communally during the day, a large central chamber for socialization and community fraternizing, as well as a number of antechambers.

There are about 20 children kept in cages in the rear antechamber (D). A second holds the bones of their victims ~ some animal, some human and humanoid ~ as well as the meager stores for the clan (some poor quality ale and sour wine in casks, a few tools, some rope, more than a little foul-smelling spoiled meat).

The third is a massive chamber dominated by a great, if crude, statue of what appears to be a gigantic Kriel or hyena (E). It's clearly some sort of idol to a hyena god, though none of the PCs have ever heard of such a thing. Beneath this statue, the four elemental idols from the village, each about 12-inches tall and six around, are placed in an alcove. Other than those, the only thing in here is a somewhat lavish divan upon which the high priest ~ the gigantic Kriel ~ sleeps.



The heroes have to find a way to defeat the werehyena clan, rescue the kids, and get the idols home. The players have various choices of how to approach the problem. The clan seems to encompass 20 were-hyenas plus their “high priest.” As with most hyenas, they are nocturnal, and so they sleep during the day (in human form). They rise when the sun sets, to go out and hunt after socializing for a few hours in their common area.

While the rest of the clan are on the hunt, there are but eight of the hyenas, plus their leader, left in the den. Here’s the key: the bloodline runs through the high priest, who wears a collar that controls the others. Should the collar be removed, or should he be killed, all of the other werehyenas are cured, returning to human form and remembering nothing of what passed while they were under its influence.

WEREHYENA (*These neutral evil creatures’ vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 16 HP 20. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d6 damage and a bite for 2d4 points of damage. They have hyena empathy, trip, alternate form and lycanthropy. They regenerate 2 hit points per round. They also laugh: all within 30ft. who hear their laugh must succeed at a charisma save or be frightened, suffering -2 to all attacks, saves and ability checks so long as the laughing continues. The save may be repeated each round, ending the effect on a success.*)

HIGH PRIEST OF THE HYENA GOD (*This neutral evil creature’s vital stats are 7d10, AC 18 HP 43. His primary attributes are physical and mental. He attacks with a greatsword for 1d12+3 and a bite for 2d6. He has hyena empathy, regenerates 3 hit points per round, and laughs: all within 30ft. who hear his laugh must succeed at a charisma save or be frightened, suffering -2 to all attacks, saves and ability checks so long as the laughing continues. The save may be repeated each round, ending the effect on a success. He carries a greatsword, wears scale mail, and a collar of lycanthropy.*)

RETURNING TO THE VILLAGE

If the heroes succeed in their mission and return the children and the icons to the village, the well will spring back to life and prosperity will return to the region, as the gods are appeased. The interlopers have been punished and the cult of the false “hyena god” has been destroyed. In gratitude, Filus will keep his word; the very same young man who guided the heroes to the clan will guide them the remainder of the way across the wastelands, greatly easing their journey.

In addition, he produces an ancient tome, large in size, bound in old, cracked leather with metal hasps and vellum pages. The book, he says, will need to be studied and translated by a wise sage, but is reputed to contain instructions for the lost art of war magic, a way to greatly increase the efficacy of mages in sieges and in large battles. It will probably take some time to research and rediscover the secrets herein, but if such secrets can be unlocked, they could change the very face of the way war is fought.

ARRIVAL AT BEYKLA

The guide is true to his word and skills, and leads the characters out of the Wasteland. There he bids them farewell before turning back towards his home. This, at least, greatly improves the characters’ chances to find food and water and avoid dangerous encounters. Outside of the Wastelands, they find themselves once again in a forested area, having moved from Adoria to Beykla, but they don’t necessarily find their circumstances much improved. They’re back to forest encounters, but now instead of goblins and orcs they are facing raiding parties of Kriels, Grayshalks and the like.

Thus do our heroes settle in for a good meal, to divide up their booty, and to prepare for the next leg of their journey: to Torrent Manor and Ramparts High.

But that is another story...

4: RAMPARTS HIGH!

INTRODUCTION

Once more unto the breach! Welcome back to the world of the Abyss Walker, created by Shane Moore. This is episode 4 of our epic series guiding the heroes from humble origins in the thieves' quarter of Lostom on a world-spanning adventure to stop the rise of the Abyss Walker and save the world from an apocalyptic darkness.

This scenario is intended for a party of 4th level adventurers. If the party has not yet reached fourth level by the time they begin this adventure, the CK may wish to include more side quests or random encounters to build their experience before they reach Torrent Manor, or may need to decrease the power of the Abyss Walker Battle Council they will face later on.

This adventure is slightly different than a traditional module, as our heroes need to contact a sage for help, which means aiding in breaking a siege on a manor. Siege warfare is an entirely different animal than your typical dungeon crawl or wilderness adventure.

This adventure will include a discussion of siege warfare, the stages and tactics used, a brief and entirely narrative mass battle system, as well as a few basic guidelines for utilizing Troll Lord Games' **Fields of Battle** miniatures rules or the war rules in the Castle Keeper's Guide should you desire to take that route in resolving the siege.

Finally, of course, there will be the story elements involved with contacting the sage, a friend of Alfgeirr, and missions that the heroes take during the siege to help break the back of the enemy. The adventure can be run as briefly or as drawn out as you like ~ it's even possible to extend the siege to cover weeks or even months of gaming, if you desire. It could involve mission after mission, skirmish after skirmish. Sieges tended to take a very long time and this one may be no different.

In the end, however, it's entirely up to you ~ it's your game, have at it!

REGARDING THE ABYSS WALKER AND ITS CULT

So far we have bandied about the name "Abyss Walker" for the CK's reference, but it's important to understand that the PCs thus far have only encountered this name in a cryptic letter from Alfgeirr. At best, it's a shadowy name from some ancient and forgotten prophecy about an oncoming storm. Even those who have heard the name don't know who or what the Abyss Walker is, if it's good or evil, human or demon, and that's exactly the way the cult wants it.

Thus far, the PCs know their foes as the Order (or cult) of the White Sash, or possibly the Cult of the Dragon. They know there's some conspiracy of which this cult is at the heart. They know little other than that, save that they've been targeted as a threat to whatever the cult wants. CKs should take great care

to continue to refer to the villains in this manner to preserve the unveiling of the mystery in its due course.

Members of this cult are fanatic to the extreme. They live and die for their cause and no amount of torture or interrogation can convince them to reveal the truth. Indeed, they may even have mysterious "suicide incantations" active on them, which they can activate at a thought and which cannot be disarmed.

Even calling forth their spirits to compel them to speak fails. Any spellcaster attempting this suffers 2d8 damage from a mystical backlash, is blasted into unconsciousness and awakens convinced that a deity is blocking their efforts.

THE STORY SO FAR...

Our heroes, hired by an elderly sage named Alfgeirr to retrieve a minor trinket, quickly found themselves drawn into a greater quest, to save the world from a rising darkness, which involved recovering a strange key from an old island outpost known as Darrien's Guard. When they returned, they found Alfgeirr murdered, his home a shambles, and his blue book, essential to the key's use, vanished. Left behind was a hasty note from Alfgeirr begging the heroes to retrieve the book and take it east.

The party's adventures then took them beneath the streets of Lostom, where they ran afoul of a den of wererats and had their first encounter with the proper cult of the Abyss Walker. After recovering the book, they discovered another clue: a sage friend of Alfgeirr's located in a place called Torrent Manor, far to the east across the wastelands of Aten. Their travels took them through an undead-haunted village where they ran afoul of a corrupt cult of the Abyss Walker led by a necromancer and his succubus lover, and then to an oasis whose items of power and children had been kidnapped by a degenerate band of werehyenas. Passing through these dangers, the heroes have emerged beaten and bloodied, but victorious and stronger as well as better armed and prepared.

Of course, thus far they know next to nothing about the "Abyss Walker" and know their foes as the Order of the White Sash, and possibly, the Cult of the Dragon.

Now, they emerge from Aten and set their feet upon the road to Torrent Manor, a road that will first bring them to the major trade center of Crossroads, where they can rest, gain information, and plan the next leg of their journey...

CROSSROADS, TORRENT MANOR, AND SURROUNDING ENVIRONS

Four roads eventually come together to form the town of Crossroads: one from the West and the wastelands of Adoria, one traveling south to Central City, east of where the king of Beykla maintains a keep called Kalliman Castle; a road north to the Beyklan capital of Dawson City and its pyramidal walls; and an eastern road leading to the heroes' destination: Torrent Manor.

The area where the heroes currently journey is far from the civilization they may have expected and is a wild, untamed frontier area constantly marred by conflict. Still, never before has it seen the ravages of humanoid hordes that it faces now. Beyklan forces, more common in the southern regions, dot the land as the King annexes town after town and tries to force subjugation and taxation on the Stoneheart dwarf clan in the underground city of Mountain Heart as well as the small pockets of Adorian refugees that dot the region, most of whom are simply trying to build new lives for themselves. The people frequently revolt and fight.

Between the Kriel and Grayshalk (in game terms, gnolls and bugbears, respectively) and the military of Beykla, this is an entire country under siege, and the manor represents both a microcosm of the overall state of the region, as well as a tipping point. Torrent broke from the crown not long ago during the recent civil wars, and since then has stood as something of a bastion of freedom for the people of the area. Should it fall, darkness will follow. On the other hand, the crown desperately wants it back as the original purpose of the Manor was for the king to enforce taxation throughout the region.

THE ATEN ROAD

The west road from Aten is where this chapter of our story begins. It is not well maintained until it comes within about fifty miles of Crossroads. It's wild country, and encounters with beasts, humanoids, and highwaymen are quite common until the characters reach the final leg of their trip to Crossroads.

HIGHWAYMEN (*These neutral evil humans have vital statistics AC 12, HP 8 (2d8 HD), Move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with short swords for 1d6 damage or light crossbows for 1d8 damage. They carry studded leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, 20 bolts, and 2d6 copper each.*)

THE CENTRAL CITY ROAD

The South road heads directly into Central City. This is a dirt road that is well-traveled and patrolled by the Kingsmen of Beykla, who are marked by their brass scale armor and red capes. They tend to be overbearing bullies, little more than highly-trained highwaymen with royal backing. Most travelers try to avoid them.

KINGSMEN OF BEYKLA (*These lawful evil humans' vital stats are AC 16, HP 10 (2d10 HD), Move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with longswords for 1d8 damage. They carry brass scale mail, long sword and shield, and 1d10 gold each.*)

THE DAWSON ROAD

The north road eventually turns east along the coast touching many smaller coastal towns that have never been mapped or mentioned by name. It eventually reaches Dawson City, the capital of Beykla. It is split by the mighty Dawson River. Ocean water from the Balfour sea actually feeds the south flowing river making it the only salt water river in the realms. Dawson's walls are long and sloped, like a pyramid's but not as steep.

TORRENT MANOR

Torrent Manor is a small walled village with a large keep at the center, surrounded by tall battlement walls with a west-facing portcullis. The manor is located roughly three days' ride east of The Crossroads. The small settlement within the walls hosts about five hundred people: merchants, stable-hands, innkeepers, blacksmiths, and other freefolk and tradesmen and their families make up the bulk. There also may be several dwarven merchants and smiths who craft fine weapons and equipment for the people of the village, raising spirits and helping them find a purpose in the world.

Such a purpose is important, as these civilians are mostly Adorian refugees who have not been treated well by the Beyklan crown. Almost all merchants coming or going to the west are well defended by mercenaries or guards and often carry high end materials to make such a long journey for trade worthwhile.

Before it came under siege, the Manor was a major trade destination, where most northern farmers brought their crops to sell to haulers that shipped it into Central City in bulk.

Defensively the Manor uses oil and rolling pitch balls as well as conventional walled defenses. The Manor has never been successfully sacked, but it has also never seen a threat like this. Currently it is woefully outnumbered and underpopulated, and there are fears across the north regarding what might happen when this important bastion falls. Even still, the keep has stood for some time, and its lord Mortan Ganover continually reassures the people that these walls can stop any assault.

UPON THE ATEN ROAD

As the heroes journey from the Wastelands towards their final destination, they quickly discover that in passing through the ruined deserts they may have emerged from the frying pan and directly into the fire. Along the way they will find themselves beset by bandits, humanoids, and even hostile agents of the Crown.

In their journeys, the heroes come across burned villages and crying refugees, and hear rumors of humanoid raiders pillaging and burning across the countryside, all while the Crown does nothing in the South. Upon gaining the trust of some of the locals, the heroes will learn the general opinion is that the Crown is waiting for the humanoids to subjugate any resistance. Only then will the Crown come up, as the forces to the rescue, and will finally take control after years of trying.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS ON THE ROAD

During their travels, the heroes will encounter random wandering bandits, monsters and the like. Every day, there are two, 25% chances for a random encounter, once during the day and once at night. Roll a d12 for the hour of the encounter if one is indicated during the day, and a d8 if during rest at night (a 1 being the first hour of travel or rest, a 4 being the fourth hour, etc.). This allows for about four hours' time to account for setting up and breaking down camp, eating meals, etc., though

if the CK wishes to allow for encounters during camp setup and the like, simply roll a d12 for daylight hours or a d12 for nighttime hours.

Not all encounters need be “Fight to the death” scenarios or even hostile. An encounter with a bear or even a hungry pack of wolves can end by letting the creature go its way, or by scaring them off. Centaurs, dryads and nymphs are not necessarily hostile creatures, nor are satyrs. It is left to the CK to run these encounters as they see fit.

Also, these tables are but suggestions. The range of encounters possible during wilderness travel is vast, with hundreds of possibilities; see **Monsters & Treasure**, **Monsters & Treasure of Ahrde**, and **Classic Monsters & Treasure** for more options with which you can play. Finally, some of these encounters would be far more lethal to second-level characters than to third; CKs should keep this in mind and re-roll or lower the capabilities of more powerful foes (along with associated XP awards), if necessary.

Statistics for these creatures can be found in the **Castles & Crusades Monsters & Treasure** and **Classic Monsters & Treasure** sourcebooks.

TABLE 4.1: FOREST ENCOUNTERS

2D8	
2.	Ankheg
3.	Bandits or Beyklan Soldiers (CK's choice; 1d6)
4.	Bear (black) or herd animals
5.	Grayshalks (2 or 3)*
6.	Dryad
7.	Giant Ants, Centipedes, Beetles, Spiders, etc. (CK's choice; 1d6)
8.	Centaurs (1d4+1)
9.	Nymph
10.	Kriel (1d6)*
11.	Ogres (1-2; possibly with an Ogre Mage)
12.	Satyrs (1d6)
13.	Assassin Vines
14.	Troll (1 hill or 1-2 river)
15.	Starved wolves (1d8)
16.	Dire wolves (1d6)

*Possibly at least one mounted astride an owlbear (CK's option)

A FEAST OF OGRES

At some point along the way, the group runs afoul of a group of ogres under the command of an Annis Hag, hungry and eager to take advantage of the chaos in the area. These creatures attack the players without provocation, seeking only to smash them, take their things and eat them for dinner...after their mistress has her way with the group, using them as playthings and potentially slaves.

HAG, ANNIS (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 7d8, AC 20, HP 39. Her primary attributes are mental and physical. She attacks with 2 claws for 2d4 apiece and a bite for 1d6 points of damage. She has a rend ability that causes automatic damage. She has SR 7, improved grab and some spell-like abilities.)

OGRES X 3 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 16, HP 13, 17, 22. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a weapon for 1d10+3 points or damage or their powerful fists for 1d10 points of damage (one attack, one damage). They have dark and twilight vision.)

ARRIVAL AT CROSSROADS

Eventually, the heroes arrive at the major town of Crossroads, which the locals prefer to call “Junction.” The name by which a given NPC refers to the town can become an indicator of loyalty and origin. Here our heroes can find lodgings in relative safety and seek information and a guide to Torrent. Crossroads is a busy city, an area of strategic importance, and it's marked by a full garrison of Beyklan troops. Though the town is not directly under the control of the Crown, it is a hotbed of political intrigue. The King would love to call the town his own, but its strategic position and the power of the merchants that pass through allows it to maintain a semblance of neutrality.

All-in-all, the town is a powder keg just waiting to blow. Every so often the fuse gets lit, and it inches just a little bit closer to detonation before someone cuts it off once more and things settle down. It feels oppressive, but at the same time open. Town guards skirmish regularly with agents of the Crown just as



often as they put down rebellions from dissatisfied peasants and battle thugs in alleyways. The royal soldiers taunt and make fun of local militia calling them “The Poverty Brigade” and “Soft Skins” referring to their leather armor as a sign of poverty.

Crossroads is roughly diamond-shaped and like most towns is separated into quarters, with each quarter lying between two of the roads that pass through. It’s protected by wooden walls which stand more to discourage casual assaults than to hold against an active military siege. The ramparts are patrolled and watchmen demand the business of all who enter, and charge an entry tax which varies based upon the perceived wealth of those coming in. Characters may be able to negotiate down, but the starting demand will be 5 gold each (they’re perceived as adventurers, after all).

The Northwest quarter is the merchants’ quarter, where most of the markets are held and goods are bought and sold. It’s also an area where industrial espionage is rife and powerful organized crime families engage in shady dealings.

The Southwest quarter is colloquially and derisively known as “Heaven and Hell.” It’s here that most of the temples to the various gods are built. With a city like Crossroads that sees people passing through constantly, there’s not a deity that isn’t represented here in some fashion.

Some temples are older, neglected and crumbling, while others are opulent and well-attended. Like the northwest quarter, shadow wars go on here with cults engaging in surgical strikes against opposing sects, with religious leaders assassinated and fingers pointed everywhere. While this is where the temples are, most residents don’t generally consider it very holy.

While the official religion of Beykla is that of Stephanis, the God of Justice, the locals have rejected this religion as well as the crown, a point of stark tension among locals and agents of the crown in Junction. Indeed, the temple of Stephanis, while not exactly crumbling, is kept up only by volunteer work of those traveling from the Beyklan crown’s more solidly-held cities.

The Northeast quarter is actively walled off from the rest of town; this is the gated community where the wealthiest aristocrats reside. Of all areas, this is one of the safest to walk around at night. It’s also a favorite destination of the thieves’ guild, whose members are constantly trying to prove themselves by slipping in and emerging with untold treasures. The most important factor of this particular quarter? These nobles have the kind of wealth that buys armies...armies that keep the Beyklan crown decidedly at bay and unable to conquer the town.

Finally, the Southeast quarter is shanty town. This is the dregs; the ghetto where many Adorian refugees end up living. It’s wattle and daub huts, basic clay brick structures, and closely-packed townhomes. It smells, living is cramped and largely joyless, and it’s not the safest place to be. Gangs rule the streets, and the thieves’ guild is located here ~ or more accurately, guilds. The same organized crime families who operate out of the merchants’ quarter have hidden bases of operations here. Many also have homes in the Northeast quarter.

It’s also home to the cheapest boarding houses in the city, if you don’t mind your pockets getting picked, your room being broken into, and potentially getting attacked in the street.

Among the crime families here is an extension of the Spot’s Gang thieves’ guild from Central City. Spot obtained his name due to a facial scar gained from taking a fire spell to the face. His gang is exceptionally violent and tends to dismember their enemies.

The characters will need to settle in for the night; the details of the Inn they choose is left to the CK. After all, there are inns and boarding houses dotted throughout the city, most in the merchants’ quarter and shanty town, and each has its own unique character. Here they can settle in and begin asking around for information about the things they’ve seen on the road, and about Torrent Manor, which they will find lies about two days’ ride to the east of Crossroads.

THE TORRENT INN

While there are many inns and boarding houses, the largest inn in Junction is the Torrent Inn, which was the original Torrent Manor, before the current manor and keep were built to the east. In general, however, only the wealthiest dignitaries and nobles can afford to stay here. It is described in, “The Wererat’s Tale II”:

It had thick marble pillars out front with long flowing red silk tapestries hanging from the upper balconies. Bright green shrubberies were out front set in interesting landscaping designs. Well-dressed stable hands waited to stable horses and carriages of patrons. The community seemed small-but it was a hot bed of activity. Nobles came and went from the lavish inn.

To add a bit of flavor to any inn you create, some local delicacies and dishes that are commonly imported include:

A cinnamon bread stick from Andorian remnant villages called a “Spice stick.” Relatively expensive.

Dolgo seeds from Mountain Heart. Underground nut like almonds. Great roasted.

The news isn’t great, however. Until now, Torrent Manor, along with Crossroads, up has been one of the few bastions of freedom in the area, but the word is they’re heavily under siege by the same humanoid marauders rampaging through the country. Several times they’ve sent to Crossroads for help, but the nobility that rule the town feel that they can’t risk their armies to bail out Torrent, as that would leave Crossroads open to attack from the Beyklan crown.

The manor, it seems, is on its own. The general sentiment is that it will fall eventually, only to then be re-taken by the Crown and again becomes a point of strategic importance for the king in the south. Crossroads is, arrogantly, secure in its own position and convinced that whatever the outcome, the king won’t dare move against them.

Thus, the PCs are left to figure out what to do next.



ENTER ALEXEI

At some point during the evening as the heroes sit and enjoy their meal, a young boy named Alexei, barely in his teens, quietly approaches them. Alexei has eyes and ears everywhere with the street kids of Crossroads, and he's aware the PCs have been asking around. He's also from Torrent, come to gather what supplies and aid he can ~ aid that is delivered by children from Crossroads via secret underground tunnels that he knows.

He offers to guide them through the enemy forces and to Torrent Manor. He knows a way in and out, he says, and is glad to help, assuming that the characters, in turn, want to help him and his people. Crossroads can use all the help they can get in this time of need. If the PCs mention Alfgeirr, he gets quite excited and announces that his Lady has been awaiting news of the sage, praying he would somehow find a means to get to her. He asks after the old man, and upon hearing that Alfgeirr has died, he seems mildly disturbed. He's too young to have ever met the man, but his Lady will be devastated.

If asked who his "Lady" is, he will answer, "The Honored Sage Laurentia, the Manor Lord's chief scientific and military advisor, of course!" He says it with a reverence that belies the deep passion of a young boy's intense crush on an older woman. Of Alfgeirr, he knows only that his Lady speaks of him in a manner that would indicate the two were very close.

The boy will answer any questions the PCs have regarding the siege as best he can, including the general numbers and disposition of troops (which he hasn't been able to strictly count, and he's not a military officer, so he doesn't know units, battalions and the like ~ he only knows "hundreds" and "thousands." It's left to the CK how he delivers or presents this information. He's only about eleven, after all.) For detailed information regarding the siege, see the next stage of the adventure.

ALEXEI (This neutral good human has vital stats AC 12, HP 2 (HD 1d4), move 30ft. His primary attributes are dexterity 16, intelligence 11, wisdom 13. His special abilities are +4 on all wisdom checks to perceive, observe or notice, hide +3 and move silently +3 and back stab for +1d6 damage. He attacks with a knife for 1d6 damage. He carries 1d4 copper and a poor quality knife.)

Alexei needs to get back to Torrent very soon, but is willing to delay his trip for a reasonable amount of time for the heroes to prepare as they must.

TORRENT MANOR

The road to Torrent Manor is as dangerous as was the road to Crossroads ~ even more so, given the siege that is going on in the area. Increase the chances of random encounters to 40% from the prior 25%, but roll 1d8 for encounter type:

TABLE 4.2: ROAD ENCOUNTERS

D8	
1-2.	Kingsmen of Beykla
3-6.	Grayshalk or Kriel (1d4 of each, with at least 1 owlbear rider)
7-8.	Highwaymen

Allow wisdom checks to spot danger before an encounter actually takes place. The CL for these checks is 2, and the boy Alexei is quick to notice any danger as well. This will allow characters so inclined to avoid combat through stealth; successfully avoiding a combat encounter should net them experience equal to defeating their foes in combat. Experience is to be gained for overcoming challenges; there's nothing that says such efforts have to be done the hard way!

The heroes never see the full siege at this point. Rather, Alexei leads them far into the forests ~ a journey which takes a full two days longer than riding straight up to the gate would take ~ and to a hidden escape route accessed through a secret door built into a gigantic, old tree.

Unfortunately, when the group arrives they come upon a shock. There is a contingent of Grayshalks and Kriel camped out right in front of the tree they need to enter! Anyone who speaks goblinoid or orc will be able to pick up from their griping and casual conversation that “children” have been seen sneaking into and out of this area. This group are the essentially screw-ups who have been relegated to “sit in the woods and wait” duty, to determine if the children are spies or runners bringing aid to the people within the keep. They have been promised they can eat any they capture.

There is one Grayshalk per character and two Kriel total.

GREYSHALKS AND KRIEL

In game terms, Greyshalks are the bugbears of the setting, while Kriel are gnolls. See the **Monsters & Treasure** tome for information about bugbears and gnolls. All information therein applies to Greyshalks and Kriel, respectively.

GRAYSHALKS (These chaotic evil humanoids have vital stats AC 17, HD 3d8, HP 12. They move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a Khopesh for 2d6 damage. They wear plate and mail armor and carry a khopesh and 2d6 silver pieces.)

KRIEL (These chaotic evil humanoids' vital stats are AC 15, HD 2d8, HP . They move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam for 2d4 plus a morning star for 1d8 points of damage. They carry scale armor, morning star, and 2d6 copper.)

Fortunately for the heroes, they are far enough away from the manor that the sounds of battle will not carry to the greater force. However as soon as the battle is joined one of the kriel will be sent to inform the army of the development. If he succeeds an entire unit of humanoids will be sent to establish a presence here, making future efforts to get out and in all but impossible.

LAURENTIA'S WORKSHOP

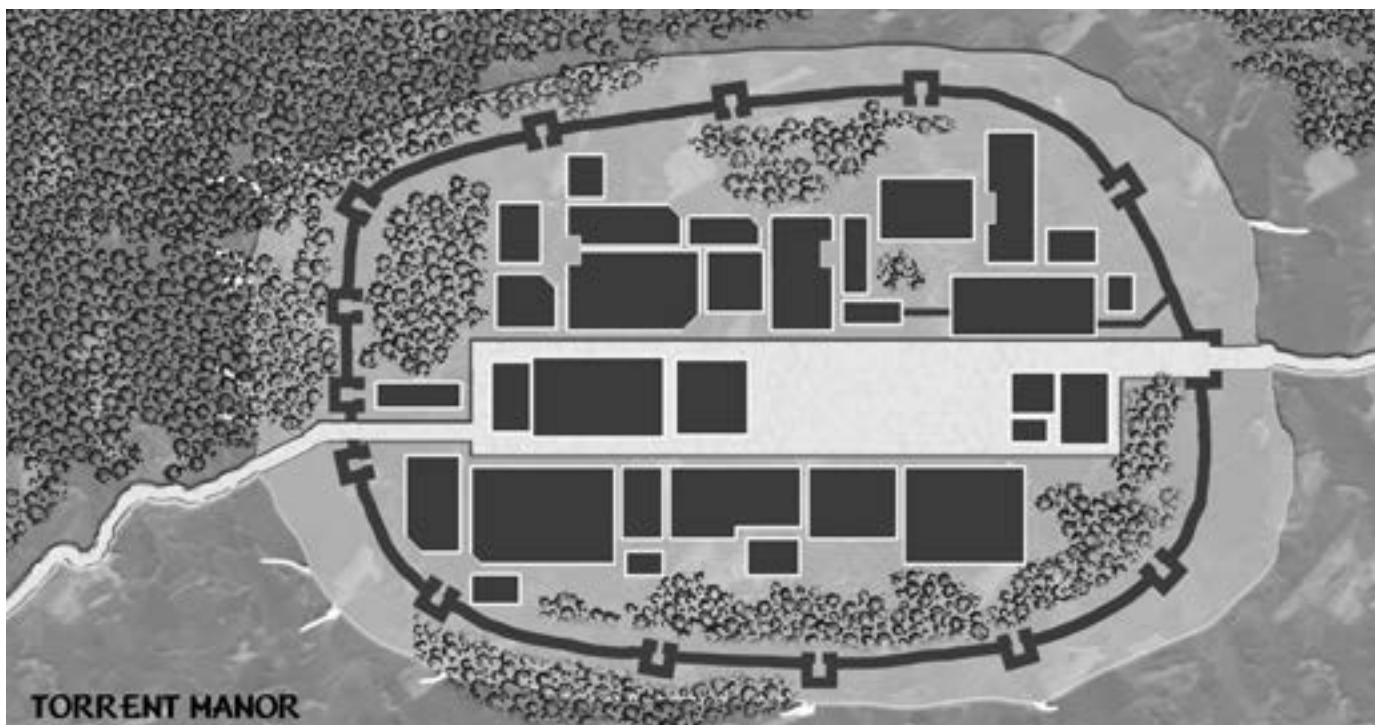
Succeeding in defeating their foes enables the group to access the tunnels through the tree. The tunnels are crude, and adults need to stoop to move through them. Fighting in here would be a nightmare, as they're definitely designed for escape, not defense. It takes hours of travel like this (after which the heroes are stiff and aching in their shoulders and backs). Eventually they come to a small chamber with a ladder leading upward.

This ladder opens into a maze of stone corridors which Alexei informs them leads under the Keep. He points out a side passage which he says leads directly to the private quarters of the lord of Torrent Manor, but he doesn't know how to get through the door. He believes it must only open from the other side.

“Anyway,” he says, “That's not where we're going. Follow me.”

He guides the characters down corridor after corridor, eventually informing them that they are now under the town itself, and heads further in. At length he emerges into a room that smells of must and is full of cobwebs. It's lit by oil lanterns, even as dim sunlight filters in through the high windows. It's cool from the stone construction, but surprisingly dry.

Shelves fill the room, themselves stuffed with books, papers, notes, bottles, flasks, beakers, various strange devices and equipment. They can't see much past the piles of papers and scrolls that fill the place, which seems both completely chaotic, yet paradoxically perfectly ordered.



“Hello?” Alexei calls out. “My Lady?”

A melodic voice floats through the cobwebs in response. “Alexei? Is that you?”

“Yup!” the boy calls out. “And I brought friends! Help! Adventurers!”

“Did you, now?”

Alexei grabs one of the PCs by the hand (someone to whom he seems to have taken a liking) and guides them through the precarious stacks, where a moment later they come into what can only be described as a small clearing amongst the chaos. Just standing up from a large oaken desk is a stunning woman of middle years, who in her youth was probably possessed of nymph-like beauty. She has auburn hair shot through with darker brown streaks and done up in an elaborate style. She gazes at the group with wily, sparkling, dark eyes, and wears a simple, magenta-colored tunic embroidered along the arms and edges with golden designs, as well as black velvet hose and high laced boots of dark brown leather.

She blinks, taken aback at the sight of the characters, and says to Alexei, “Well, it seems you have!”

She makes a subtle motion, which any magic user in the party can make a Spellcraft check to detect as the activation of some sort of magical defense; a field of mostly-orange threads of magic surrounds her before fading once again, indicative of some sort of abjuration effect, such as a defensive magic.

She looks at the characters cock-eyed, and says, “You’ll forgive my rudeness, but I’m unaccustomed to strangers entering my workshop by a means only Alexei and myself should be aware exists. He’s a good boy, if a bit trusting. And you are?”

Allow the PCs to introduce themselves, and convince her that they are friends. How exactly this plays out is left to the CK, but this is the lady Laurentia, the very sage they’ve come to seek out. Showing her the book and telling her their tale will be sufficient to gain her trust; she has a divination field active within her laboratory which allows her to detect falsehoods, and she’s not shy on calling the PCs out if they lie to her.

Upon hearing the news about Alfgeirr, she is visibly shaken ~ heartbroken, even, and sinks into a chair, her eyes welling up with tears. She and the old man were lovers once, and though their life paths took them in different directions, the two have always carried a torch for each other ~ indeed, for her part there has never been another.

Upon being presented with the book and key, she is enthusiastic that she can decipher the information that lies within, but it will take some time.

“And first,” she says, “We must survive the peril that lies upon us, which consumes much of my attention currently. If you could help us in this, we would be eternally grateful, and I could be free to turn my attentions to aiding in this quest involving the mysterious Abyss Walker.”

If questioned about the Abyss Walker, she’ll tell the characters what she knows. There is a vague prophecy of coming darkness and whispers of a being known as the Abyss Walker, but no one knows who or what this being is, when it is coming, or even if it is a force of light or darkness.

This book, she and Alfgeirr believe, is both a good and an evil omen. It heralds the beginning of the Walker’s rise, as well as the information that may be used to stave it off, or even stop it altogether. The key, she only knows goes with the book, but she doesn’t know what it’s for or what it opens ~ she hopes the answers lie within the Blue Book.

After a brief interaction and talk with Laurentia, she insists that the PCs be brought before the Lord of Torrent Manor, announced, and briefed on the situation.

LAURENTIA THE SAGE (*This lawful good human has vital stats AC 17, HP 33 (HD 10d6), move 30ft. Her primes are intelligence 18, wisdom 16, charisma 15. Her special abilities are her vast knowledge, a range of scientific and magic items and defenses, and the ability to cast any spell as a ritual (though she is not a primary caster, she can read spells from spell books and use any scrolls). She carries a ring of invisibility, a ring of teleportation, and earrings that allow her to cast mage armor upon herself (raising her AC to 21). Her tunic appears to be velvet and brocade but is in fact woven of a tough material of her own design which provides her a non-magical +7 to AC; her boots are boots of elvenkind. She doesn’t carry money, but has plenty of coin, gems and jewels secreted throughout her lab, which is also heavily booby-trapped and rigged to take out just about any intruder at the flick of a switch ~ the details of this lab are left to the CK to determine if needed.*)

As the heroes move through the town, they see a village of people in dire straits. Hunger and disease are rampant, and healers do what they can to help people, but they’re overwhelmed. Stores are running low, as the manor has been under siege for weeks. There are several battalions of grayshalks, kriel and owlbear cavalry at their gates, and the oppressive sense of the other shoe about to drop right on their heads is heavy in the air. Laurentia doesn’t think it’ll be much longer before the armies storm the walls. What meager defenses they currently have won’t be able to hold out against the onslaught. She’s done what she can and continues to work on solutions, but while her traps and war machines can do a great deal of damage, she fears that it won’t be enough.

The heroes’ arrival has been fortuitous, as they may be the most capable option for scouts that have become available. She expects the manor lord to request their assistance in seeking out the weak points in the enemy, attempting to find some way of undermining them and breaking the siege. While they’re aware help isn’t coming from Crossroads, other boys have been sent for help from other local nobles who have a vested interest in a local power base not under the fealty of the crown. Hopes are high that reinforcements may arrive within a few days, if they can hold out that long.

THE LORD OF TORRENT MANOR

En route to the chambers of Lord Ganover, Laurentia briefly explains the situation here. Recently, this land was torn apart by civil wars, and wars with orc hordes that ravaged across the realm ~ the PCs may well have heard of these conflicts, as the danger they represented would well have made its way all the way to Lostom.

At some point shortly after the conflict was over, as the lines of settlements were being re-drawn and Adorian refugees streamed forth from the now-Wastelands, Ganover rebelled against the “rightful” lord of Torrent Manor, the Count Valterri Partanen, with the weight of the manor’s guard behind him, and overthrew the Count, who has been exiled back to the crown.

This accomplished, Ganover announced Torrent Manor’s secession from Beykla, to stand as a free town in the region. Between Torrent and Junction, this effectively divides the kingdom in half, a situation King Theobold does not like at all.

To make matters worse, a number of other nobles in the region have secretly offered their support to Torrent, funneling resources into the village in the hopes of one day building a successful revolution in the region. The dwarves, too, have now begun to support Torrent, taking great relish in the idea that the keep previously designed to tax their people now serves as an ally in their struggles.

Indeed, Laurentia’s expectations about what her lord will request are correct ~ she knows Morton Ganover well, and he welcomes the heroes with open arms, begging their assistance in the manor’s plight. He asks the heroes to somehow gain information about the number and disposition of the enemy troops, any reinforcements they possess, and any weaknesses that might be exploited.

Indeed, given the nature of their assailants, he’s certain that the armies would fall into disarray if their leader could be found and slain. It’s unlike grayshalks and kriel to hold together with such rigid discipline, which means an exceptional leader must be at the heart of the assault.

In return, he offers to allow Laurentia to devote any services she can to help the PCs, once the crisis is past.

Thus it is that he tasks the heroes with finding a way to brave the enemy armies, gather information, and find some way to disrupt the humanoid menace so that Torrent Manor may survive this unprecedented assault.

The characters don’t have long to resolve the problem. The castle is into Stage 3 of a castle siege (see Appendix B), and morale is just starting to fall as people begin to feel the pangs of hunger in their bellies.

Currently, Torrent Manor is only a couple of weeks into the Long Siege, and stores are still holding up due to strict rationing. Still, the people are afraid and there are whispers of rebellion just barely starting. Knowing the oppression the crown has visited

upon these people, the canny Lord Ganover is not imposing martial law or iron fist rule, but he fears that it may come to that before long.

At the CK’s option it could be at an earlier or later stage. It depends on how long you wish to drag out the drama and push the siege; this could end up being a mini-campaign unto itself if you so choose.

Characters who partake in a number of adventures for Lord Ganover during a longer siege could build a great deal of experience, which will serve them well in future adventures. They may also find themselves a welcome base of operations for future gaming, though keep in mind that if they build up too much experience, you may have to increase the difficulty of future encounters and adventures.

For more information on how to handle a castle siege, see below.

LORD GANOVER (*He is a lawful neutral 6th level knight whose vital stats are HP 52 and AC 19. His primary attributes are charisma, intelligence, and strength. His significant attributes are strength 15, wisdom 17 and charisma 13. He wears a +2 large metal shield and full chain suit, and carries a morning star, a +1 long sword, and has 1,000 gp worth of jewelry coin and other possessions.*)

MEETING APOLLISIAN

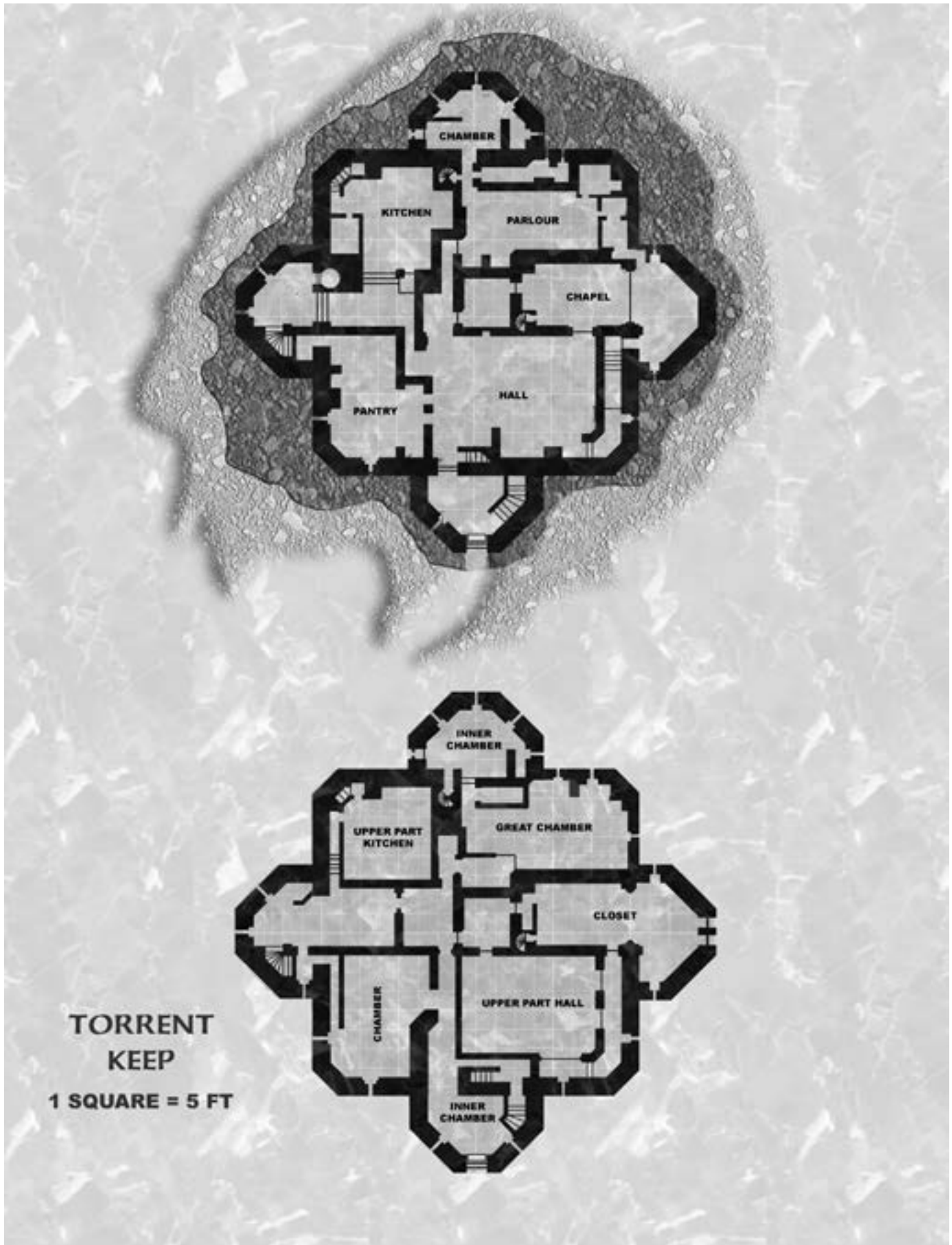
Also present in the manor is Apollisian Bargas, a traveler just passing through when this whole mess began. A hero in his own right, he is helping to shore up the defenses and helping to fight the battle. He has not gone forth to infiltrate the enemy units as whispers have gotten back to the keep that he may, in fact, be partly the target of this invasion, beyond the Keep’s strategic importance. For that reason Lord Ganover will not permit Apollisian to sally forth until this mess is over.

APOLLISIAN BARGOE OF WESTVON KEEP (*He is a 6th level lawful good paladin. His vital stats are HP 44, AC 21. His primary stats are strength, dexterity, and constitution. His significant abilities are strength 16 and dexterity 14. He wears +1 plate armor and shield. He carries the enchanted artifact weapon, Songsinger, a +5 longsword. A +1 short sword, 2 potions of healing. He carries a fair amount of gold, usually around 250 gp at a time, but normally only uses it for expenses for travel. He does not indulge in finer things.*)

Apollisian is the major hero of the Abyss Walker novel series; the PCs can interact with him at any point while they are in Torrent Manor, and this brave soul can help with the eventual siege, outlined later. For more on Apollisian, see the novels by Shane Moore.

INFILTRATING THE ENEMY FORCES

How the Player Characters infiltrate enemy forces, gather the information they need, and defeat the generals is left to the heroes to determine.



THE BESIEGING FORCE

The enemy has approximately 1,500 troops, which are currently fairly well organized, but their discipline is hanging by a thread. These troops consist of battalions of Kriel, with Grayshalk commanders. About 1/3 of the troops are human mercenaries; uncouth and undisciplined, but brutally-trained warriors.

A brigade of cavalry is present, consisting of Kriel astride owlbear mounts.

There are four companies of archers (3 of Kriel crossbowmen and 1 of human longbowmen).

The remainder are infantry. There are no siege weapons, however they do have ladders available with which to assault the walls.

Discipline is iron-fisted and unforgiving, a necessary approach to keep the wild humanoids in line.

The leaders of this army are a special council of four in the service of the Abyss Walker Cult. Their purpose here is twofold. First, they are out to destabilize the region, allowing for civil war to tear the land apart. Taking advantage of the chaos, they intend to infiltrate the court of Beykla, gradually establishing control of the cult within the royal halls.

Secondly, they are after the Paladin Appolisian, who is currently within the halls at Torrent Manor. The cult fears the rising power of the paladin, and is concerned that he may be the hero of which the prophecy speaks. They seek to end his life and thereby hedge their bets for the oncoming storm...

Should the council be defeated, the armies of the humanoids would quickly dissolve into utter chaos and infighting, many quitting the field altogether. Those that remain fighting will be at a marked disadvantage against the desperate inhabitants of Torrent Manor.

THE ENEMY IS AS FOLLOWS:

MALIK JASSEY (*This 4th level neutral evil knight whose vital stats are HP 42 and AC 19. His primary attributes are charisma, intelligence, and strength. His significant attributes are strength 13 and charisma 14. He wears a +2 large metal shield and full chain suit, and carries a morningstar, a +1 long sword, and has 1,000 gp worth of jewelry coin and other possessions.*)

BORO COLLEY (*This 6th level neutral evil human ranger whose vital stats are HP 39, AC 17. His primary stats are strength, dexterity, and constitution. His significant abilities are strength 14 and dexterity 16. He wears +2 leather armor and shield, and carries a +2 long sword, 2 potions of healing, longbow, 20 arrows, pack, hunting gear and 25gp.*)

ALIEU SENGHORE (*He is a chaotic neutral 6th level chromatic mage whose vital stats are HP 15 and AC 17. His prime attributes are dexterity, intelligence, and wisdom. His significant attributes are intelligence 17, dexterity 18, constitution 14. He wears a +3 ring of protection, a ring of damage absorption that absorbs 1-3 hit points of damage per blow per round, and carries two healing potions, a potion of haste, and a wand of*

magic missiles with 33 charges. He has 500 gp in coin and finery. He can pull 40 threads per day. His spellcraft check is +8. His prepared spells are: 0-level: change object, dancing lights, dragon mark, ghost sound, fire bolt, acid splash*, detect magic*; 1-level: change self, color spray, dragon image, faerie's glamour, magic missile; 2-level: blur; dark chaos, dragon bite; 3-level: lightning bolt*. Spells marked with an * cost double threads to cost, and have a +1 CL to cast.*)

NADIA DANZO (*She is a lawful evil, half elf, 4th level assassin whose vital stats are HD 4d6, AC 13 or 15 and HP 13. Her prime attributes are dexterity and wisdom. Her significant attributes are dexterity 14, intelligence 13, and wisdom 14. Special: She is of human lineage. She sometimes wears leather armor, and carries a dagger, a +2 short sword, an ankle band conferring +2 to armor class, three draughts of white poppy, two draughts of mandrake, one draught of meadow saffron and 600 gp worth of jewelry and coin.*)

NADIA'S PET SPIDER (*This medium-sized neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 15, HP 17. Its prime attributes are physical. It attacks with a poisoned bite for 1d6 points of damage, plus 1d4 poison unless the victim succeeds at a constitution check, or web as per the spell, once per combat.*)

CASTLE KEEPER'S NOTE

This particular adventure presents a significant potential to alter the history of the world as presented in the Abyss Walker novel series. Should you wish to maintain the timeline as presented in the books, it is imperative that Torrent Manor not fall. In the end, since it is you who will be running the final battle, you can easily "script" this to not happen, simply allowing the PCs to enjoy their adventures during the battle without making overall battle rolls, or even fudging the battle rolls so that they fall in favor of the manor in the end.

Alternately, remember that it's your game, and there are no rules that say you have to follow the books!

THE BATTLE OF TORRENT MANOR

If the PCs completely fail in their mission, Torrent Manor may be doomed, though it's left to the CK how things proceed. Turn to Appendix B to adjudicate the battle (assuming the PCs are alive to participate).

In this case, the first battle round sees the Abyss Walker's forces superior (+1), moderately organized (+1) with roughly 125% the numbers of Torrent (+4), for a total of +6 to their first battle check, which is made by Aleiu's intelligence of +2. The grand total for the initial Battle Check, then, will be +8 for the Abyss Walker forces. Their numbers and disposition are above, as are their four heroes, should the CK wish to use them in battle for The Actions of Heroes (see Appendix B).

This is compared to Torrent's moderately organized (+1), inferior (-1) forces outnumbered by 125% (-4), but fortified (+2) defenses, for a total modifier of -2. The Battle Check will be made by Lord Ganover's wisdom of 17 (+2), meaning

the defenders at Torrent Manor will fight at +0 on their first Battle Check.

Torrent Manor's forces include roughly 250 warriors, including a single company of cavalry (which won't be a factor unless battle is joined outside the walls) and a single company of archers. Should the CK wish, Apollisian can be used as an additional hero for purposes of The Actions of Heroes (see Appendix B).

THE AFTERMATH

The battle is brutal and bloody, and even emerging victorious, Torrent Manor has taken a beating. There are dead and wounded to be tended to, and fears to assuage. But there is also feasting and celebration in Lord Ganover's mead hall, a celebration that spills into the streets with the Lord's blessing.

For the heroes' part, they are again united with Laurentia, who immediately goes to work with the key and the book. The task takes her several weeks. This will allow the characters to heal, and can provide for the CK to create further adventures: helping to clear out the countryside of ravaging bands of humanoids; standing against the intrigues of the Beyklan crown; and possibly even running across assassination attempts from the Abyss Walker Cult, who now view them as a legitimate threat.

In the end, a few weeks later Laurentia calls them to her workshop and outlines her findings.

"My friends," she says, "This book is a chronicle of ancient days of our world. It tells a story of a war amongst the gods, and a prophecy of the end of days. It contains a prophecy, which points to the end times. It speaks of a group of young heroes recruited by a wise man, a journey that began simply but will end in fire and blood and the fate of the world hanging within the balance. It doesn't say how the quest will end, but it talks of an ancient force of great evil, of darkness and doom to the Mortal Realms."

She flips a few pages, and consults her notes, then continues.

"But here," she says, "it also talks of ancient and powerful magics, lost knowledge and science that lies hidden within the Polar Flats. This magical knowledge is supposedly guarded by a cult of power, associated with this mysterious Abyss Walker figure, though for good or ill is unclear. It seems that the book is but a piece in the greater puzzle, and that even its authors were in the process of piecing together the information."

She holds up the key. "This key, supposedly, unlocks the vault to this cache. If we can recover this trove, it may help shine more light upon what we're against. I will create a map for you, but promise me to return and share with me the fruits of what knowledge you find.

"So it seems, my young charges," she says, "That your next destination will be to the far North. I recommend that you begin in the city of Dawson, where you can equip yourselves for the arctic journey, and find passage. But take rest for a few more days, while I create the map you shall need."

With that, she dismisses them to think upon their future.

RUNNING A CASTLE SIEGE

Now we come to the meat of the adventure: running a castle siege. While those who have seen fantasy films tend to have a somewhat romantic notion of an action-packed battle at the walls of a keep while humanoids storm it with ladders, siege engines and battering rams, the truth is that an actual siege is much more painful and boring.

Sieges progress in a number of stages, each of which presents challenges to role play and run through. There are essentially four stages to a siege, which we will refer to as The Oncoming Storm, The Arrival, The Long Siege, and the End Game.

Running a siege is essentially an open-ended process, with a number of options to incorporate adventurers at any stage.

SIEGE STAGE ONE: THE ONCOMING STORM

This stage of a siege involves the approaching armies. The reasons for a siege are as many as there are types of people in the world. But in general, the idea is to overrun a structure that is too well-defended to simply attack, and that means cutting them off from the outside world.

It's rare that a siege happens entirely by surprise. Those who live in such a fortress generally have notice that there is an army approaching, which is long enough for them to gather up some stores and evacuate women, children, elderly and sickly people (though not always; Torrent Manor is full of refugees that had nowhere else to go, for example).

Stage one, thus, is preparation against the oncoming armies. It involves shoring up defenses, sending a call for aid if one has any allies, and trying to gather up as many stores of food, water and provisions possible.

During this stage of a siege, PCs might answer the call of a local lord seeking help in the face of an encroaching enemy. They might be tasked to accompany a caravan bringing vital supplies, or might be dispatched to seek such supplies and build a caravan.

SIEGE STAGE TWO: THE ARRIVAL

In Stage Two the siege proper begins. An enemy arrives at the gates and forms organized camps. The idea here is that they surround the keep, or come as close to it as they can, and cut off all possible aid from the outside world. At this time a call is put out for surrender, and if the keep surrenders, the siege ends before it begins. Many sieges have gone down this road throughout history.

Failing the success of a call for surrender, then the armies entrench themselves and may even begin to build semi-permanent structures, a small town of their own outside the walls. There they begin the next stage...the long siege.

Adventures for characters during this stage could involve sneaking out of the keep and bypassing the opposing army to



gather information, take out important figures, or even to seek help from other nearby allies.

SIEGE STAGE THREE: THE LONG SIEGE

From here a long and painful wait begins. The key to a successful siege, on the part of the invading army, is patience. The pressure will build like an over-shaken bottle of champagne, with starvation, disease and lack of resources eventually taking their toll. As people will die, the living will eventually begin to turn on one another and their leaders.

One of the worst sieges in modern history took place during World War II when the German Army laid siege to the city of Leningrad in the Soviet Union. There were rampant stories of Russian soldiers being murdered or disappearing into the shadows, and even of cannibalism as stores ran critically low into the bitterly cold Russian winter.

During Stage Three, minor skirmishes might take place as the enemy sends small forces to assault the walls, testing the strength of the defenders, then withdrawing. The point of these skirmishes is: to scout for weak points in the defenses; to serve as distractions as agents attempt to infiltrate the keep; to inflict casualties on the people, which eventually will rot and bring forth more disease; and to generally sow misery among the people.

Between skirmishes more calls for surrender, often peppered with offers of mercy, will be issued. In addition, the besieging army may encourage the people within to turn on their leaders and deliver them up in exchange for clemency or (again) mercy.

PC adventures during this phase, similar to Stage Two, could be sneaking through enemy forces to infiltrate and look for weaknesses (the very mission Lord Ganover has tasked the characters in this scenario to perform). Alternatively they could serve as morale officers, trying to keep spirits up, offering healing and encouragement. They might also attempt to sneak out to find new resources or help, as in stage Two. They might be assigned to help build siege engines, ballistae and trebuchets to help defend the walls. They could be tasked to help dig tunnels to allow for evacuation, or to escort refugees through existing tunnels, hopefully to safety.

The key in this phase, however, is that hope gets bleaker the longer it drags on. Call for constitution checks against starvation, wisdom checks

against the mental strain, charisma checks to keep morale up, and intelligence checks to come up with creative solutions to difficult problems. Gradually raise the CL of the checks as resources grow thin, and don't be afraid to assign stress-related psychological disorders as necessary (See the **Castles & Crusades Castle Keeper's Guide** for more information).

Despite the PCs best efforts, the bomb is going to blow eventually; the key is to try to break the siege before that happens.

WHAT ABOUT CLERICS AND WIZARDS?

It's true that in a fantasy setting, clerics and wizards can make a huge difference in terms of providing resources and defenses. After all, an adequate number of clerics can effectively overcome any food shortage simply by conjuring food.

Here's the thing to remember: there may be one cleric per 100 people in a town, and that's at very best. It's more likely to be one cleric per 1,000 people or even fewer. The needs of a town will inevitably far outstrip magical resources available, even with characters like our heroes providing their best efforts. In the end, people are still going to starve, die, and suffer, even with magic at their disposal.

STAGE FOUR: THE END GAME

Stage four involves one of two outcomes ~ the besieged fortress surrenders and is overrun, or the attackers eventually storm the walls. Of the various phases of a siege, the End Game is likely the most fluid of them, as it could occur at any time. There are a range of possible scenarios that could cause a battle to erupt:

- The enemy feels that the forces inside the walls are weakened enough that their assault is guaranteed success with minimal casualties;
- The enemy simply grows impatient and attacks;
- The besieged forces manage somehow to goad the enemy into attack;
- The besieged forces sally forth to engage the attackers head-on in the field of battle (this is generally a desperate effort to escape and evacuate, or a valiant last stand);
- Something destabilizes the besieging force, who dissolve into chaos ~ a mutiny among battle-hungry warriors, for example.

These are just a few potential reasons a siege might erupt into a final battle.

Once battle begins, it rarely consists of a single assault on the walls. Rather, it will somewhat resemble the skirmishes of Stage Three, though on a much larger scale ~ each assault will come with overwhelming force, before the enemy backs off and makes camp once more. Siege weapons will be brought to bear, firing ballistae and boulders at the walls and people inside. Terror will be used as a weapon, as the bodies of those dead who fell from the ramparts are launched over the walls.

Sorcerers will bring their mightiest magics to bear. The battles will be brutal and losses will be taken on both sides. For the defenders, the sooner the wave breaks and the battle begins, the better. The longer Stage Three goes on, the weaker they will become.

FIELDS OF BATTLE UNIT STATISTICS

Each of the stat block references in this section represents one squad of the indicated forces. Total numbers of forces can be found under The Battle of Torrent Manor and Infiltrating the Enemy Forces, above. From there it should be easy to extrapolate how many squads and what squad size is best to use for your table when using **Fields of Battle** to resolve mass combat with miniatures.

See Appendix D: Narrative of Mass Battle Rules on how to run a siege battle.

ABYSS WALKER FORCES

GREYSHALK

Use bugbear infantry from **Fields of Battle**.

KRIEL INFANTRY AND CROSSBOWMEN

Use gnoll raiders from **Fields of Battle**.

KRIEL OWLBEAR RIDERS (1 SQUAD)

SIZE/RATIO: Large/2:1

HD/UHP: 5d10 (owlbear)+2d8/89 UHP

MOVE: 30ft.

AC: 15

ATTACKS/BONUS: Khopesh (1d10)/+2 AB, plus 2 claws (1d6)/+5 AB, plus bite (2d6)/+5 AB

SQUAD FORMATION: HP: 45, Khopesh (1d10)/+2 AB, plus 2 claws (1d6)/+5 AB, plus bite (2d6)/+5 AB

SPECIAL: Darkvision 60ft., Kriel combat maneuver (as gnoll raiders), improved grab (+2d8 damage if both claws hit)

SAVES/PRIMES: P

FACE: 10ft. (1 inch)

MORALE: +5 (due to owlbear ferocity; kriel require a morale check after losing 20% casualties)

SPELLS/SPELL-LIKE ABILITIES: None.

HUMAN MERCENARY ARCHERS

Use human longbowmen from **Fields of Battle**.

HUMAN MERCENARY INFANTRY

Use human skirmishers from **Fields of Battle**.

TORRENT MANOR FORCES

HUMAN ARCHERS

Human longbowmen from **Fields of Battle**.

HUMAN CAVALRY

Human heavy cavalry from **Fields of Battle**.

HUMAN INFANTRY

Human rabble from **Fields of Battle**.

ENDING THE BATTLE

The battle continues until one side runs out of troop strength or achieves a “Rout” result on their morale check. However, if an army routs and the other side pursues, they may continue to make morale checks to attempt to regroup. They may battle in any round in which they are attacked, albeit at -5 to their battle check as their primary goal is to escape.

It’s important to note here that this does not represent two armies fighting until there’s not a single man standing. Running out of troop strength merely means that an army’s strength is sapped to the point where it can no longer effectively battle. This is abstracted in the rules as represented by 1 soldier = 1 point of strength and damage is referred to as “taking casualties,” but again, this is all a basic abstraction. In reality, when an army takes casualties it represents broken units, wounded, captured prisoners and those who broke and ran in addition to the dead.

Thus, when an army’s casualties reduce their number to zero, there are still men standing. There are still soldiers, indeed, that might be quite capable of fighting. It’s just that the army itself can no longer effectively field a battle and must surrender or quit the field. The actual end result is left to the CK to determine.

5: HELP ME MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT

INTRODUCTION

Here we are again. Welcome to episode 5 of our epic quest in the world of Terrigan, the setting of Shane Moore's **Abyss Walker** novels. This adventure is an overland jaunt intended for characters of 3rd to 4th level of experience. It will include several encounters that have the potential for character death, but also might allow for heavy experience. In this scenario, the heroes are on an overland journey to the port city of Dawson, where they hope to catch a ship north to continue their quest to discover the secrets of the mysterious Abyss Walker.

On their journey, the heroes will face many perils unrelated to the quest itself. They will face down a powerful hell-spawned enemy known as a dream demon, that seeks to capture a young girl named Doris, who is also the subject of an ancient prophecy. It falls upon the heroes to save Doris from this horrible fate while also protecting her mother Missy and rescue Doris' father, the Baron Stephen Graywind of Dawson. Should they succeed, the heroes will gain a powerful patron, friend and ally in Dawson and indeed in the kingdom of Beyklan. Should they fail, who knows what darkness may fall over the region when the young girl comes of age and takes her place as a mother of demons...?

RECOMMENDED VIEWING

This particular adventure takes direct inspiration from a number of well-known horror and fantasy films. In order to capture the feel of the adventure, and even inspire your own creativity in maintaining mood, theme and events, it is recommended that the following films be viewed:

"Living Dead" Trilogy (*Night of the Living Dead / Day of the Dead / Dawn of the Dead*) – George A. Romero, Director

Feast – John Gallagher, Director

From Dusk Till Dawn – Robert Rodriguez, Director

Legion – Scott Stewart, Director

Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight – Ernest Dickerson, Director

Solomon Kane – Michael J. Bassett, Director

Evil Dead Trilogy – Peter Jackson, Director

EXPERIENCE LEVELS AND ADVANCEMENT

As we reach the halfway point of our campaign, let's take a moment to address the issue of experience levels. By this point in the scenario, it's important that the Castle Keeper understand that it may get difficult to maintain character levels as recommended per each adventure module once the PCs reach mid-level. Hopefully by this point your PCs have at least reached third level of experience, but if they have not yet you have several options available.

The most obvious option is that you can run side adventures of your own design, using these modules as plot points along

the way. This allows you to tailor the quest to your own design, and truly individualize the campaign by bringing in character histories, your own plot devices and details into play.

Secondly, you can award "story based" experience rather than using experience points. In this fashion, the CK carefully controls the advancement of characters, by awarding them skills and experience levels at specific points in the story itself. This can see characters leveling much faster than they normally would, but in many ways is much more in keeping with the way things tend to work in the novels upon which this series is based.

There is also the option of reducing the levels and numbers of foes in the adventures, which already are rather difficult (and deliberately so) to suit your style of play. This way you can allow characters of a lower level to participate.

Alternately, you can always begin play with characters of higher level and increase the types and number of foes. While this particular work advances the heroes and gives you an insight into the world of Terrigan at the same time, it can also be easily adapted to any home system you want.

The reverse is also true. If your characters are advancing faster than you would like, you can limit experience awards, grant story-based experience, or simply increase the number or types of foes they face commensurate with their current level.

In the end, it's your game and it's entirely up to you. Likewise, this is your version of Terrigan, and you needn't feel bound by the events of the **Abyss Walker** series of novels, nor beholden to them in any way.

THE STORY SO FAR...

Our story began in the corrupt city of Lostom, as our heroes completed a minor quest for an elderly sage named Alfgeirr, only to discover that the entire thing was a test of their worthiness to undergo a larger, more important journey for the scholar. This quest took them to a lost island, where they discovered a blue crystal key. Upon returning, the heroes found Alfgeirr dead: murdered in his own ransacked study.

The sage left them a message via his faithful owl familiar, bidding them to recover a blue book that was taken by a society called the Order of the White Sash, who had established a dark temple within the wererat warrens beneath the Lostom streets. The message also warned the PCs that the Abyss Walker was coming, and that there was a prophecy they must stop.

Upon recovering the book, the heroes found another message within. It was correspondence from another sage who appeared to be a close friend of Alfgeirr's, and who might be able to shed light on the whole mess. This led them across the Beyklan Wastelands to the besieged keep of Torrent Manor. There they met the sage, a striking red-haired woman of middle years named Laurentia.

After participating in the defense of Torrent Manor, the heroes have worked with Laurentia to suss out as much of the quest as they can. It seems that the Abyss Walker is a name that has floated in and out of knowledge across the ages. It is at the center of an ancient prophecy regarding a great and rising darkness, but nobody knows who or what the Abyss Walker is, or even if it is an omen of good or ill in the scope of the prophecy.

The book and key they brought to Laurentia are leading them far to the north, in search of ancient and powerful magics tied to this prophecy. They have also learned that they themselves may be destined to play a major role in the coming apocalyptic battle. Thus, our heroes find themselves preparing to leave Torrent Manor and heading for the port city of Dawson, the capital of Beyklan, where they hope to catch a ship to the icy north...

...and the adventure continues.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Our heroes have gotten the next piece of the puzzle in their quest. They have learned a bit more about who or what the "Abyss Walker" may be, but things are still a mystery. All they know for certain is that there's some sort of global conspiracy at work, and that they're stuck at the center of it. The next leg of their journey will take them to Dawson, where they hope to find a ship to the icy north in search of "ancient and powerful magics, lost knowledge and science that lie hidden within the Polar Flats."

They have been given a map to their destination, which begins, unfortunately, at a port in the Polar Flats. Getting to that area is up to the PCs, but their friend Laurentia has given them a final boon: a letter bearing her seal which they are to deliver to a Captain Johnathon Silvermane. He captains a vessel known as the *Wyvern*, a merchant and privateering vessel known to make frequent visits to Dawson. Laurentia assures the heroes that this letter will ensure their passage with a trusted friend, so long as they deliver the message to Silvermane himself. In addition, she's given them 500 gp in coin, which she feels confident will cover their expenses in style.

Thus it is that our heroes find themselves once more on the road, perhaps seeking adventure or perhaps wishing it had never found them. The sky is overcast and the air thick with humidity; there's going to be a strong storm or series of storms along the way it seems, and our heroes will need to seek shelter as they go.

ENCOUNTERS ON THE ROAD

There is a road leading from Torrent to Dawson, and it's one that's rather well-traveled. However, this means that the Beyklan kingsmen also travel it, and they behave like arrogant bandits. Characters travelling from the road are certain to be harassed, harangued, and "taxed" heavily by the soldiers they encounter along the way. Fighting back against the king's guard is not a good idea for those heading to the capital of the kingdom.

It is, of course, up to the PCs how they comport themselves but in the end, traveling the open road is both the safest way

of avoiding danger from monsters and unforeseen encounters and presents the largest chance of losing everything they have, including their letter from Laurentia.

KINGSMEN OF BEYKLAN (*These lawful evil humans' vital stats are AC 16, HD 2d10, HP10. They move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with longswords for 1d8 damage. They carry brass scale mail, long sword and shield, and 1d10 gold each.*)

If the PCs opt to avoid the road, they suffer the chance of encounters with humanoids or other hazards. There are also trails that can be taken (of which Laurentia informs the heroes) which will lead them to Dawson and are relatively safe. These trails pass through a small village or two in the forests, and which will allow them to avoid many of the Crown patrols. If the PCs choose to take one of these trails, they will be subject to a 25% chance of random encounters. Roll twice for random encounters; once during the day and once at night. If an encounter is indicated, consult the table below:

TABLE 5.1: ENCOUNTERS

Roll 2d8	
2.	Ankheg
3.	Bandits or Beyklan Soldiers (CK's choice; 1d6)
4.	Bear (black) or herd animals
5.	Grayshalks (2 or 3)*
6.	Harpies (1-2)
7.	Giant Ants, Centipedes, Beetles, Spiders, etc. (CK's choice; 1d6)
8.	Centaur (1d4+1)
9.	Nymph or Dryad (CK's choice)
10.	Kriel (1d6)*
11.	Ogres (1-2; possibly with an Ogre Mage)
12.	Satyrs (1d6)
13.	Assassin Vines
14.	Troll (1 hill or 1-2 river)
15.	Starved wolves (1d8)
16.	Dire wolves (1d6)

*Possibly at least one mounted astride an owlbear (CK's option). Kriel are essentially gnolls, and Grayshalks, bugbears.

The majority of these monsters can be found in the **Castles & Crusades Monsters & Treasure** or **Classic Monsters & Treasure** Sourcebooks. If you don't have one of these books, feel free to substitute any appropriate monster you like.

HIGHWAYMEN (*These neutral evil humans' vital stats are AC 12, HD 2d8, HP 8. They move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with short swords for 1d6 points of damage or light crossbows for 1d8 points of damage. They carry studded leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, 20 bolts, and 2d6 copper each.*)

GRAYSHALKS (These chaotic evil humanoids' vital stats are AC 17, HD 3d8, HP 12. They move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a khopesh for 2d6 damage. They wear plate and mail armor and carry a khopesh and 2d6 silver pieces.)

KRIEL (These chaotic evil humanoids' vital stats are AC 15, HD 2d8, HP 8. They move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam for 2d4 plus a morning star for 1d8. They carry scale armor, morning star, and 2d6 copper.)

Our heroes have at least a week's ride ahead of them. Around day two, the rain starts to fall, at first a fine, soaking mist that doesn't impair their travels overly much, but is enough to make everything miserable. The PCs will start to feel on edge, grouchy and bitter (save potentially any rangers or other outdoors-y characters in the group). There's no set game effect for this misery, but it could serve to enable some great role playing at the table if properly encouraged.

STAY A LITTLE LONGER

By day three, near midday, the rain has increased to a torrential downpour. There's no good place to camp, nowhere to take shelter from the storm. By their information from Laurentia, the PCs are coming up on a roadside inn where they should be able to take shelter.

Around an hour or so before supertime, they see it: a well-appointed waystation and journeyman's stop a ways off the road on a small bluff. Two cloaked figures ~ one an adult and the other a child ~ flee through the storm and enter the inn ahead of them from the opposite direction.

As they draw nearer, the heroes see the sign swaying violently in the wind, lit up by flashes of green lightning in the pour. As they reach the entrance, the PCs can see the name: The On Your Way Inn.

Just before entering the Inn, call for wisdom checks. At least one of the PCs will see shambling shapes in the darkness moving towards them ~ there are dozens of these shapes, although the driving rain, rising mist, and general conditions make it impossible to see exactly what they are. They are, however, coming from the same direction as the two figures previously seen. The lightning flashes reveal hunched, stumbling, staggering and shambling figures as well as those walking normally and those that seem to be gliding over the ground with a faint glow about them.

As they enter the inn, they find a warm, welcoming and dry space that smells of stale beer, spirits and pipe smoke beneath the scent of roasting meats. A fire crackles in the corner, before which is laid a deerskin rug and several comfortable seats. Gambling tables are situated to the left, and a few people throw dice and play cards. Several tables are scattered around the place, and bar maids serve the few patrons there at this time of night. Across the room in the far left corner a set of stairs runs up, presumably to rooms for rent.

The inn is a former mission, rundown but kept in usable repair by the owner. He is a grizzled old man named Clu Rollins who maintains it as a way stop between towns. He's got a few rooms upstairs, at least one of which is always occupied by Ophelia, a waif-like girl who is willing to share her space (and herself) with just about anyone...for a price. In truth, Ophelia is a vampire who feeds on her customers to stay alive. She's going to betray the group to the monsters outside at some point.

CLU ROLLINS (This chaotic good human's vital stats are AC 12, HD 5d6, HP 24. They move 25 ft. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a battle axe for 1d8. He has no special abilities.)

OPHELIA (This unique chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 8d12, HP 58, AC 20. Her primary attributes are mental and physical. She attacks with a slam attack for 1d6 points of damage. Her special abilities are blood drain (1d4/rd), energy drain, dominate, create spawn, creatures of the night, gaseous form, spider climb, alternate form, vampire vulnerabilities, charm, connected, exalt, embolden, fascinate, demoralize.)

Other current occupants, who have taken refuge from the storm include:

"Big Andy" Heartstriker and his two boys, Lou and Marty. Big Andy is a high-ranking official in the Crossroads thieves' guild on his way to Dawson for business. He's also a regular customer of Ophelia's. He was here to spend some time with her when the storm hit.

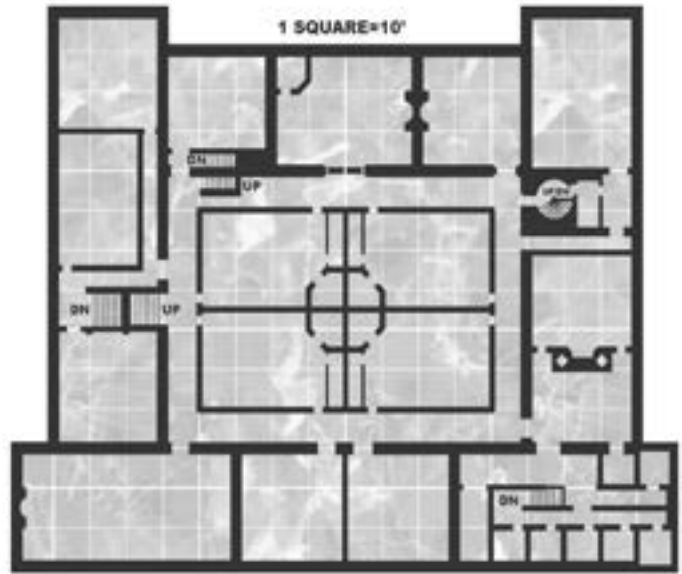
BIG ANDY (This lawful evil human's vital stats are AC 13, HD 4d6, HP 17. They move 30ft. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a longsword for 1d8 and a knife for 1d4+3 (dual wielding) or a pistol crossbow for 1d6. His weapons are all poisoned requiring a constitution saving throw at CL 4; failure means suffering an extra 1d6 damage and being at -2 to all attacks, saves and checks for 24 hours. His special abilities are intimidate others, hide, move silently, back attack, sneak attack +2d6.)

LOU AND MARTY (These lawful evil half orcs' vital stats are AC 13, HD 3d6, HP 14. They move 3ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with knives for 1d6+2 or pistol crossbows for 1d6 + poison. The poison deals 1d6 damage per round for 1d4 rounds unless a successful CL3 constitution save is made. The save can be made each round and a successful save negates all remaining damage. Their special abilities are hide, move silently, back attack, darkvision 60ft, enhanced smell, resistant to disease.)

Lola DeMarco is a washed-up entertainer who now sits at the bar in a faded and threadbare gown, drinking herself half-blind. She's bitter about her past, but doesn't want to talk about it. And no, you can't buy her a drink.

LOLA DEMARCO (This neutral human's vital stats are AC 13, HD 2d8, HP 12. She moves 30ft. Her primary attributes are mental. She attacks with a +2 magical long main gauche called "Needle" which deals 1d8+2 damage and can be completely

WINE CELLARS



2ND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



3RD FLOOR

ON YOUR WAY INN

concealed (can only be found by a physical search requiring a wisdom check at CL 10). Her special abilities are charm person 2/day, exalt, nimble (+2 on dexterity saves).

Missy Graywind and her daughter, Doris are the two figures the PCs saw entering the inn just before they arrived. Missy and Doris are refugees from a nearby village that was the victim of the very horde that's about to assault the hotel. They will not reveal their surname unless pressured, as it will give them away. See Act Three for the story of the village, but the demons are after Doris for the birthmark she bears, and are holding Missy's husband hostage.

MISSY GRAYWIND *(This chaotic good human's vital stats are AC 11, HD 1d6, HP 4. She moves 30ft. Her primary attributes are mental. She has no attacks (but can use weapons if needed), and her special abilities are iron will (+2 to wisdom saves).)*

DORIS GRAYWIND *(This neutral good human's vital stats are AC 12, HD 1d4, HP 2. She moves 30ft. Her primary attributes are physical. She has no attacks (but can use weapons if needed), and her special abilities are nimble (+2 to dexterity saves), hide, move silently.)*

Richard Pinebough, a traveling merchant who's in the business of selling fine hair brushes that are affordable to the common lady.

RICHARD PINEBOUGH *(This neutral human's vital stats are AC 12, HD 1d6, HP 4. He moves 30ft. His primary attributes are mental. He attacks with a hairbrush for 1d2 damage. His special abilities are charm (treat as charm person spell, but non-magical).)*

William Shadowlight is a young veteran who's missing his left leg. Once a kingsman of Beykla, he lost his leg battling the Kriel. While he's bitter about his lost limb, he is honestly glad to be out of the military, as he's a good man and secretly not a fan of the King's policies.

WILLIAM SHADOWLIGHT *(This lawful good human's vital stats are AC 14, HD 3d10, HP 22. He moves 15ft. His primary attributes are constitution, wisdom, charisma. He attacks with a longsword for 1d8. His special abilities are cure disease 1/wk, detect evil, divine aura, divine health, lay on hands 6HP 1/day, turn undead as 1st level cleric.)*

The inn consists of three floors. The main floor is a bar and eatery, and the second and third floors consist of a number of rooms for guests to board (small rooms with single beds, a small nightstand/dresser and a single rickety chair). There is, finally, an always-damp root cellar which Clu uses as storage. Behind a pile of old crates is a tunnel that leads to the forest behind the inn; Clu doesn't know it's here and it requires a CL 8 wisdom check to notice it, and then only if someone is actively searching the room. Of course, the woods behind the inn are overrun with demons and undead, so the tunnel won't do the heroes much good...but it's possible that eventually the monsters will discover the tunnel and get in.

THE SHAMBLING HORDES

The shambling shapes the heroes saw in the distance are hordes of undead and demonic creatures including ghouls, ghosts, vampire wolves, wights, wraiths, demons and shadows. The first thing the hordes do is to fan out and surround the place. The second thing they do is to destroy carts and kill horses, destroying any chance of rapid escape or mass evacuation. The only hope is to try and wait out the storm until the sun comes out and drives these things back.

CLERICS AND THE HORDES

These hordes have exceptional turn resistance. All undead are treated as though they are four hit dice higher than normal for purposes of turning, and only half the normal number are affected. In addition, no undead during the siege can be destroyed.

However, with a wisdom check, a cleric or paladin may divine that the entryways can be "sealed" by using holy water or even a drop of a cleric or paladin's blood placed in the doorway or on the window. This will keep the demons from entering, though they'll be able to reach over the threshold, meaning it's best to stay away from doors and windows even when sealed.

THE SIEGE

Don't rush through the siege. This is a relatively open-ended portion of the adventure, and it alone can comprise an entire evening of play or even longer, if you choose. On the other hand, if you're in a rush and want to get on to the next section of the adventure, you can tweak the hordes so that they can be turned, or otherwise allow the heroes to fight their way out, or simply run only a couple of hours of siege before the storm breaks, allowing the sun to shine through.

The key in running this assault is to build drama and tension among the people in the inn. They will get progressively more frightened as the night wears on and the undead and demons throw their might against the walls. Start picking off NPCs one by one to raise the tension until the heroes either wait out the siege or come up with a plan to get out.

MISSY AND DORIS

The undead want Doris, who carries a special birthmark that supports a prophecy that she will be the mother of demons. If they get her, the young girl will be indoctrinated into a faith of pure, depraved evil and darkness, and, when she comes of age, she will be mated to horrific entities from beyond.

The heroes should have the opportunity to learn this in some way, or at least to figure out that the demons want the girl for some nefarious purpose. That should prompt them to avoid letting this happen at any cost. It's left to the CK how exactly this happens. Certainly the demons will at some point offer to leave everyone else alone if they just turn over the little girl. Missy may also confide in the heroes that they came from a small farming village up the road a piece where a witch burning went bad. Her husband sacrificed himself to allow Missy and Doris to escape.

Missy and Doris don't reveal their surname easily, but if they are convinced to do so, after passing an intelligence check the heroes may also recognize the name Graywind as a noble house from Dawson. "Missy" is actually the Baroness Melissandra Graywind of Dawson. Certainly William is aware of their noble lineage and is likely to slip up and refer to them as "Milady" when he addresses them on occasion, an honorific which Missy will answer with a quick hiss to silence him.

Doris has been having awful nightmares over the past several months of a handsome, dark-skinned man who wants to marry her and change her into an evil faerie queen, in order to help him bring darkness over the world. This handsome man is, in fact, the Dream Demon in charge of the current siege on the tavern, and the main villain of the adventure. As such, he should survive this section of the module to appear again at the climax. If the PCs defeat him here, he still simply shows up, inexplicably, at the Grotto in Stage Three (possibly with more impressive stats, at the CK's option).

MAKING IT THROUGH THE NIGHT

To determine the number of hours the siege will last, either decide on what's best for your game or simply roll 2d4. This is how long the heroes must last until the sun comes up and destroys or drives off the hordes and allowing them to escape. From the start of the siege, play it out by the hour. Ask the group what they're doing each hour, and roll 1d4-1 to determine the number of events that take place that hour (0 is possible). Some potential events follow which you can pick or roll randomly. Other events are possible during this time; it's left to the CK to determine the scope and severity.

Choose an event or roll 1d10. Some events may occur more than once, but if a result doesn't make sense to occur a second time, roll again.

1. Ophelia lures a character off on their own and feeds. They return not remembering what happened, unless they beat her attempt to dominate them with a charisma save.
2. Ophelia slips away and betrays the group, opening a door to let the demons in.
3. One of the NPCs wanders too close to the window. A clawed arm blasts through the fortifications and begins to drag them out.
4. The demons demand that the people in the inn turn Doris over and promise to leave everyone else in peace if they get the girl. They even offer to release Missy's husband, the Baron Stephen Graywind. Some of the NPCs think it's a good idea.*
5. Something's gotten in! But how? And from where?



6. Just after an attack by the creatures, Missy cries out that Doris is missing! What's happened to her? Does she show back up? If so, is she still Doris?
7. Ophelia or the demon attempts to seduce someone into betraying the group.
8. A fight breaks out between two characters (PCs or NPCs or both), putting everyone at risk.
9. Someone panics or gets tired of sitting around, and rushes out into the night, opening the door to the demons rushing in.
10. The dream demon uses his powers to seduce, frighten or bargain with a PC to give him Doris.

*This event must occur at some point during the siege.

EXPERIENCE AWARDS

There should be opportunity for combat to occur during this siege; allow the characters to fight off attacks at least a few times to allow for some experience accumulation and heroics, protecting innocents from the onslaught of darkness. If nothing else, simply surviving the night should net a bonus XP award of 1,000 to 3,000 XP, depending on the nature and danger of the events that occur.

50 CASTLES & CRUSADES

MONSTER STATS

DEMON, DREAM (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are AC 18, HD 8d10, HP 51. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with two claws for 1-4 and one bite for 1-6 damage points of damage. It is immune to fear or fear type spells, can fly 60 feet per round and cast color spray once per day, alter twice per day (to appear as an attractive human), inflict light wounds, detect thoughts and charm person at will. It can also use a special thought projection ability at will; this ability works identically to the 9th level illusionist spell *dreaming*, save that the demon need not touch the victim, the ability has a 250 yard range, and the victim gets a charisma save to resist the effect.)

GHOSTS (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are AC 17, HD 4d8, HP 18. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d4 damage and a bite for 1d8 damage. Victims of attacks must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 minutes. Remove curse or remove paralysis negates the effect. They have darkvision 60ft. Any creature within 30 ft. must make a constitution save or take 1d4 subdual damage and -2 to all attacks for 2 rounds from the stench. Creatures killed and not eaten by ghosts will rise as ghouls within 2d4 days unless *bles* is cast upon them.)

GHOULS (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are AC 14, HD 2d8, HP 12. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d3 points of damage, and a bite for 1d6 points of damage. Victims must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4 minutes. Remove curse or remove paralysis negates the effect and elves are immune. They have darkvision 60ft.)

SHADOWS (1 per PC): These chaotic evil medium undead vital stats are AC 13, HD 3d12, HP 18. AC 13, move 30ft/40ft (fly). Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by incorporeal touch for 1d4 damage plus 1 point of strength damage. Lost strength returns at 1 point per 2d4 turns. Their special abilities are create spawn, darkvision 60ft., incorporeal (normal attacks deal ½ damage), blend, sunlight vulnerability (sunlight destroys them.)

VAMPIRE WOLVES (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 6d12, HP 45, AC 18. Their primary attributes are mental and physical. They attack with bite for 1d8 points of damage and a successful hit drains the victim of two levels of experience. Once locked on, the victim must make a strength save or the wolf latches on and automatically drains 1d6 points per round and the victim may not fight to resist, enjoying the experience. Its special abilities are blood drain, darkvision 60ft, create spawn, energy drain, gaseous form, entourage, electrical resistance (half), scent, spider climb, trip, turn resistance, vampire vulnerabilities)

WIGHT (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d12, HP 32, AC 15. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with claws for 1d6 points of damage, and a successful hit drains the victim of one level of experience. Its special abilities are create spawn, energy drain, and dark vision 60 ft.)

WRAITH (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 5d12, HP 37, AC 15. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with incorporeal touch for 1d6 points of damage and a successful hit drains the victim of one level of experience. A wraith is incorporeal and can only be hit by a +1 or better magic weapon. Animals fear wraith's and will not willingly approach within 30 feet of them. They can create spawn from any that they slay with their energy drain ability.)

RED HEADED STRANGER

Upon surviving the siege, Missy and Doris beg the PCs to escort them to Dawson, and to at least investigate the village to see if Stephen is still alive. They promise favors and rewards to the group if they help. The village, she insists, is on the way, and she is afraid that without her husband or a male heir the King may absorb their property and claim it for the crown.

Regardless of whether the PCs agree to accompany Missy and Doris the two will trail behind them, as they're all going in the same direction ~ to Dawson. The next day shows clear skies and sun, as though the storm of the prior night never happened.

At about twilight, the heroes come upon the still-smoldering ruins of the village of Postlethorpe. The thin trails of smoke are visible over the trees from about three miles away. A palpable aura of evil hangs heavy and oppressive over the area. Even though the skies are clear, it seems somehow dark and gray within this place. Only the buildings at the furthest edges of town are still intact. Bodies lay everywhere and the stench of charred flesh filling the air.

The town itself looks like the epicenter of some sort of massive blast. There is a smoldering pole at the center of the town, to which a charred corpse is lashed. The blast radius goes out from this point, with scorch marks and leveled buildings. It is almost as if some dark mage dropped a massive and horrifically powerful fireball on the town. Though the buildings further away are still standing, they're burned out and charred.

If the PCs have not yet heard the story of Postlethorpe, Missy can fill them in. Her husband was called in to adjudicate a property dispute among the people of this normally quiet town. By the time they arrived, they discovered that an elderly woman had been accused and tried by mob for being a witch. She'd already been lashed to a pole and the pyre set ablaze when they arrived.

Always a man who believed in justice, the baron began to fight his way through the mob only to discover that to his horror, the people had been correct: the woman was in league with demonic forces. The witch cried out a curse on the entire village and summoned forth her patron, the very black-skinned demon who had led the assault at the Inn. Hordes of creatures emerged from the woods and tore into the town. As the people fought bravely, Missy and Doris were separated from the Baron, and the last she saw of him was as he was being dragged away by the creatures.

It was at that point that the witch died with an inhuman howl and a blast of energy blew the fire outward, leveling the town. Missy and Doris only survived by diving into a hut which protected them from the blast, and then clawing their way out from under the wood and straw. It was then that they came face-to-face with the demon itself, who pointed at them and cried for its minions to bring Doris to it. From then, Missy's only thought was to protect her daughter and she fled at breakneck pace towards the Inn, where she took refuge with the others.

At first glance there doesn't seem to be a living soul in the place. Call for wisdom checks; anyone who succeeds (or whoever rolls the best in the case of everyone failing) will hear a soft whimpering from somewhere in the wreckage. Following the sound, the group finds a young girl with fiery red hair, wracked with sobs, laying curled up under the charred ruins of a hut. The girl is filthy, but aside from some bumps and bruises, seems to be intact. She's semi-catatonic and pulls away from anyone who tries to touch her with a panicked near-violence. Charisma checks (or good role playing, or both) will be needed to calm her down and get her to accompany the group.

Searching the wreck even further reveals no bodies that could be the Baron. Even those burned beyond recognition wear the simple rags and tunics of peasants, not the finery of a noble. Missy thus insists that her husband has been "taken" and they must try to track the creatures that took him and get him back. There's not enough time, she insists, to go to Dawson for help; they don't know how much time the Baron has.

Regardless, it's getting dark soon and it's probably time for the heroes to withdraw from the ruins and find a secure place to camp.

MAGIC AND POSTLETHORPE

Postlethorpe has been infected by the evil of the summoned demon. As such, certain spells will not function within several miles of the area. No magic designed to detect evil or alignments will function, simply radiating a palpable aura of supernatural evil everywhere. Banishment spells do not function, nor do spells designed to create any sort of door or portal between dimensions. Likewise, healing spells will fizzle—anyone subject to such magic is required to make a saving throw against the effect, using their most advantageous save. Success means the spell does not work. Those who are reduced to 0 hit points or below while in this region may not benefit from healing magic at all until they naturally recover to 1 hit point. This lasts even after removed from the area. Undead have turn resistance as described under the siege at the roadhouse.

THE GIRL

The little girl, whose name is Cassandra, is in fact the very witch the townsfolk thought burned. She has used *alter self* to appear as the young girl, and carries a charm that hides the magical aura of the spell. As they camp for the night, the girl will act suspiciously, but in ways that could be related to the trauma of

her experiences. She'll shy away from clerical-type characters and paladins, claiming they're the ones that brought this horror down upon the village and killed her parents. Likewise, she shies away from holy symbols, but tries to hide her disdain.

She will latch onto Doris, befriending the girl quickly (for reasons that by now should be obvious as she wants to kidnap the young woman).

Two things can possibly happen here. In the first option the party can somehow reveal the little girl as the witch ~ physically touching her with a holy symbol, holy water or the like will do, causing her to reveal herself suddenly and violently. In this case, characters have to make a charisma roll to not be stunned into inaction for a round, during which she'll levitate above the crowd and activate protection from missiles to offset any shots fired. At this point she'll deliver the following speech:

"You heroes think you have what it takes to stand against the legions of the Abyss? This world shall fall, and that girl is the key! We shall have her! Her very soul will be ours, to nourish us! The girl is marked!" She turns towards the Baroness. "Give her to me, Mother. Give her to me, and your husband will be spared. Fail, and we will consume his soul!"

She will then make one pass to try and grab Doris and carry the girl off. If she fails to do so, she will fly into the night, cackling madly and calling out, "Bring her to the grotto at the heart of the forest, Mother! You have two days; if you do not comply, your husband will be dead by dawn!"

The second option is if the girl is not revealed. In this case she will lead Doris off into the night via *suggestion* and *invisibility*. This should happen without the PCs noticing. Castle Keepers should do what they need in order to distract the character on watch, preying upon their weaknesses and using any spell or ability they need in order to pull off the stunt. It could even occur during the chaos of an attack on the camp (see below).

ENCOUNTERS DURING THE NIGHT

It is possible that there may be an assault on the camp that night, in an effort to carry Doris away. This could take the form of ghouls and ghosts, wights, kriel servants of the demon, even werewolves if the CK deems it necessary. This is left to the discretion of the Castle Keeper. It comes down to how tough a time the PCs have had of it so far. The goal, after all, is not to kill off the party, but to create drama and give them a reason to move forward!

TRACKING THE DEMONS

The next morning, any characters with the ability to track will be able to pick up the trail of the demons through the forest. Not all of them fly, after all. This requires a tracking roll for any PCs who have such an ability; alternately, Missy may be able to recall that there was once an old druid's grove deep in the forests which locals referred to as the "Grotto." Though no longer in use by the druids, it has up until now been known as an idyllic place, untouched by civilization and beautiful. The locals consider it sacred.

It's also exactly the kind of place that demons would seek to manipulate and corrupt.

Tracking the demons into the forest takes the majority of the day. What they find at the grotto when they arrive will depend largely upon how the events of the prior night progressed.

THE GROTTA

The Grotto is largely as Missy described it to the heroes, but now a pall of darkness hangs over it. It's a large clearing, perhaps 100 feet across, in the heart of the forest, beneath a canopy of thick greenery. A large pond dominates the center, measuring about 35 feet across. A low mound rises up from the center of the pond. The place is actually furnished, but with furniture that is entirely natural ~ chairs, benches and small tables fashioned by magical shaping of trees and rocks. The sense of the whole is an idyllic lounge, like one would find in a noblewoman's parlor or an elite club, but entirely natural.

It would be a stunning place of rest under normal circumstances, but now it's a beacon of corruption. Any supernaturally aware characters will sense an aura of evil about the place. The green of the foliage seems dark and sickly; the waters have a black, brackish look about them. No sunlight filters through the thick canopy.

THE MOUND IN THE LAKE

If Doris was taken the night before, the PCs will find her tied to a rock altar on the mound at the center of the small lake. Demons flank her on either side, and the Dream Demon stands over her, chanting, with a knife in its hand. Its intention is not to kill the girl. She will be hurt, however, as it carves dark symbols into her flesh to "baptize" her into her destiny as the future Mother of Darkness.

If the heroes managed to save Doris, they will rather see Stephen bound on his hands and knees, beaten and bloody, at the center of the mound. He also will be flanked by demons with the Dream Demon standing over him, with a large, curved blade. The Demon welcomes the group, and demands that they turn "My future bride" over or Stephen will be killed.

THE BATTLE OF POSTLETHORPE GROTTA

The battle, at this point, is joined. The heroes must do something to save Stephen ~ a task which is not easy, all things considered. It's left to the Castle Keeper to decide how many foes stand against them, but there are strange swamp beasts haunting the waters ~ bog monsters created from an (even more) degenerate mutation of goblins and toads. These creatures will emerge from the waters to stop characters from rushing to Stephen's aid.

In order to rescue Stephen, the heroes will need to fight their way through the demons and monsters, and destroy the Dream Demon. Heroes who have gained access to spells like *banishment* may make short work of the other demons in the area, but the Dream Demon is mysteriously immune to this spell. The reason for this (though the PCs have no way of knowing it) is that the

demon is linked to the soul of Doris, which anchors him to this plane. He can only be banished by directly vanquishing him.

If a spell like *banishment* is used on the Dream Demon, it will simply shrug it off, but Doris will scream in pain, clueing the heroes in on this connection. The girl has no idea what's going on however; she's truly an innocent in all of this, save for the prophecy.

In the end, this is the climax of the adventure and the stakes are high. The heroes are fighting for not just a nobleman of Dawson, but for the soul of a child. This could set them up as great heroes or failed adventurers. This should not be an easy battle, but if he is cut free and given a weapon, Stephen, though battered, will stand by the heroes and fight for his family.

CASSANDRA THE WITCH (*This chaotic evil fae hag has vital stats HD 4d10, AC 14, HP 22, move 30ft/fly 60ft. Her primary attributes are all. Her special abilities are the following spell-like abilities as a 5th-level caster: bane (3/day), barkskin (2/day), cause disease (1/day), cause light wounds (at will), charm person (3/day), entangle (4/day), faerie fire (4/day), magic missile (at will), obscuring mist (3/day), summon swarm (1/day)*)

DEMON (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d10, AC 18, HP 31, move 40ft (fly 60ft). Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with two claws for 1-4 and one bite for 1-6 damage points of damage. It is immune to fear or fear type spells, can fly 60 feet per round and cast color spray once per day.*)

DREAM DEMON (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 8d10, AC 18, HP 51, move 40ft (fly 60ft). Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with two claws for 1-4 and one bite for 1-6 damage points of damage. It is immune to fear or fear type spells, Gweits death throes (treat as summon swarm (centipedes) cast by 8th level caster upon Dream Demon's death), can fly 60 feet per round and has the following spell-like abilities: color spray once per day, alter self twice per day (to appear as an attractive human), inflict light wounds, detect thoughts and charm person at will. It can also use a special thought projection ability at will; this ability works identically to the 9th-level illusionist spell dreaming, save that the demon need not touch the victim, the ability has a 250 yard range, and the victim gets a charisma save to resist the effect.)*

SWAMP BEASTS (*These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 15, HP 17, move 30ft, 40ft (swim), 60ft (leap). Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with spear for 1-8 and tongue for 1-6 plus 1-4 acid. They can leap 60 feet, their tongue lash has a 15 ft reach. They have darkvision 120ft. and can spew globules of slime up to 30ft. Those hit suffer 1d6 acid damage and must succeed at a strength save or be restrained as per the hold person spell. A new save attempt may be made each round to break free, or the character can be cut free by an unrestrained ally.)*

STEPHEN GRAYWIND (*This LG human knight has vital stats HD 4d10, AC 11 (without armor), HP 22, move 30ft. His primary attributes are strength 15, wisdom 14 and charisma 16.*)

His special abilities are birthright mount, horsemanship, inspire and embolden. He currently has no mount (it was killed at the inn) nor armor and is unarmed.)

AFTERMATH

Regardless of whether the heroes save Stephen Graywind, if they have comported themselves well, they have made a friend this day. If the entire Graywind clan survives, Stephen vows that the heroes have a friend and ally in Dawson and should they need anything from him, he will help them.

If Stephen dies, but Doris and Missy survive, the widow will grieve deeply, but will still be grateful for the heroes' help and will ask if there is anything she can do to aid their quest (including introducing them to a sea captain who is an old friend of the family).

If only Missy survives, the outcome will be similar, but she will be too grief-stricken to make any offers. The PCs will have to ask for her help, which she will give, but as in a daze. In the years to come she may recover and view the heroes' actions as just, or she may come to irrationally hate and blame them for what happened.

If only Doris survives, what to do with the girl is left to the heroes, and is beyond the scope of this adventure. Certainly the responsibility for the girl would fall upon the Crown as she then becomes a part of the estate that would be absorbed back into the King's holdings. Alternately, she could be delivered to an orphanage where she'd be kept off the demons' radar (hopefully). One of the PCs might even decide to take her on as a ward. In the end, the CK should work with whatever plan the PCs come up with in this case.



UNCLOUDY DAY

The rest of the journey goes mercifully without further incident, and the heroes arrive at the city of Dawson. The current leg of their journey is coming to a close, and the next lies upon the horizon.

ARRIVAL AT DAWSON

At least a day's journey out the heroes begin to see the signs of civilization, in term of homesteads and small farms dotting the countryside. These outliers are known as "non-propers," with those inside the city called "proppers." Farmers tend to be the wealthiest of the non-propers and often sit on the "People's Guild," or a group of less well-off (read: poor) politicians who lobby for the needs of these outlying farmsteads.

Citizens in the area are treated well and have rights, and the Graywind family is well-liked in the area, being one of the few noble houses that don't snub or look down upon non-proppers.

THE WALLS OF DAWSON

The heroes can see the walls of Dawson some ways off. They have a steep 45 degree angle that makes them nearly impossible to break through, because the lowest points are the thickest. The mighty city has never fallen since the walls were added, nor have they ever been breached. Climbing is even more difficult because the burning oil spills don't go away. The walls themselves are a marvel of dwarven engineering the like of which has never been seen the like in history or anywhere else in the world.

POPULATION: Dawson is home to one of largest populations in the world, at just over 600,000 souls, mostly human with some elves. Halflings are disliked and mistrusted as "travelers, thieves and beggars" and gnomes are lumped in with halflings. Absolutely zero orcs, half orcs or other monstrous humanoids are allowed within the walls. However, if the heroes are with the Baron they may be allowed in, but only with an armed escort at all times.

TOWN LAYOUT: Dawson is arranged in two general neighborhoods: the East and West Sides. Both sides have their own nobles and the income is about the same ~ divided between the haves, the middle or merchant class, and the have-nots. Three major bridges, six smaller bridges, and 12 ferry masters between the east and west side.

Ferry masters only transport goods for merchants and do not accept civilian travelers without charging a hefty coin.

The real difference between east and west comes from the many criminal organizations that are on either side. This is where most of the monstrous humanoids find refuge if they wish to remain in the city. Each gang/guild has territory north and south of each side, always vying for control of the streets.

The sewer system is massive, and the rapidly flowing water of the Dawson is channeled into the sewers with massive brick channels. The flowing water then cleans out the main sewer arteries. This ebbs and flows with the tide, so it creates interesting dangers when moving in the sewers.

Merchant districts are evenly spread throughout the city with “free markets” open in various locations. These are brick masonry works where smaller merchants that can not afford a full time shop or building can rent space from the city and set up tents.

The docks are significant and broken into three types. The central docks are known as the river docks. These are for river merchants and are on both sides of the river. They’re owned by the merchants’ guild and have no east/west allegiance.

The west docks are poorer and can’t handle larger ships. Fishing vessels and other shops dock here. It’s rumored that the floating pirate city has contacts in these docks for those that wish to find it. But, the city has been trying forever to get an in with the east docks to infiltrate the fabled floating pirate city and many do not believe it really exists (It does).

The east docks are large, and have a base of stone piers. These only accept the largest military and merchant vessels (such as the *Wyvern*, on which our heroes will be traveling).

There are eateries, rooming houses, inns and taverns scattered throughout the city of varying quality. Seafood is, naturally, a common menu item, and the local wine and mead are outstanding even in the lowliest taverns, with each tavern brewing their own vintage of wines, meads, spirits and ales. Local favorites are ginger beer and root beer, fermented with each house’s own special blend of spices.

The king has a palace in Dawson, but prefers to spend his time in his keep far to the southeast of Central City. The city is managed by a duke appointed by the king. This appointment changes regularly, with the current duke being Lord Alistair Humphries. He tends to be rather aloof towards the people and isn’t often seen walking or driving through the streets (though his tax collectors certainly are!)

There are literally hundreds of religions/cults/groups in the city to just about every cause, faith and movement one can imagine. Most of the gambling dens are run by the church of Luckerey, the god of luck. Most of Luckerey’s cult members are the much-maligned halflings.

People from Dawson are proud, and somewhat ignorant, sheltered and privileged. They tend to be unaware of events in the rest of the world and are more than a little insular and prejudiced towards people from other nations and regions. This isn’t because they are evil. On the contrary, most are decent, hard-working folk just making a living. Unfortunately, many of them have simply never left the city and they can’t comprehend the real dangers of the world. This often makes it all-too-easy for dark forces like the White Sash to gain footholds and strength in their criminal underworld.

THE WYVERN

The heroes will find the ship they’re looking for at the docks. The ship is a famed merchant and privateering vessel in the service of Beykla known as the *Wyvern*. It is helmed by one captain Jonathan Silvermane, a swashbuckler and likeable chap whose men deeply respect him. Silvermane is not afraid to head north. He’s the sort who charges head-first into danger without a second thought, just for the fun of it, and who leads the kind of charmed life where he always seems to get away with laughing at death. He is famed for crying out, “One day the perils of the sea may claim me, but that day is not today!” just before doing something other people would consider phenomenally stupid.

Fortunately for Silvermane, his crew will gladly follow him straight into the mouth of Hell itself.

There are two ways that the heroes could find Silvermane. The first is if they have rescued Stephen Graywind, or managed to arrive safely with Missy and Doris in tow. Assuming they have told the nobles of their quest, Stephen or Missy will be glad to introduce them to Silvermane, an old friend of the Graywind family, and bid him take the heroes on their journey, even funding the expedition.

The other way is to simply ask around town. Heading straight to the docks can easily turn up information about the *Wyvern*, especially if the heroes mention they’re looking to head north. Someone is bound to point out that, “Th’only knave mad enough t’make a journey like that’s Silvermane, o’ the *Wyvern*. I hear’d he’s just made port and is set t’leave in a day or three. Ye might catch him if ye hurry!”

True to the information the PCs receive, the *Wyvern* is in port for three days, plenty of time for the heroes to take some rest and respite, resupply, prepare for their northern journey (potentially with funding and support from a noble house) and get into some trouble while in town. After all, they’ve made enemies of the Order of the White Sash, who have agents everywhere, including in the dark corners of Dawson. And there is still a certain assassin that they may not have been able to kill yet (or whom they may think is dead, but has somehow survived to plague them once again).

...we’ll leave that to the Castle Keeper to decide, though.

6: SKY TURNED RED

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Episode 6 of our 8-part mini-campaign for **Abyss Walker: The Hallowed Oracle**. In this adventure, designed for a group of fourth-level characters, our heroes will continue to be engaged in astounding adventures. So far, they have been busy rescuing villages from demonic forces, doing battle with evil sorcerers and assassins, and uncovering a dark, global conspiracy that is tied to a prophecy into which they have become inexorably embroiled. They have heard the name “Abyss Walker” and know that it is a figure prophesied to rise, but still don’t know if their role is to aid or stop this figure or whether it is a hero or villain. They only know that a cult known as the Order of the White Sash has been out to oppose them at every turn.

Currently, our heroes have booked passage on *The Wyvern*, a merchant and privateering vessel under the command of one Johnathon Silvermane, out of Dawson. Their destination is the Polar Flats, where they hope to find the answers to the questions they seek, and face their destinies head on. But danger lurks at every turn in the world of Terrigan, and even at sea they must be at their most alert.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Our heroes depart from Dawson for the icy north. The *Wyvern* sails up the coast under the command of Captain John Silvermane, intending to stop in the elven kingdom of Minok



Vale before he island hops across the sea to the Polar Flats. He has trade cargo to unload, and must pick up supplies for their trip north.

During their stopover at the Vale, the ship’s first mate, Christof Curtis, is kidnapped. Unfortunately, this leaves the crew in a pickle ~ the Elves don’t allow non-elves away from the trade port, and they aren’t taking the kidnapping seriously. As such, the crew is forced to mount a rescue party inland, which could, if they’re discovered, lead to war between the elves and Dawson. Still, the captain is unwilling to depart without his first mate who is like a brother to him and to whom he owes his life.

To keep up appearances while secretly trying to rescue his mate, Silvermane turns to the heroes. Thus begins an adventure into a magical wood with fey, hidden groves and dark conspiracies. In the end, it turns out that it is the evil ex-wife of the elf king who has perpetrated the kidnapping. She is in league with the White Sash and is trying to orchestrate a war between Dawson and the Vale. The PCs kill her in the end, saving the life of the elf king, which cements relations rather than resulting in war.

The Journey continues...

ADVENTURES IN TERRIGAN...AND ELSEWHERE

This adventure is part 6 of our ongoing campaign and is set in the world of Terrigan, the core setting of the **Abyss Walker** series of novels by Shane Moore. It’s a colorful and detailed world of dark deeds, great heroics, and an epic battle between the forces of light and darkness, where every decision characters make has their lives and the fate of the world hanging in the balance. While this adventure is tied to that particular campaign setting, it can be run in your home world as a standalone adventure, with only a few minor changes.

The story, at its heart, is a tale of a kidnapping and conspiracy into which the PCs are thrown. It can be set in just about any forest or elven kingdom, and is easily removed from the story of the Abyss Walker if need be. Simply insert it any time the heroes are traveling and stop off for supplies at an insular kingdom with very limited access to foreigners. An important NPC they are guarding or a close friend is kidnapped by the conspiracy, which intends to start a war with a neighboring kingdom. The race is on!

KIDNAPPED!

SETTING SAIL

After a few days in Dawson, our heroes join the intrepid crew of the *Wyvern* under the command of Captain Johnathon Silvermane to begin their journey north. The launch is a whirlwind of organized chaos and activity, with sailors rushing to and fro, freeing moorings, raising sails, and undertaking

all the hustle and bustle of getting the vessel underway. Any characters with experience as a seaman may be able to help out with the process. Otherwise it's all they can do to stay out of the way as they watch the breathtaking and staggeringly efficient process. Our heroes have seen this at least once before, but it never ceases to be amazing, and the *Wyvern's* crew are more efficient than any they've ever seen.

SILVERMANE AND CURTIS

When it's all done and the *Wyvern* is on the open seas, things relax and it's surprisingly tranquil. The captain invites the PCs to take dinner with him and his first mate Christof in Silvermane's cabin. As they sit, the heroes have the opportunity to get to know the captain and mate, both of whom are genuine and friendly. Though they act like brothers, the two men couldn't possibly be more different. Silvermane is a serious man with a wry grin and a quiet sense of humor who nevertheless has sincere eyes and a brave heart. He is earnest and inquisitive, and honest to a fault.

Christof Curtis, on the other hand, is the polar opposite ~ at least in personality. Though every bit as honorable as Silvermane, the huge black man is boisterous, rowdy and possessed of a booming laugh. He appreciates a good insult and can give and take one with equal authority. He's one for raising rousing toasts and clanking his flagon hard enough to spew ale all over the tabletop. Christof is a former gladiator who revels in conflict, even good-natured, and runs a friendly fight club among the sailors which helps to keep grudges at a minimum and allows the men to blow off steam.

He is never seen without his unique sword, a heavy, ornately-carved and sharply curved blade from an exotic southern region that Curtis claims was a gift from a noble patron during his gladiatorial days.

JOHNATHON SILVERMANE (*This neutral good human pirate's vital stats AC 14, HP 33, HD 6d6, move 30ft. His primary attributes are charisma, dexterity and wisdom. His significant attributes are dexterity 16, constitution 13, charisma 15. He attacks with a magical cutlass for 1d6+3 damage (+6 to hit). His special abilities are seamanship (+3 to related tasks), taunt (charisma; 2 enemies; must focus attacks on Silvermane and are at -2), overwhelming assault (first round; +2 init, -2 AC), pirate-speak dialect, wet the deck with blood (dispatch enemies with less than 5 hit points), sneak attack (+2 hit/+4 damage), nimble combatant (+1 AC vs. one enemy). He carries a cutlass and wears a leather jerkin. The pirate character class can be found in the **Amazing Adventures Companion**.)*

CHRISTOF CURTIS (*This chaotic good human former gladiator has vital stats AC 12, HD 5d10, HP 32, move 30ft. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity, constitution. His significant attributes are strength 17, constitution 15, charisma 14. He attacks with a heavy-bladed scimitar for 1d10+3 (+8 to hit) damage. His special abilities are weapon specialization, combat dominance. He carries an ornate scimitar with a heavy-tipped blade and wears leather armor.*)

THE MINOK VALE

The *Wyvern* makes port at the Minok Vale after sailing for a few days, in order to offload trade goods and resupply for the journey north. This elven sovereignty is nominally within the boundaries of Beykla, but forms its own insular kingdom. It is a collection of vales in the northeast corner of the region, composed of several nominal nations which have come together to form a collective. While the numbers of ruling families on the council vary from year to year, there are normally (and currently) around 12 families. The Vale's population is about 50,000 at any one time, but can swell to ten times that during great and rare events when all the families come together from far and wide.

Of these, the Overmoon family is royalty and the entire collective is ruled by a king from the Overmoon dynasty. The current king is Christopher Calamon Overmoon, who sits upon his polished oaken chair and dons the golden crown with eight horns representing the eight vales of Minok.

In terms of influence, the Strongbow family sit just below the Overmoon and have been members since the beginning. The Al-Kalidus family has fallen completely out of favor with the collective and has been banished from the Minok Vale entirely, due to the crimes of the king's ex-wife, Surelda, who is at the center of a recent (in the long memories of elves) scandal which rocked the kingdom.

Surelda and her son Kalen turned to shadow and the worship of demons in their unholy thirst for power and dominance over the vale, plotting to raise their family supreme by deposing King Overmoon. The two created a network of spies and assassins throughout the palace halls and very nearly succeeded in assassinating the king. After seven failed attempts, they were unmasked and charged with treason. They then became desperate and staged an open coup, which failed quickly and decisively.

Unfortunately for the Vale, Surelda, Kalen, and a number of their supporters vanished deep into the forest where they cemented their power base in such a way that they have not yet been able to be uprooted. King Overmoon is a good-hearted man and does not wish to see a great deal of bloodshed. As such he is loath to send a military force against the Al-Kalidus traitors, who have been completely silent since their exile. Indeed, the king has no idea where the exiles even are, and has let the folk of the Vale believe they are gone entirely, departed for distant lands where they pose no threat to the Vale. Still, the house of Overmoon is vigilant against their return.

The Vale's buildings and structures exist high in the tops of Illiander trees, which are like enormous redwoods, though far larger and more massive than any redwood has ever grown. These trees are not native to Beykla, but were transplanted from the mysterious elven lands of Vidora. The structures themselves are equally mysterious and magical, being constructed (more aptly, magically fashioned) from the very wood of the trees, and amber crystal from the tree sap.

There is a ground-based harbor where ships from the outside world can dock, and a Barbarian's Quarter near the docks where outsiders can visit and relax (such as it is) while in port. This is the only part of the Vale which is open to non-elves who with very rare exceptions are almost never permitted into the Vale proper. The closest most people can say that they have been was to have seen the gleaming wood and crystal structures shining high amongst the trees, and the distant and tiny figures of elves moving among the high bridges connecting one tree to another.

EXPLORING THE DOCKS

As is usual with stopovers, the *Wyvern* expects to be in dock for a bit. Specifically, the PCs have two days to explore the outlanders area and sample the local fare. A few of the more notable establishments in the region include Old Auntie's Mill and Grille and the Illander Grove Inn,

OLD AUNTIE'S MILL

Old Auntie is a retired female half-orc adventurer who is every bit as ugly as she is sweet tempered. Nobody knows her real name and anyone who asks is just told, "Oh, just call me Auntie, Dearie." She serves the kind of hearty, home-cooked meals that sailors appreciate. The tavern is a good old-fashioned, sawdust-on-the-floor, dark wood establishment that smells of pipe smoke and stale beer.

It's a rowdy place, but Old Auntie doesn't tolerate fights. Her bouncer, a bruiser named Bruce who looks like an ogre but is actually just a really big and ugly human, helps keep the patrons in order. If he can't handle it, more than one drunken vagrant has discovered that Auntie retired because she wanted to, not because she had to. Auntie and Curtis are old friends from their gladiatorial days.

Her best known dishes include lamb stew, venison steaks with seasoned red potatoes, and roast rabbit with fried rice. Any of these meals cost 1 silver per plate and all come with Auntie's fresh-baked bread which may well be the best bread ever baked anywhere in the world. Indeed, as good as her food and drink is, it's the bread that's the main attraction for most, and you can get just a plate of bread and hand-churned butter for 5 copper. Auntie, of course, won't give up her secret, save to say she mills the grain herself.

Beverage-wise she has a broad selection of wines, ales and spirits with her apple pie mead (1gp per glass) being especially well-loved due to both its rich and sweet flavor and its high alcohol content. It's a favorite dessert, and, most say, well worth the high cost. In addition, her house-brewed sarsaparilla, root beer and ginger beer (1cp each per flagon) are well-liked. Her wine (5cp per flagon) is passable, and her rice spirits (5 cp/shot) are quite potent, if a bit flavored of grain and not much else. Her beers, again all brewed in-house, consist of a red ale, which is characterized by a sour and somewhat tart character, a heavy oatmeal stout which many have called a meal unto itself, and a bitter ale which is very assertive and satisfying. Any beer is 3 cp per flagon.

OLD AUNTIE (*This neutral 8th level half-orc fighter has vital stats AC 15, HP 58, HD 8d10, AC 15, Move 30ft. Her primary attributes are strength and wisdom. Her significant attributes are strength 17, constitution 15, wisdom 16. She attacks with two butcher knives for 1d6+8 damage and is +12 to hit (+9/+6 when attacking with both). Her special abilities are weapon specialization (knives; +2), combat dominance. Her apron is fashioned from an old suit of +3 leather armor and still provides its magic bonus, and her twin butcher knives are forged from a +3 magic longsword she once wielded, and still provide their bonus.*)

BRUCE (*This neutral 6th level human monk has vital stats AC 15, HP 63, HD 6d10, Move 50ft. His primary attributes are strength, constitution and dexterity. His significant attributes are strength 13, dexterity 15, constitution 16. He attacks bare-handed twice for 1d8+1/1d4+1 (+6 to hit). His special abilities are iron body (+3), stun attack, deflect missiles (2/rd), iron fists (+2), slow fall, feign death. He carries no treasure save his regular pay of 1d12 silver in a belt pouch.*)

THE ILLANDER GROVE INN

Run by an elven woman named Cory (like Old Auntie, she won't reveal her full name), who is the object of affection for every sailor (male or female) who walks through her door, the Illander Grove Inn claims to provide a genuine elvish experience for visitors to the Vale. It truly is a magical place, though a bit overwrought for tourism's sake, presenting more of a "what outsiders think elves are like" experience. It's an expensive and upscale establishment, but most people who visit say it's worth it if for no other reason than to gaze on Cory and listen to her sing.

The entire place is decorated with natural wood, plants and leaves, which creates a pleasantly fresh feel to the air as opposed to the smoke-and-stale-beer smell of Auntie's. The seats and furnishings are all a combination of stone, wood and magically-formed crystal which look hard but are astoundingly comfortable upon which to sit.

Popular menu items here are, again, honey-mead, although Cory prefers to stick to a straight sweet mead rather than the flavored fare one gets at Auntie's. Her mead is also 1gp per glass, with a decanter available for 5 gold pieces which will net six glasses. She also offers genuine elf wine in varieties distilled from grapes, plum, elderberry, blackberry, raspberry and cherry. The cost for wine is the same as for mead. Cory does not offer ales or other beverages.

Food-wise she has specially prepared dishes of local grains, flowers, nuts, fruits, and meats including game meats which are seasoned with her secret elven recipe. Many of the dishes include combinations of fruits, meats and flowers that most would never even consider but, upon tasting them, the experience is magical. As an upscale establishment, dishes cost 1gp per meal.

Desserts include elvish honey cakes, raisin custard, and Illander-fruit pie (when it's in season). Desserts are 5sp each.

Specialty offerings at the Inn include Fig Root and Lunarian Water. Fig Root is a delicious Strongbow root that is dried and soaked in spirits, which has a flavor akin to chocolate and licorice. It costs 5gp each. Lunarian Water, which costs 500gp per draught, comes from enchanted wells that priestly elves, or other good forest creatures, bless by the powers of Leska to rejuvenate and heal one another.

LUNARIAN WATER

This water bestows a number of rejuvenating effects. First, it heals 1d6 points of damage. Second, it instantly rejuvenates the drinker as though they had just rested for a full 8 hours. Finally, it has the effects of an anti-toxin, allowing an additional saving throw against any toxins from which the drinker suffers, at a +2 bonus. This includes alcohol, and one of its more popular uses among sailors (and its colloquial name among seafarers) is “Wake-up juice.” A person can benefit from a draught of Lunarian water but once per 24 hours.

CORY (*This chaotic good 8th level bard/chromatic mage (Green/Enchantment) has vital stats AC 19, HP 26, HD 6d6, Move 30ft. Her primary attributes are wisdom and charisma. Her significant attributes are dexterity 18, wisdom 15, charisma 18. She attacks with crystal rapier for 1d6 damage, plus 1d6 cold damage on a successful hit, crossbows for 1d8, or a potion of improved sleep which affects a 20' radius area and has a CL 10 save. Her special abilities are decipher script, exalt, legend lore, fascinate, fast reaction, spells (56 threads; level 0 – 8, level 1 – 5, level 2 – 3, level 3 – 2, level 4 – 1), Secondary School (Blue/Evocation), spellcraft, forbidden lore.*)

TREASURE: She wears *elven chain* under her clothes, plus a *cloak of protection +2* and a *ring of protection +2* as well as a *necklace of charm* that requires any who view her to make a CL 10 charisma save or be affected as per the *charm person* spell while in her presence. If forced to fight, she carries a long, needle-like rapier made of unbreakable crystal which deals 1d6 damage, plus 1d6 cold damage on a successful hit, and has a pair of loaded crossbows under her bar which deal 1d8 damage, as well as a *potion of improved sleep* which she can throw and explodes to affect a 20' radius area; the save against this potion's effects is also CL 10.

Besides Cory, all of her staff are trained combatants who are experts at incapacitating enemies (treat all as 4th level rogues).



CHROMATIC MAGIC

As a reminder, in the world of Terrigan magic works by the manipulation of threads from a weave. These threads are only visible to mages and are of various colors which represent what we traditionally think of in fantasy as schools of magic. The evil magi are necromancers, and focus on black threads.

In game terms, to cast a spell, a mage expends “threads” equal to the spell’s level plus one, and makes a SIEGE check using their best mental attribute with a CL equal to the spell’s level. This applies only to spells within that mage’s specialized color. Casting spells outside the specialized color costs double the thread cost, and increases the CL of the Spellcraft check by 1.

Cory’s exact spells are not listed, as she is an experienced mage and should be considered to have prepared any spells she’ll need for a given encounter. The CK can fill in her “prepared slots” as they go, adding necessary spells on the fly until the limit for a level has been reached. Most of her spells will be Green (Enchantment) or Blue (Evocation; her secondary school; she can cast up to level 2 evocation spells at standard cost). Any other spells she has cost double the normal thread cost.

CORY’S SLEEPING DRAUGHT

Cory’s sleeping potion is a special alchemical mixture that she cooks up from a diluted form of Jahallawa extract, a highly toxic sap which undiluted can place a person into a coma for weeks. Only she has the recipe and the key elements are in her mind, nowhere on paper. She nominally is permitted to create it only for the Royal Guard and she keeps the King supplied with it. She keeps a few doses for her own personal defensive use, something the crown treats as a “blind eye” situation. She doesn’t own up to it and the Guard are not permitted to ask about it, and to overlook it should the circumstance of its use by Cory (and by Cory alone) ever arise. The formula would be worth a king’s ransom to other nations...if it could ever be duplicated (and it never has).

KIDNAPPED!

Things start to go bad that night when Curtis doesn’t return to the ship. He was last seen at the Illander Grove Inn, where he left with three elven maidens. Silvermane has gone to question the bar staff, all of whom admit to having seen Curtis there, but did not know the women with whom he left.

Asking around further, with the proper wisdom or charisma checks and at the CK’s discretion, open up dark implications ~ it appears that for reasons unknown Curtis was kidnapped. Even further, Curtis is an accomplished warrior so what it would take to kidnap him is disturbing unto itself.

Eventually, the heroes and crew should come up with enough information to gather that he was led (or dragged) into the forests by a group of 3 elf maidens. Accounts will vary with many people questioned seeming confused and dazed when they answer the questions; some claim he went happily and willingly. Others claim he looked like he was in a daze, some

say he was struggling and others claim he looked unconscious and was hauled off. They can direct the heroes to the general region of the forests where Curtis was led, but cannot recall any specifics. Attempting to question the Strongbow guards who patrol the area to keep outsiders in their quarter is largely fruitless. None admit to having seen anything and issue veiled threats about the consequences of non-elves leaving the Outsiders quarter.

DON'T LET THE DICE DO THE TALKING

Here we run into a common issue with fantasy gaming ~ the dice should not rule your table. The information above is essential to the players continuing the adventure. Thus, while it's always a good idea to have the players roll, as it gives them a sense of control, it's always a bad idea to withhold essential information.

This is where role playing comes into play. If your players make a valiant effort then they should be granted a hefty bonus to their checks, So unless they really seriously botch the roll, the players should be able to find the information. If everyone tanks their checks, you can have a random street urchin claim to have seen something and give them the basics, for example.

How long you wish to make the questioning phase last, or how you get the players this information, is up to you. Regardless, never leave your players stranded without the important information they need to continue the game ~ in this case, that Curtis appears to have been taken into the woods by three elf maidens, and a relative spot where he was last seen.

The problem that arises here is multi-fold. First, Silvermane is not leaving without his best friend and first mate. Second, the elves will not allow outsiders to enter their domain. Asking the Guard to investigate yields a hand-waving and a vague promise to "look into the issue" along with warnings of what happens to interlopers who sneak off into their forests ~ a clear reference to Curtis. They seem to believe that if the heroes' claim is true, then Curtis has willingly violated their laws and will be executed.

Such it is that after a period of investigation and useless begging for help among the elves, Silvermane calls the heroes together in his cabin.

"My friends," he says, "I fear I must ask a grave task of you, and I will understand if you refuse. I have other men who are eager to take on this mission, but they are not nearly as experienced as you in such matters and I feel you would have the best chance at success.

"In case you haven't already guessed, I want you to steal into the Minok Vale and find Curtis. Discover whatever plot it was that took him from us and return him safely, if possible. If not," he gets grim and has to pause a moment before continuing, "If not, bear his body home."

If the PCs ask why he won't come, he says, "I would! Curtis and I have been through all but Hell together. He is like a brother to me. But I am already under direct watch and suspicion due

to our investigations and requests for help. The elves know me here. They do not, however, know you, nor do they know my full crew contingent. Thus, I can easily keep up illusions that we are going about our business while you look into this matter. Please, I beg you; will you go?"

TROUBLESHOOTING

It is assumed the heroes will undertake the mission. If they refuse, Silvermane will neither ask them any favors, nor do them any favors from here on out. They have cost themselves a potentially valuable ally in the future.

He will send his other men, who will promptly be captured by the elves. The entire crew will be arrested and jailed on suspicion of espionage, as the entire King's Guard shows up at the docks the next morning. Skip to the end of Act Two and introduce Alexis, who suspects the former queen's conspiracy and offers to free the crew if the heroes undertake a mission for her.

If the heroes demand pay, Silvermane reminds them that he's already giving them free passage to the frozen wastes of the north, a journey that few other sailing vessels would risk. Despite that, he agrees to pay them 50 gold each for their troubles.

If the heroes demand that Silvermane accompany him or go to lengths to shame him as a coward, he will accompany them. His absence will quickly be noted by the elves, and the capture of the heroes will occur more quickly in Act Two.

INTO THE WILDS

RUNDOWN

In this section our heroes track Curtis into the woods and discover signs of a dark elf conspiracy. They are then captured by the throne. They must convince none other than the King not only of their innocence, but that there are darker forces at work before they instigate a war. The worst happens when the King himself disappears . . . but a new ally makes herself known and hope rekindles.

TRACKING CURTIS

The heroes head into the wilderness on the trail of their quarry. How they approach the issue is up to them, but slipping out of the Outsiders Quarter isn't a simple proposition unto itself. The area is guarded by House Strongbow guards who keep a sharp eye out for those attempting to cross the borders.

This particular section of the adventure is fairly wide open. The CK should roll with whatever strategy the heroes choose and make it as involved, simple, or difficult as befits their campaign. However, note that getting murderous with Minok Vale guards is probably the worst idea. It will at the very least increase tensions between the elves and the other kingdoms surrounding the area. Any PCs considering getting lethal in their efforts to escape, or indeed, even with getting violent, should be permitted an intelligence or wisdom check to realize what a bad idea this is.

As the heroes enter the forests this becomes largely a factor of tracking. It will behoove the players to have a ranger in the party for this purpose.

PARTIES WITHOUT RANGERS

If there are no rangers, allow any characters with a high enough wisdom score to succeed in the roll to track. While normally in **Castles & Crusades** a character's level is not added to SIEGE checks if they are mimicking the abilities of another class, in this case alone (if the party does not include a Ranger) the ability can be used as normal by other classes. The next most likely candidates to have this ability are Barbarians and Druids. These can serve in lieu of a ranger if the party has either ~ for Barbarians, tracking becomes a part of their Deerstalker class ability and for Druids, it becomes a function of their Nature Lore.

If the party does not have a ranger, barbarian, or druid, simply allow any character who wishes to attempt a check the ability to track as per the rules under the Ranger class. Indeed, multiple characters making checks could form a much more believable effort, and allow everyone to feel included. Choose which character will be "Leading" the check as the primary tracker. Any other character making a basic wisdom check at CL 1 will add +2 to the leader's check as they notice something that keeps everyone on the trail. If the helper succeeds at a CL5 check, increase the bonus they grant to the tracker to +3.

With a basic success on the check, the tracking character or characters pick up the trail of the kidnappers ~ 3 slight fey and a larger human. If the heroes are of sufficient level, they can discern more information: the creatures are indeed 3 elf maidens and a human male. The human is either injured, exhausted, or drugged based on his gait and the appearance that he's being supported by the elves. They appear to be moving at stunning speed, all things consider, and have a good head start.

AMBUSH!

The trail leads the heroes for several hours into the forests when they make a disturbing discovery; the body of one of the elf maidens, barely alive, and Curtis' sword nearby, stained with blood. At this point, the trail vanishes entirely, as though by magic. If there are any druids in the party, they may recognize the use of the druidic ability to move through woodland areas without leaving a trail.

Before the heroes can take any further action, an arrow sinks into a tree right next to the head of one of the party (CK's discretion which) and twenty elves melt from the foliage, all wearing the sigil of both House Strongbow and the King's guards. There are ten archers and ten warriors. They warn the heroes to put their weapons down and surrender, and that they are being placed under arrest in the name of King Christopher Calamon Overmoon of the Minok Vale.

Fighting these elves would be foolish; the heroes are likely grossly outnumbered. If they do choose to fight, the elves will oblige. The elves would rather not slaughter the heroes right

here, however; the King will want to question the prisoners to uncover whatever plot they are undertaking, and they must be publicly punished for assaulting a citizen of the Vale. As such, their arrows are tipped with a powerful sleeping draught of the same variety that Cory uses with the same CL 10 save. When struck with an arrow the victim must save once per round for 1d6 rounds before the poison is out of their system.

ELVEN ARCHERS (10) (These neutral elves have vital stats AC 15, 22 HP, HD 4d8, Move 30ft. Their primary attributes are dexterity 16, wisdom 15. They attack with elvish longbow for 1d10 damage and sleep draught (2 attacks; +5 to hit) or elvish saber for 1d8 damage (+5 to hit). Their special abilities are eagle eye (double effective range), unstable shooting (no penalty for firing on the move), master bowyer (build and repair bows), blinding speed (automatic initiative), rapid shot (2 shots with bow). They wear elven chain armor and carry elvish longbows and elvish scimitars. For more information about the archer, see the **Amazing Adventures Companion** or **The Adventurer's Backpack**.)

ELVEN SWORDSMEN (10) (These neutral elven duelists have vital stats AC 16, HP 21, HD 4d6, Move 30ft. Their primary attributes are dexterity 15, charisma 16. They attack with elven combat knives for 1d6 damage (2 attacks; +2/+1 to hit). Their special abilities are Florentine fighting style (improved 2-weapon fighting and AC), taunt (charisma check CL=target's HD and wisdom bonus; if successful, victim must attack duelist exclusively for 3 rounds, at -2 to hit). They wear elven chain and carry elven combat knives. For more information about the duelist, see the **Amazing Adventures Companion**.)

CAPTURED!

Our heroes awaken in chains in the dungeons, stripped of their weapons, armor and supplies. Not long after they awaken, guards arrive to lead the heroes before King Overmoon himself. The



King sits glaring down at the PCs from an ornate, polished oaken throne. Atop his silvery-blond hair sits the magnificent golden crown of Minok which bears eight thin horns representing each of the eight vales that dwell under his rule. At the base of each horn is seated a jewel bearing the symbol of the individual elven nations. Beneath their anger and rage, his deep blue eyes bare the wisdom of nearly eight hundred years of rule. He wears a bright blue robe streaked with silver elven runes and a bright silver shawl that runs around his neck. His fingers are encrusted with many rings, each with an individual symbolic meaning.

The king wastes no time and demands to know the meaning of this clear invasion into his lands by outsiders from Beykla. They have assaulted and nearly murdered a member of his own court, as evidenced by both their discovery over the body and the testimony of the surviving victim, a handmaiden of the court named Allana.

The king also demands to know what has become of their companion who, according to Allana's testimony, fled into the forests before his guard arrived and left no trail to follow. If the heroes deny having a companion, the king's seneschal throws down Curtis' blade stating that this unique sword is well-known to be carried by the first mate of the *Wyvern*.

If the heroes ask how the King knew where they were, his eyes narrow and he says, "You, who are clearly spies from Beykla, have no place questioning me. But my people are clever and we have eyes everywhere. I was notified that you were in the forests conducting mischief, and where."

Regardless of how good an argument the heroes make, the King will not be swayed. He orders them thrown into the dungeons until he decides on the proper time and place for their execution. The Seneschal asks about the *Wyvern*, and the King orders it to be restrained in port, and its crew closely watched...for now. As the truth comes out he may well decide to arrest them all. And, he insists, Beykla will pay dearly for this treachery.

As the heroes are dragged back to the dungeons, allow them a wisdom check. Success indicates that they notices a stunningly beautiful elven maiden dressed in a fashion that is both regal and practical. She watches them carefully, with glints of suspicion, concern and perhaps even fear in her eyes.

UNCOVERING THE CONSPIRACY

Allow the heroes some time to discuss what's happened to them as they sit in the dungeons. Perhaps even allow them to plot a means of escape. It seems clear they were set up and led directly into the forests and into an ambush, but to what end? Does the king wish to start a war? Is there something else going on?

As the light through the small windows high up in the dungeon fades to dark, torches are lit outside, and the dim blue light of day transforms into the even dimmer orange flickering light of the night. Hours pass and as the heroes begin to drift off, a sharp hiss snaps them back to wakefulness. Craning their necks, they can just barely see the face of that same elf maiden from court, gazing at them in the window.

"We haven't much time!" she whispers. "One of the guards fancies me, but that only buys me a few minutes here, even with my position. I believe you've been set up, and I want to help you."

If the heroes question her identity, she says, "My name is Princess Alexis Alexandria Overmoon. I'm the king's daughter, and future ruler of this Vale. Please, I don't have much time. Let me tell you what I know."

She holds up, in front of the window, the blue key that the heroes have carried with them. "I have this, and your Blue Book. I know of the prophecy and of your role in it. And yes, there may well be a conspiracy to start a war between our great kingdom and Beykla, but it is not my father who wills it. He is, however, growing old and set in his ways which has led him to be shortsighted in many ways.

"After my mother's death," she goes on, "the King was married to a woman named Surelda Al-Kalidius. Surelda, likewise, was a widow, and came to the marriage with a child of her own, Kalen. At the time it was hailed as a great merging of two houses. But when my father refused to declare Kalen his heir, preferring to keep me and the blood of the Overmoon clan on the throne, Surelda and Kalen turned to darkness. To the worship of demons. They sought to overthrow the dynasty, to murder my father and me, and seat themselves in power.

"Their coup was defeated, but my father, his heart rent in twain by her betrayal but still deeply in love with her, ordered her entire house banished from the Vale forever. He has never recovered from the betrayal. It has been over a century since this happened and the story has faded to memory.

"I have always suspected that Surelda and Kalen did not flee the Vale, but have been in hiding, building their strength for a new assault. Indeed, your arrival and the existence of the Blue Book and the Key seem to fit this entire picture into the prophecy."

She looks away and then back. "My time is almost up. I will send word to the *Wyvern* about the situation, and I will find a way to get you out. If you are willing to take up your mission again, find your friend, and uncover this conspiracy, we may yet avoid war. In exchange, I will return your book and key to you, and tell you what I know of the prophecy. Do we have an accord?"

Hopefully, the heroes agree.

ALLIANCES AND ESCAPE

Regardless, the next night Alexis returns, this time pale-faced and angry, wearing the full robes of a noble, and demanding to know what they know and how they accomplished this tragedy. Regardless of what they say, she appears outraged and orders the guards to take these conspirators to her antechamber.

When they are deposited, the Princess arrives and orders the guards to leave her alone with the prisoners. There's a brief exchange about safety and she angrily announces, "Until the King returns, I am your Queen and you will do as I say!"

The guards depart and the princess falls into a chair, her beautiful face white and drawn. She takes a moment to compose herself, then says, “My friends, it is worse than we imagined. My father is gone. He vanished sometime during the night. I have no doubt, now, that Surelda or Kalen is behind this, but my people are so consumed with blaming you and the coming war with Beykla, and I have no evidence to support our suspicions. If you are to help us, the time is now.”

She produces from her bodice a glass lens, which she offers to the heroes. “This,” she says, “is a lens that when looked through, will reveal the truth in all things. It has but three charges left, and the knowledge to recharge it has been lost, so use it wisely. I would begin at the point where you were arrested. Also,” she says, moving to her closet, “I have recovered these for you.”

LENS OF TRUE SEEING

The lens that Alexis has given the heroes is a very rare lens of true seeing. It is a monocle that when looked through with the intent of viewing the true nature of a thing, will grant to the wearer the effects of a *True Seeing* spell as cast by a 9th-level caster. These rare magical items normally come with 10 charges, and cannot be recharged, though no mage or alchemist knows why. This particular lens has but 3 charges left.

She opens the door to reveal the heroes’ equipment and possessions, save for the Blue Book and Key.

“You’ll forgive me for some degree of cynicism,” she says, “but my father’s life is on the line. I keep the book and key until you return. Besides, these are not things I want falling into the hands of the Al-Kalidius house should you fail.”

She is unwilling to negotiate further (the heroes are flat-out denied requests for elven chain and weapons or the sleeping draught, for example), but she promises to try and old off both the war and pursuit as long as possible. She reminds the heroes, though, that she will have to play the role of outraged daughter and pretend to blame them for the disappearance of her father.

She then moves to a panel on the wall and moves it aside, revealing a secret door. “This passage,” she says, “is means of escape for the royalty in case the worst happens. It will lead you deep into the forests. You’ll need to find your own way from there.” Then she backs off and holds up a small vial of blue liquid.

“Our sleeping draught. You overcame me, and when I produced this to subdue you, you broke it in my hand and fled through the passage. It could be anywhere from ten minutes to an hour before my guards suspect something’s wrong, so go quickly and close the passage behind you. When you emerge, head southeast and let the stars guide you.

“Good luck, my friends.” She shatters the vial, and a bluish smoke rises in her face, rendering her unconscious almost instantly, so that she staggers and falls.

IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

RUNDOWN

The heroes trail the conspirators to the former queen’s base of operations, a black tower deep in the corrupt heart of the forest. Here they discover that the former queen is in league with the White Sash, and that she desires to create war with Dawson to further the secret society’s goals. The plan is to make it appear as though the first mate of the *Wyvern* assassinated the king and to kill the mate in public, to foster conflict with the humans.

In the end, however, her hatred of the king is so great that in reality she just wants him dead. As such, the heroes have the goal of saving the life of the elf king and killing the former queen for her treachery. The CK should work in the climax taking place during a ritual under a blood moon to tie into the module title.

BACK IN THE FORESTS

The heroes take the escape passage, which emerges from the base of an enormous Illiander tree near a stream. Discerning their position in relation to the *Wyvern* and where they were requires examining the sky. Any character with any sort of wilderness survival skills (again, Rangers, Barbarians and Druids are the best here, though Bards or seafaring types may also have such knowledge) can make an appropriate SIEGE check to get their bearings and get the heroes back on track. This eventually leads them to a point where they can track their way towards where they last encountered signs of Curtis’ kidnappers.

Getting back to the clearing where they were arrested takes all through the night and up to the next dawn. When they arrive the trail still seems cold, but, using the lens, the heroes can discover where their quarry went and get back on their trail. Tracking tests will become more difficult here, but once the lens reveals how their quarry are covering their tracks it becomes possible to follow them despite their use of the druidic woodland stride ability.

TRACKING THE CONSPIRATORS

Tracking down the conspirators requires another 15 hours of tiresome work (three tracking checks, at CL 8, 10, and 5, respectively; a failed check can be overcome by using the lens to get back on track). Use the same rules for tracking as discussed earlier in this scenario, including those for helpers.

After their second tracking check, and halfway to their third (a little over 8 hours into their journey), the heroes encounter their first resistance; a group of orcs wearing the regalia of the White Sash attack from the brush!

The heroes must make a wisdom check at CL 5 or be surprised by the orcs’ initial attack. Surprised heroes are subject to sneak attack (+2 to hit/+4 damage) from the orcs on the first round. Alternately, if the CK is feeling exceptionally cruel, the orcs can attempt a Death Attack per the Assassin character class in the **Castles & Crusades Player’s Handbook** on heroes who fail their surprise roll.

WHITE SASH ORCS (7) *(These chaotic evil orc assassins have vital stats AC 14, HP 17, HD 3d8, Move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with scimitars for 1d8 damage. Their special abilities are darkvision, case target, climb, death attack, disguise, hide, listen, move silently, poisons, sneak attack, traps. They carry orcish scimitars and wear studded leather armor. They have pouches with 1d10 silver each. They wear the regalia of the White Sash.)*

After the second round of battle, two elven archers will join the fray, firing from the trees. These archers are not those of the Strongbow clan; they do not have the sleep draught, they wear sigils the heroes have not seen before, and wear black, wicked-looking leather armor comprised of angled plates. They, too, wear the regalia of the White Sash.

ELVEN ARCHERS (2) *(These neutral elves have vital stats AC 14, HP 22, HD 4d8, Move 30ft. Their prime attributes are dexterity 16, wisdom 15. They attack with elvish longbow for 1d10 damage (2 attacks; +5 to hit) or elvish saber for 1d8 damage (+5 to hit). Their special abilities are eagle eye (double effective range), unstable shooting (no penalty for firing on the move), master bowyer (build and repair bows), blinding speed (automatic initiative), rapid shot (2 shots with bow). They wear +2 hard leather armor and carry elvish longbows and elvish scimitars. Each has a belt pouch containing 1-10 gold. They wear the regalia of the White Sash. For more information about the archer, see the **Amazing Adventures Companion** or **The Adventurer's Backpack**.)*

ELVISH WEAPONS

In this battle it's possible the heroes will get their hands on Elvish longbows and sabers. If they do, these are finely-crafted, though non-magical weapons. They grant a +1 to hit due to their exceptional accuracy and balance. Elvish longbows deal 1d8 damage in the hands of a character who is not of the Archer character class and 1d10 damage in the hands of a trained archer (which at the CK's option could include fighters with weapon specialization in bows). Elvish sabers are lightweight, exceptionally balanced and deal 1d8 damage.

Though ornate and finely crafted, these weapons are not magical or otherwise exceptional.

It's difficult at best to question any orcs that survive, as these creatures have cyanide suicide devices that they crack, much like the assassin the heroes dealt with all the way back in Loston, each tailored to the creature in question (some are false teeth; others are rings with hidden needles, etc.). They will die rather than submit to capture.

SKY TURNED RED

The battle with the White Sash orcs, if nothing else, will illustrate the danger into which the heroes are walking. If any orcs or elves escape, the conspirators will be aware the heroes are coming. If the heroes kill their foes and are careful about disposing of the bodies, they may still have the element of surprise on their side.

By the time the heroes arrive at the conspirators' camp, night has fallen once more, but the moon that has risen is a true blood moon. It's a deep red color that casts its hew over the entire landscape, giving everything the look of being coated in blood. It is an ominous sign. Any magically-inclined characters can indicate it is an extremely rare occurrence that can only be predicted with months of careful studying of signs in the skies, and that it is the perfect time for demonic rituals.

And indeed, as they find themselves on a bluff overlooking the clearing into the conspirators' camp, it does seem that they are preparing for something.

There, below, is a shocking sight: dozens of elves, orcs and even a couple of humans, Kriel and Grayshalks (bugbears and orcs of Terrigan). All wear the White Sash. The encampment is one of a number of crude huts and campfires, deep in the swamps at the heart of the forests, far beyond where most elves ever travel. It stands at the mouth of a cave in which the heroes can clearly see the flicker of torchlight and much of the activity in camp seems to be surrounding said cave.

Getting in is going to be a challenge. The most direct way would be if the heroes thought to steal White Sash regalia from the orcs and elves they battled earlier. This may allow the heroes to bluff their way in with a successful charisma check, though the conspirators will be suspicious of newcomers ~ there are few enough of them that they all know each other.

Otherwise, it's left to the CK and players to come up with a strategy to infiltrate the lair.

INSIDE THE LAIR

Inside the lair, Surelda and Kalen plot their revenge and are almost ready to carry out their plans. They intend to sacrifice both King Overmoon and Curtis in a bloody ritual to Dadramadeon the Arch-Demon, and to make it look like the two murdered each other with clear evidence planted of an assassination attempt by Beykla.

THE SHOWDOWN AND THE CAVALRY

The heroes have two major goals, here. First, they must stop the ritual and defeat Surelda and Kalen. Second, they must find the evidence that points to the conspiracy. It may well seem a suicide mission to the heroes, but help will arrive at the most opportune moment (at the CK's option).

Alexis is even cannier than the heroes reckoned. The very lens she gave them has been enchanted with a second function: it allows her seers to track it and see through it, which has led the king's elite guard directly to the heroes' position. As they have not had to track as the heroes did, they have been steadily gaining ground on the heroes; they can show up at any time the CK deems a dramatically appropriate moment.

It is also possible that Alexis herself may be with the cavalry; despite her responsibilities to lead the country, she is young, brash and somewhat impulsive. She also has a deep hatred for Surelda and Kalen and a burning desire to see her father either

rescued or avenged. Whether or not she arrives for the final scene is left to the discretion of the Castle Keeper.

ALEXIS ALEXANDRIA OVERMOON (She is a 4th level chaotic good ranger. Her vital stats are HD 4d10, HP 29, AC 16, move 30ft. Her primary attributes are strength and dexterity. Her significant abilities are dexterity 19 and strength 13 She wears +2 elven chainmail. She carries Long bow +1 and a short sword +1, 1 potion of healing, boots/gloves of elvenkind, She carries a small amount of gold, usually around 5-10 gp at a time, but has access to the fortunes of the Minok Vale.)

ALEXIS OVERMOON

Alexis Alexandria Overmoon is another major hero in the Abyss Walker novel series, a trusted friend and companion of the paladin Apollisian. She will eventually depart the Vale to learn about justice and to gain the experience she will need to be a wise and just ruler, which will bring her into contact with Apollisian.

A NOTE TO THE CK: The arrival of the elite guard is not intended as a “bail out the PCs” moment so they can watch as the scenario plays out. They should still be the overall motivators of how this story resolves. The elite guard serves to even out the playing field, and draws out the overwhelming numbers the heroes face, so they can focus on the major enemies and their task at hand. Narrate the battle raging in the background to give the heroes hope that they’ve got powerful allies and the chance to get out of this mess. It could make for a wonderful dramatic moment for Alexis to stride into the dark temple with her retainers just as the PCs have Surelda and Kalen on their knees, defeated.

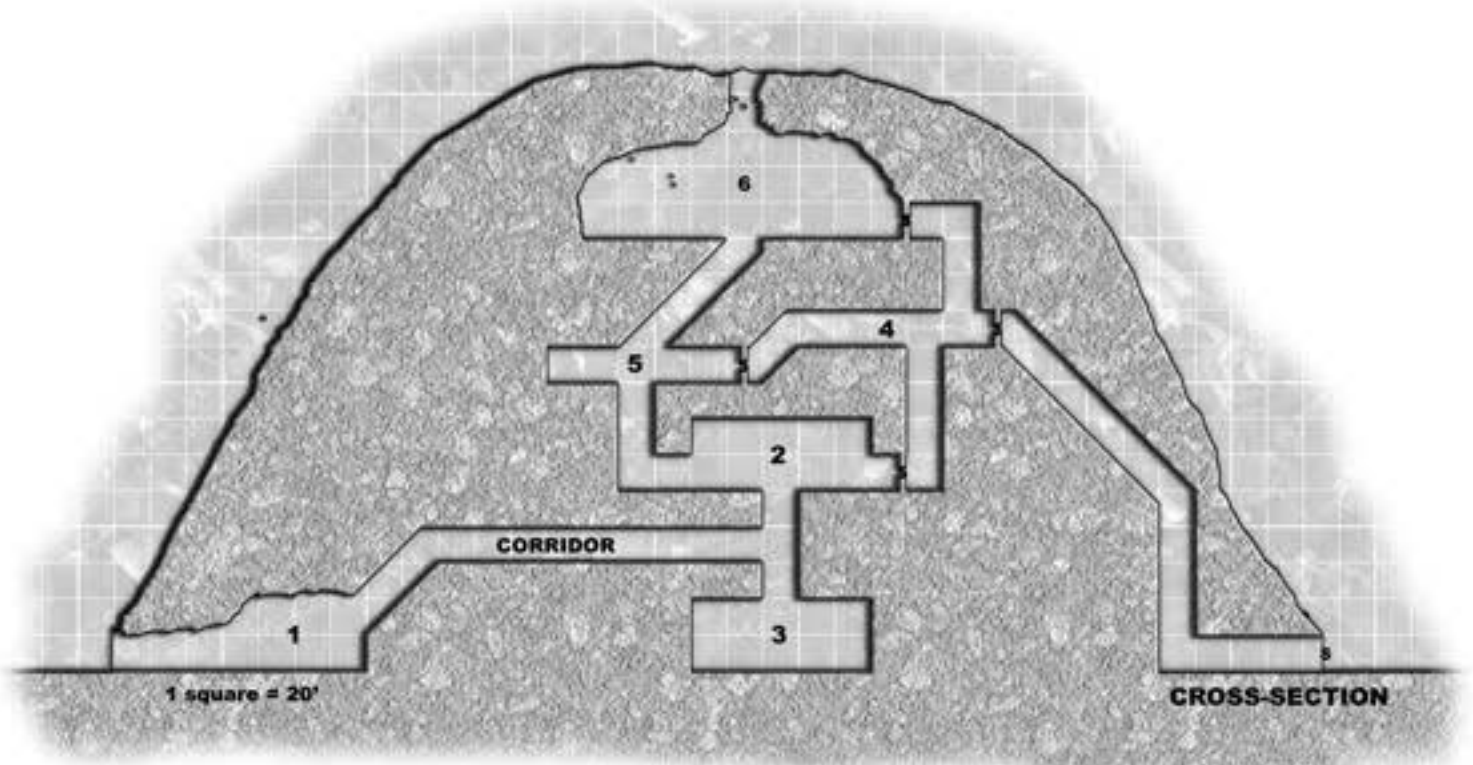
THE CAVE

The cave, as the heroes will likely discover, is actually an ancient burial mound from a lost civilization which Surelda has, through sorcery, converted to a palace. Over the past hundred years she has raised dozens upon dozens of undead creatures, who lay waiting in the walls of the place to answer her calls.

Inside, the cave is quickly revealed to be a cultivated and excavated living area, appointed with the finest luxury. The walls and pillars holding the floors up appear to be made of obsidian, in a mockery of the crystal that the Vale elves use for their structures. Blasphemous tapestries showing all manner of abhorrent and demonic acts decorate the place, as stunning for the care and expertise in their execution, as for the acts they depict. If it weren’t for how abhorrent they are, one could almost say they are wrought with stunning artistry.

The structure has all the usual areas one would expect in a structure of this sort: an entry hall, great hall with kitchens and stores, private apartments for herself and her son, dungeons, guest apartments from foreign dignitaries (which do show signs of recent use), slave pens, and, at the top level, a temple dedicated to the demon Dadramadeon.

It is in this temple where the ritual to sacrifice the king and Curtis is currently being held. Fortunately for the heroes, the cacophony of the ritual itself will drown any sounds of battle it takes to get there. As they reach level 3 they will hear a faint moaning in the distance, which grows louder the higher they climb, until at last they will realize it’s the howling of a powerful wind within the temple as the ritual reaches its climax.



It is left to the CK to decide where King Christopher and Curtis are currently kept. They will be found either in the dungeons (Level Three) guarded by zombies and ghouls, or they will be found tied to racks behind the altar on Level Six, to be killed at the end of the ritual. It is possible, if the CK chooses, to have one in the dungeons and one at the ritual. Curtis, for example, could be held in the dungeons to be framed for the king's murder later, while the King is strapped to the altar for sacrifice above.

The key to the cave-lair follows.

LEVEL ONE: ENTRY HALL

AREA 1

This long hallway opens up into an opulent entry way with pillars supporting the 20-foot-high ceiling. Each is decorated with grotesque artwork depicting the depravities of Dadramadeon. Dim light is provided by torches set in sconces along the walls. At the far end, what appears to be a large statue sits before a staircase heading up. As the heroes approach the statue, it will animate and attack! The creature is a finely crafted golem which had been left here for untold ages. Surelda discovered and enslaved the beast when she arrived. It is now programmed to guard the stairs and assault any who have not expressly been invited in by the queen.

GOLEM, CLAY (LESSER) (*This neutral creature's vital stats are AC 17, HP 49, HD 8d10, Move 20ft. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks by slam for 2d8 damage. Its special abilities are immunity to magic except move earth, disintegrate, earthquake, and berserk. It can be struck by normal weapons. It is worth 613 XP.*)

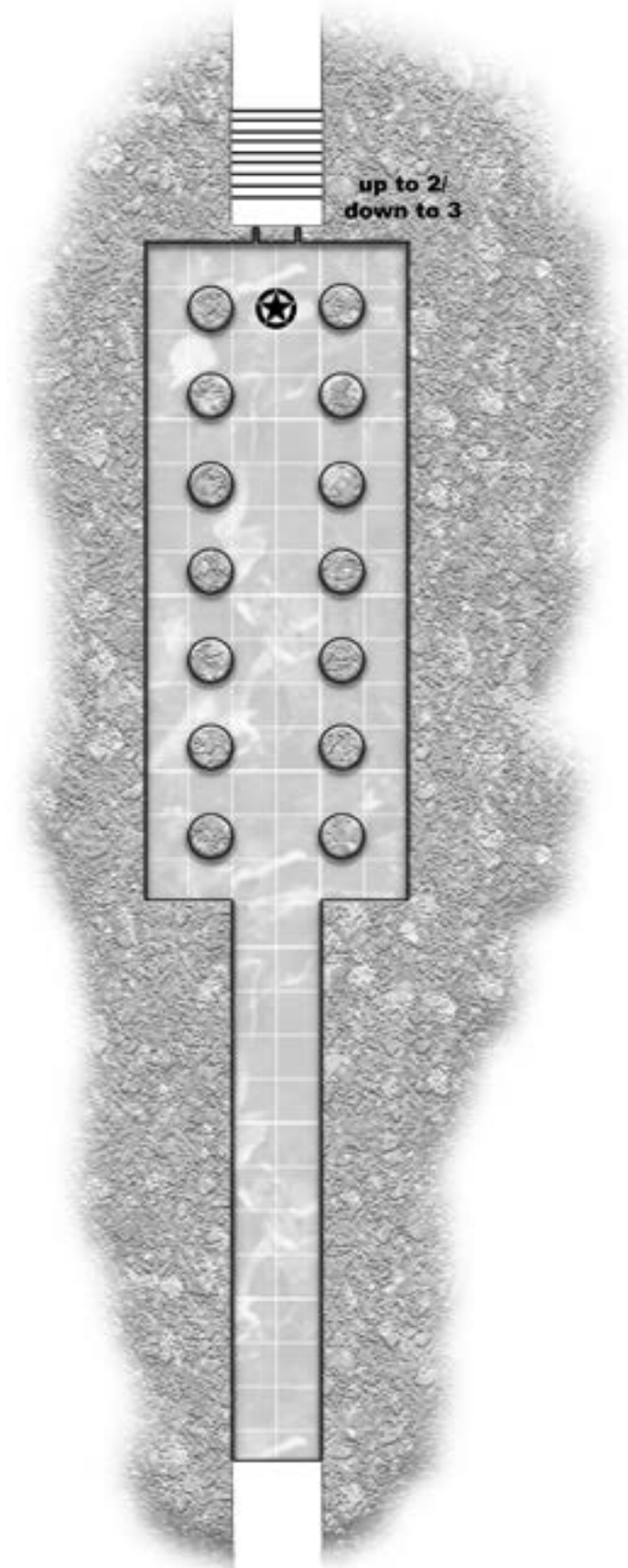
Leaving level one and climbing the stairs opens up into a 200-foot long corridor leading off into the darkness. At the end of the corridor are stairs going up and down. Taking the stairs up brings the heroes to level 2; going down takes them to Level 3.

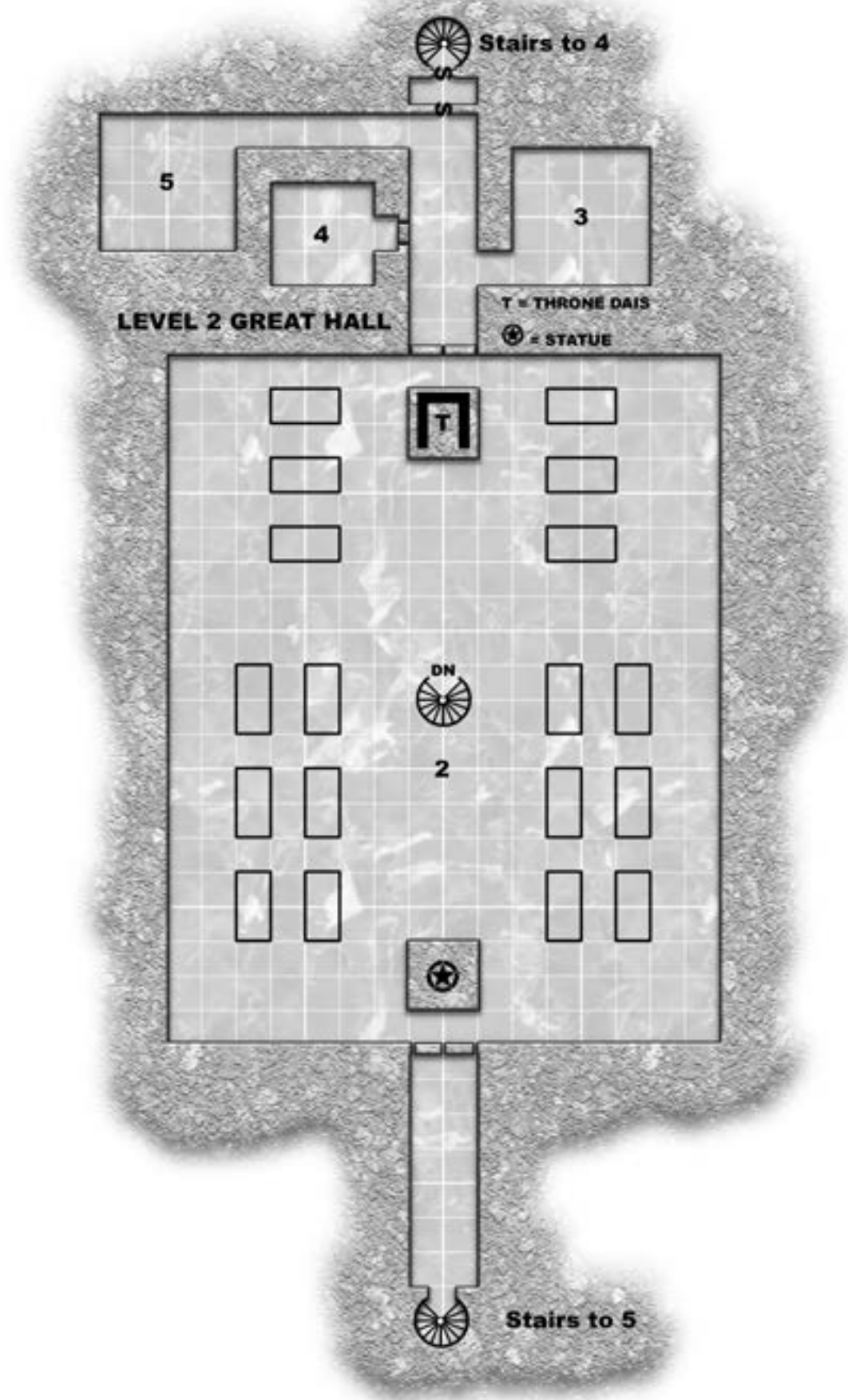
LEVEL TWO: THE GREAT HALL

AREA 2 GREAT HALL

You reach the top of the spiral stairs to find yourselves at the center of a vast great hall, exactly as one would expect to find in a keep. To your sides and to the front of the room are ten-foot long banquet tables. Before you is a dais upon which sits two opulent thrones carved from obsidian. Situated behind the thrones are a pair of double doors. Behind you a large, demonic statue sits before another set of double doors.

This area is currently empty. It is exactly as it appears; a great hall for hosting feasts, and a throne room where the queen and her son will hear disputes and issue orders of state for the kingdom she is building. The double doors behind the statue (clerics can make a wisdom check at CL 2 to recognize this statue as Dadramadeon) lead to a long staircase which goes up to level 5. At the end of the hallway behind the throne, a secret door





leads to the private quarters of Surelda and Kalen. It requires a CL 8 check to locate. Alternately, the Kriel cooks in the kitchen are aware of it, as they occasionally deliver meals to the usurper queen and prince.

AREA 3 KITCHENS

You find yourself in a kitchen, face-to-face with three Kriel, slaving over several boiling pots.

If the heroes are clearly invaders, the Kriel will attack using large kitchen knives. Otherwise (the heroes are disguised as White Sash, for example), the Kriel will demand to know their business and order them out of the kitchens.

KRIEL (3) (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 16, 18, 15, AC 13. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with meat cleavers and large kitchen knives for 1d6 points of damage or a slam for 2d4 points of damage. They have no valuables).

AREA 4 WINE CELLAR

This cool room is filled with racks of bottles and a few casks. All are excellent elven wine with some bottles over a century old.

This is Surelda's personal wine collection, much of it spirited out when she was exiled from the Vale and others purchased in secret by her agents who still operate in the kingdom. The wine is of excellent quality, eminently drinkable, and some of the most valuable bottles could go for up to 100pp.

AREA 5 SCULLERY AND STORAGE

This room holds the stores for the kitchens. There's little to see here, but a lot in the way of supplies ~ dried goods, some salted meats, breads, cheese, baking supplies and more.

LEVEL THREE: THE DUNGEONS

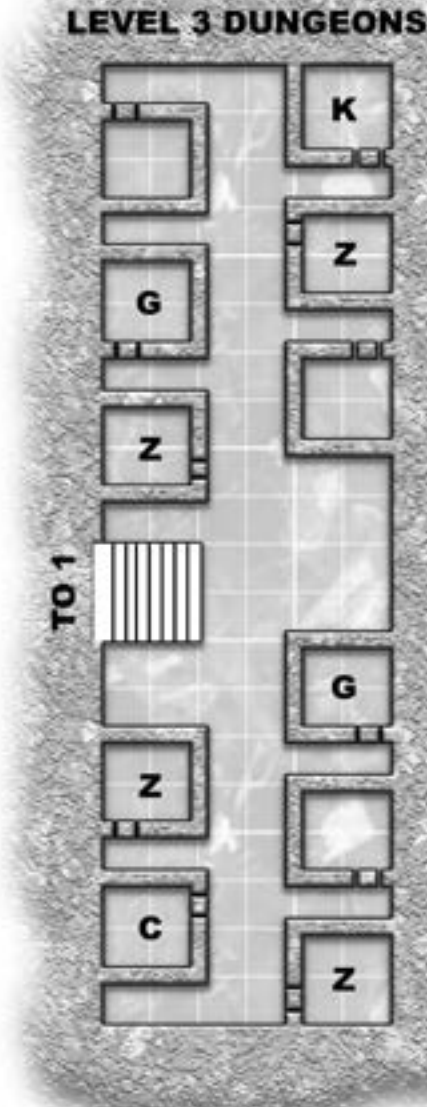
Emerging at the bottom of the steep staircase, which turns from spiral to straight, you find yourself in a ten-foot hallway. Along each side are a series of ten-by-ten cells with the doors on each situated to face the wall of the next cell, or the cell across from them, so that the occupants of no cell can see those of another. You can hear movement in several of the cells, and the stench in this place is horrid almost beyond your imagining.

This is where the heroes may find Curtis. Up until perhaps a half hour before the heroes' arrival the king was also held here, though Curtis never saw his face. He can, if rescued, tell the heroes that he heard a man's voice as he was dragged out, screaming that they would all be executed for this treachery and heresy.

There are no keyed encounter areas on this level, as each cell is fundamentally the same ~ a 10'x10' room with manacles inset into the walls.

King Christopher was formerly held in the cell marked with a "K." Curtis is in the cell marked with a "C."

68 CASTLES & CRUSADES



The cells marked "Z" and "G" contain zombies and ghosts, respectively. These are the raised corpses of the queen's enemies, kept here enslaved to her will and ordered to attack anyone who enters without speaking a magical password that only Surelda knows. Their doors are unlocked, but they will stay inside their cells unless the intruders do something to interfere with the state of affairs ~ that is, they try to open any door on this floor. At this time, the doors of those cells occupied by undead will be thrown open and the monsters will emerge.

GHOSTS (4) (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 18, 18, 17, 20, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d4 damage and a bite for 1d8 damage. Victims of attacks must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 minutes. Remove curse or remove paralysis negates the effect. They have darkvision 60ft. Any creature within 30 ft. must make a constitution save or take 1d4 subdual damage and -2 to all attacks for 2 rounds from the stench. Creatures killed and not eaten by ghosts will rise as ghouls within 2d4 days unless bless is cast upon them.)

ZOMBIES (4) (These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 8, 9, 11, 10; AC 11. They have no primary attributes and always go last in initiative. They attack with one claw that does 1d8 damage. For each extra zombie attacking they collectively gain a +1 to hit. So if there are three zombies attacking one target they all get +3 to hit.)

LEVEL FOUR: SURELDA AND KALEN'S CHAMBERS

Emerging to the top of the secret staircase, you find yourself in a grand and opulent hallway. The walls are hung with ornate iron lanterns which cast a yellow glow over the area. Red carpets adorn the floors, and artistic tapestries the walls. These are skillfully rendered, but depict such acts of depravity and horror that it makes you uncomfortable to even look upon them. At the far end of the hallway are two doors, to the left and right.

This area is only accessible by means of finding the secret doorways in either level 2 or level 5. Finding these secret doors is not easy, requiring a CL 8 wisdom check (or harassing servants who may be aware of its existence). In general, Surelda and Kalen's quarters mirror one another, save that where Surelda has a magical laboratory and private shrine to Dadramadeon, Kalen has a workout area and torture chamber.

Both Surelda and Kalen have pets they keep as guard creatures in their rooms. Kalen keeps a tamed hell hound in his quarters and Surelda keeps a shadow mastiff and an incubus demon she has bound as a plaything. The incubus is madly in love with Surelda, and utterly loyal to her. It will not choose to fight to the death. Rather, if it is in danger it will attempt to escape and warn its mistress of the intruders. The CK can place these guardians wherever they feel it is appropriate.

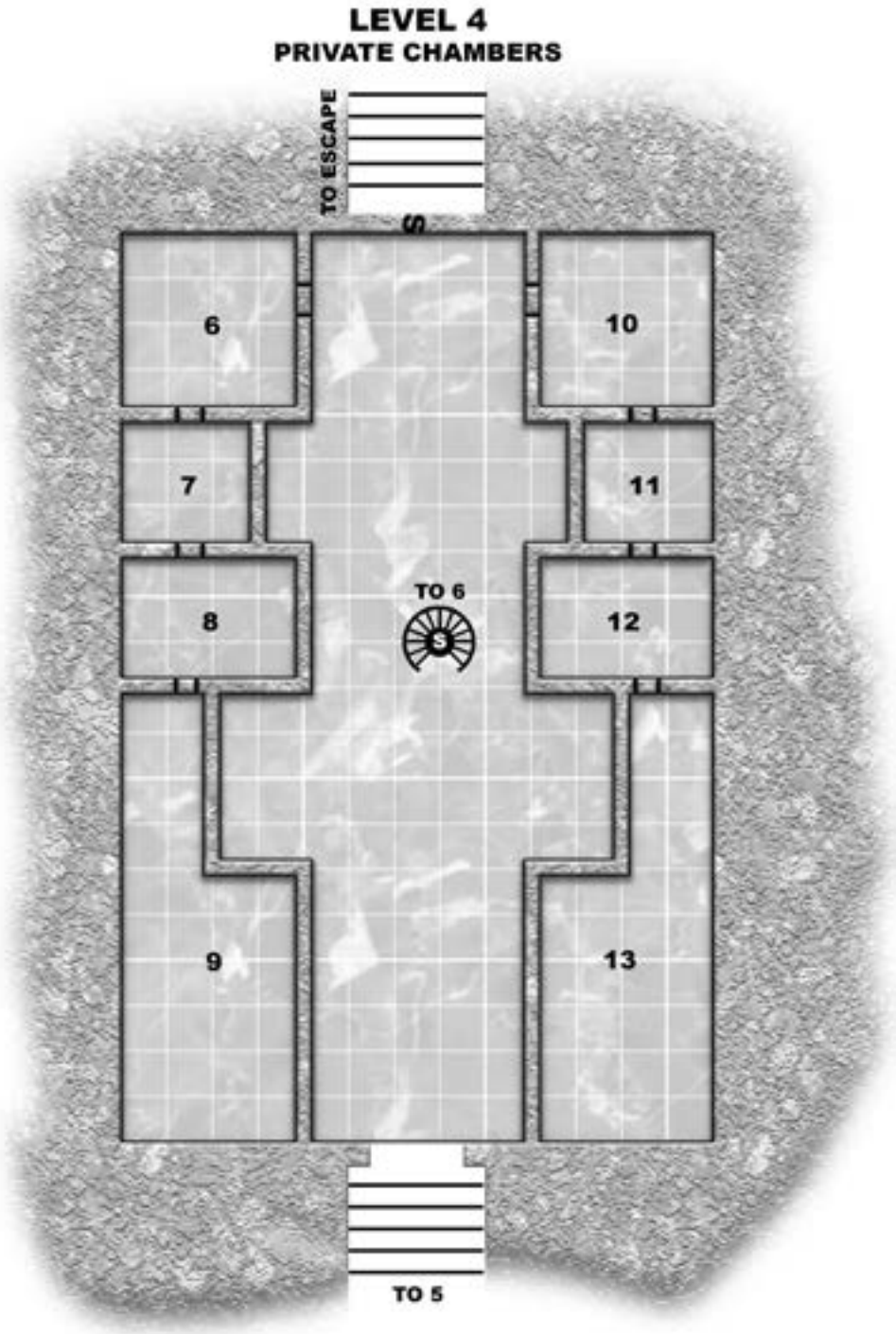
Finally, the secret door at the far end of the main hallway leads to a long set of stairs which lead out of the mound altogether, in much the same way as the king's escape route from the palace which Alexis showed the heroes. This particular passage leads out the back of the mound and directly into the forests, allowing a quick escape should the occupants get into trouble.

AREA 6 AND 10

These areas function as a parlor and lounge area. They are appointed with comfortable

furniture ~ a sofa, lounge, coffee tables and end tables ~ and decanters and glasses with the preferred aperitif of each. The queen likes her elven mead, while Kalen has a unique mushroom spirit flavored with plum.

DEMON, INCUBUS (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 18, HP 26. His primary attributes are mental. He attacks with 2 claws for 1d4 each, a tail for 1d2 and a bite for 1 point of damage. He can fly for 60ft, speaks all languages, and takes half-damage from fire and cold. He can assume the form of a beautiful woman and hold that form indefinitely, though in death he reverts to his natural demonic form. He is immune to spells that force him to change his shape. He can cause insanity when he opens his wings,



requiring victims to succeed at a wisdom save or be affected as a hold person spell; a new save is required every round and four failed saves result in permanent, crippling madness unless remove curse is cast. His kiss can put victims to sleep unless they succeed at a charisma save. Sleeping victims can only be awakened by dispel magic, remove curse, heal or a more powerful similar spell. His spell-like abilities are: emotion (1/day), hallucinatory terrain (3/day), and hypnotic pattern (1/day), all as a 10th level caster.)

HELL HOUND (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 8d8, AC 16, HP 46. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d6 points of damage; any successful bite inflicts a further 1d6 points of heat damage. They have a breath weapon that inflicts 1 hit point of damage per hit dice. They are immune to fire based attacks and have darkvision.)

SHADOW MASTIFF (These neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 23, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a single bite for 2d4 points of damage. They are able to blend with darkness, have a bay attack that can cause fear for those who fail their save, as well as the ability to trip their opponents who fail a dexterity save following a successful attack by the mastiff. They can blend into shadows, becoming invisible, and are incorporeal, being affected only by magical weapons. They have darkvision 60 feet.)

AREAS 7 AND 11 (OFFICE)

These spaces are well-appointed office space, with oaken desks, comfortable seating for multiple people, and plenty of space to do practical work. In Surelda's office is a small but quality library regarding the history of the Minok Vale and surrounding kingdoms, and a number of texts of magical and alchemical interest can be found on shelves, well-kept and neatly maintained. None are particularly valuable in a monetary sense, but may contain other forms of value to bards, mages and the like at the CK's discretion.

Locked in her desk is her spell book. It contains Black, Green and Red spells: there are 10 spells of level 1, 5 of level 2, 2 of level 3 and 1 of level 4 (CK's option which, but see Surelda's prepared spells later). The desk lock is CL4 to pick; it is also set with a poison needle trap: Type IV poison 2d8 damage and comatose for 1d4 weeks. A successful save (CL 6) means 1d8 damage and -1 to all attribute checks for 24 hours. The trap is CL 4 to find and disable.

Kalen's office contains detailed descriptions of the plan to cause a war between Beykla and the Vale and the plans he and his mother have to serve as messiahs who will lead the elves to victory and glory in the name of their demonic lord. It also has explicit descriptions of lewd acts he and his mother have performed together in rituals to their demon, and indicates that, in the eyes of their dark god, he and his mother are wed. When they emerge to "save" the elves from darkness, they will marry formally and take the throne together as king and queen. He plans to demand the right to take Alexis' life himself as a wedding present.

AREAS 8 AND 12 (BED CHAMBERS)

These are the bedrooms of Surelda and Kalen. Each, again, is richly appointed with black and red satin sheets, velvet curtains, and a wardrobe containing the spare clothing of each. A footlocker at the base of Kalen's bed, and a glory box at the foot of Surelda's contain some of their personal valuables. In each, there is roughly 500gp in various gems and coin. In Surelda's glory box is kept a long, thin, razor-sharp poniard, with a blade of obsidian. It is a +1 dagger of venom capable of injecting a Type VI poison once per day. She is saving it for the day she has an opportunity to murder Alexis. In Kalen's footlocker the heroes find an ornate sabre that appears to be carved of some sort of black hardwood. This blade is a +3 undead bane, which can only be wielded by a character not of an evil alignment. Kalen took it from a fallen foe and kept it as a trophy.

AREA 9: SURELDA'S LABORATORY

This is Surelda's magical and research workshop. Here the heroes can find: all of her notes on demonology; encoded references to "the prophecy" and her designs to help bring it about; and the ritual she intends to use to murder the king and his daughter, summon the power of Dadramadeon into herself, and begin a war with Dawson. There are also indications of an improper and unholy relationship with her son, whom she intends to marry and the two of them unite the elven kingdoms under demonic influence.

Along the shelves in her lab are various chemical concoctions, acids, poisons, and all manner horrors. In large jars and tanks the heroes can see failed efforts to create life and splice together various creatures in horrific ways.

If the heroes take the time to look (at least a half hour of digging through her alchemical mixtures, powders and the like, plus a successful CL 3 wisdom check), they may find 1d6 random usable potions hidden here.

AREA 13: KALEN'S TORTURE CHAMBER

This area functions as a workout and torture chamber for Kalen. All manner of horrible torture implements can be found here; stretch racks, iron maidens, brazen bulls, torture chairs, and shelves with cutting, poking and burning tools, whips and scourges. There is dried blood everywhere. Currently, securely strapped to poles and adorned with battered and nigh-useless suits of cheap leather armor, are four elves. All are unconscious and near death and sport dozens of cuts and bruises. It seems clear that Kalen has been using them as living training dummies. If healed and armed, these elves would be willing to help the heroes fight for their people, especially if they learn the king is in peril. All are first-level fighters.

ELF CAPTIVES (These chaotic good elves have vital stats HD 1d10, AC 11 (plus any armor they are given), HP 8 each, Move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon. Their special abilities are weapon specialization +1 to hit and damage.)

70 CASTLES & CRUSADES

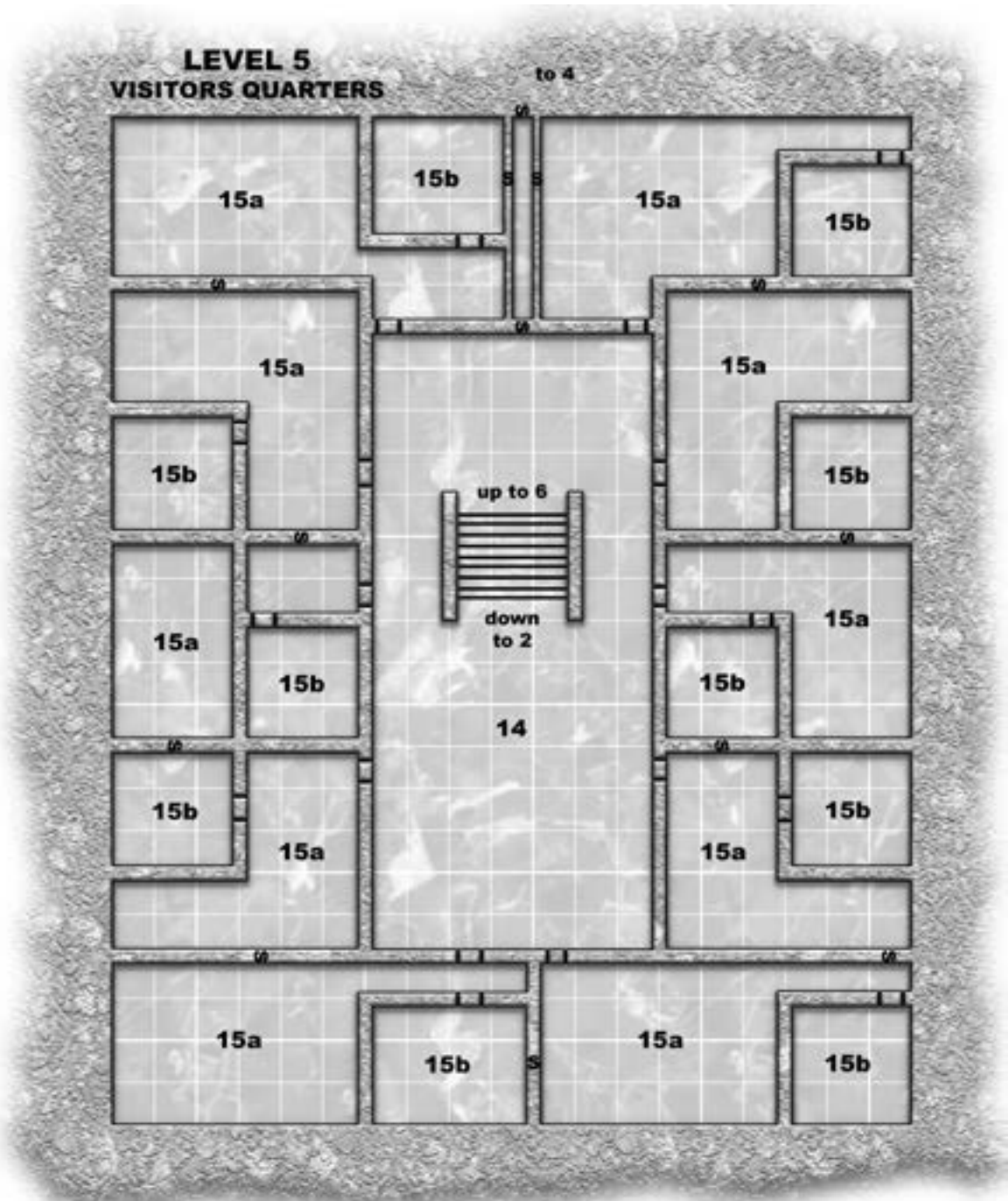
Also in this room is a rack of spare weapons, several long- and short swords, sabers, spears and hand axes. All are serviceable, though none are particularly high quality; they're for training use. If used in actual combat, any roll of a natural "1" on a 20-sided die will see the weapon break.

Likewise, 3 spare suits of wicked-looking, black studded leather armor hang on display. They are currently sized for a male elf, though any medium-sized character could make temporary use. Humans and dwarves see the effective AC of this armor reduced by 1 (+2 rather than +3) until they have it properly sized.

LEVEL FIVE: VISITOR'S QUARTERS

Emerging from the stairs, you find yourself in what appears to be a comfortable common lounge area. There are sofas, love seats, divans and mats of various kinds on the floor. Hookahs sit at convenient intervals between the lounging areas, on tables and on the floor. Here and there are pouches of intoxicants designed to be smoked. Lining all four walls are a series of doors ~ three on each of the left and right walls, and two at both the front and back, at semi-regular intervals.

This is the visitor's area that Surelda and Kalen have set up as a place for them to play host to dignitaries and emissaries



from other kingdoms. Nobody is here at the moment; the rooms on this level are empty and eerily quiet, though an increasingly loud chanting sound can be heard from the floor above.

What is most interesting about this floor, should the heroes decide to investigate, is two things. First, several of the rooms here have shown signs of use, and the hookahs have definitely been used. This indicates that Surelda has in fact hosted guests here, meaning her plans may extend well beyond the Minok Vale.

Second, searching inside any given room may turn up a secret door (CL 4 to discover). In fact, an entire network of secret doors connect every single room in this area. These enable someone to move unseen through just about any room in here, to any other room.

The secret doors at the beginning and end of the hallway leading to Level 4 are exceptions. These require a CL 8 check to discover, and the hallway itself is barely 2 feet wide. It's narrow enough that even the most attentive mapper may not notice the disparity in space.

The layout of each apartment is largely identical, with variances only in the specific location of the bedroom and lounge, and is as follows:

AREA 15A LIVING AREA

This is a lounge, living space and office. It contains a comfortable couch and easy chair, a small writing desk, a few tables, a decanter for wine or spirits (most empty but a few with a glass or two worth remaining), oil lamps, paper and utensils, and other comforts.

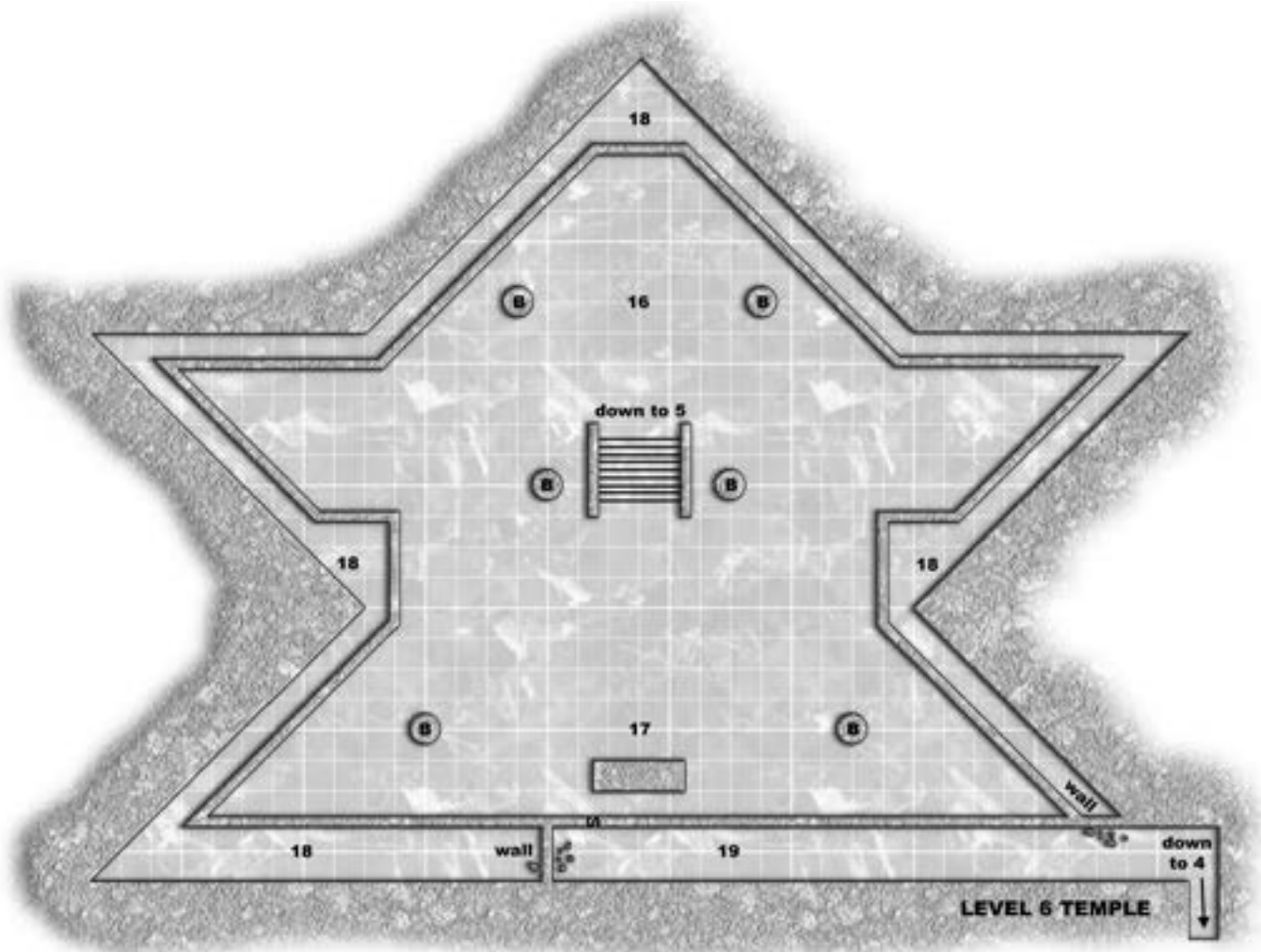
AREA 15B BED CHAMBER

This is a 15'x15' bedroom. It contains a comfortable four-post bed, a footlocker, dresser, dressing bench, vanity and wardrobe.

LEVEL 6: THE DARK TEMPLE

As you climb the stairs, the chanting grows ever louder. It's a dark and rhythmic chant in a strange dialect of the abyssal language. Even those among you who are not mystically inclined can sense a palpable weight of evil in the air. The thick smell of pungent incense assaults your senses as you climb, the smoke a yellow-orange mist that stings your nose and eyes.

You emerge into a vast temple, shaped vaguely like a pentagram, but with a flat bottom. Fire blazes in six large braziers, the incense burning within coloring the flames:



two at the rear of the place are purple, the two flanking the staircase you've climbed, green, and the two flanking the dark altar at the front of the room, blood red. As you cast your gaze around, you see over a dozen elves, all wearing the mark of the White Sash, chanting in ecstatic glee. Statues and wall art depict the atrocities focused on the demon Dadramadeon in his constant battles against his rival arch-demon Bykalicus for the fate of the soul of the world.

As your gaze penetrates the crowd of worshippers to the black, blood-stained altar ahead, your blood runs cold. There, wearing nothing more than an ornate shift, translucent and trimmed in gold, is Surelda herself. She straddles none other than King Christopher Overmoon, who is strapped to the table, a confused, blank and languid look on his face. The usurper queen raises her face to the skies and cries out to her archdemon patron, begging him to bestow upon her all of his power in exchange for this sacrifice, as she raises a jagged blade high above her head.

Beside her stands her son, a look of lustful glee in his eyes, his hand on his sword. He licks his lips with anticipation as the blade rises...

AREA 16 THE TEMPLE

The temple is huge, at least 150 feet across at its widest point. It is loaded with 12 dark elven warriors, all fanatical worshippers of Dadramadeon and loyal unto the death to Surelda. Hidden in the shadows to the left and right of the staircase are a total of four White Sash assassins.

ELVEN SWORDSMEN (12) (These neutral elven duelists have vital stats AC 16, HP 21, HD 4d6, Move 30ft. Their primary attributes are dexterity 15, charisma 16. They attack with elven scimitars and poniards for 1d8 and 1d6 damage (1 attack with each at +2/+1 to hit). Their special abilities are Florentine fighting style (improved 2-weapon fighting and AC), taunt (charisma check CL=target's HD and wisdom bonus; if successful, victim must attack duelist exclusively for 3 rounds, at -2 to hit). They wear elven chain and carry elven combat knives. For more information about the duelist, see the *Amazing Adventures Companion*.)

WHITE SASH ASSASSINS (4) (These chaotic evil orc assassins have vital stats AC 14, HP 17 HD 3d8, Move 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with scimitars for 1d8 damage. Their special abilities are darkvision, case target, climb, death attack, disguise, hide, listen, move silently, poisons, sneak attack, traps. They carry orcish scimitars and wear studded leather armor. They have pouches with 1d10 silver each. They wear the regalia of the White Sash).

AREA 17 THE ALTAR

This 15-foot altar is the focal point of the ritual, where Surelda intends to sacrifice the king. Her faithful son Kalen stands by her side. Immediately behind the altar is a secret door through

which Surelda and Kalen can make an escape. It leads to their private quarters on Level 4. See Area 19.

AREA 18 THE CATACOMBS

This is Surelda's deadliest surprise. This cave complex is, in fact, a converted ancient burial mound. The hidden passageways circumnavigating the vast majority of the temple are filled with the bodies that were buried here countless ages ago, all now re-animated and enslaved to Surelda's will. The walls have been cleverly disguised to look like stone, but it's only a façade, and at Surelda's command they will burst inward, flooding the area with ravenous undead hordes. The exact number is left to the Castle Keeper, but they consist of skeletons, zombies, ghouls and ghosts. At the CK's option, other kinds of undead can be present as well. Carefully constructed (and sturdy) stone walls keep the escape passage in area 19 secured from invasion by the undead.

GHOSTS (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 18, 18, 17, 20, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d4 damage and a bite for 1d8 damage. Victims of attacks must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 minutes. Remove curse or remove paralysis negates the effect. They have darkvision 60ft. Any creature within 30 ft. must make a constitution save or take 1d4 subdual damage and -2 to all attacks for 2 rounds from the stench. Creatures killed and not eaten by ghosts will rise as ghouls within 2d4 days unless bless is cast upon them.)

GHOULS (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 12 each, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d3 points of damage, and a bite for 1d6 points of damage. Victims must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4 minutes. Remove curse or remove paralysis negates the effect and elves are immune. They have darkvision 60ft.)

SKELETONS (These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 1d12, HP 7, 8, 8, 10, 12, AC 13. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with long swords doing 1d8 points of damage.)

ZOMBIES (These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 8, 9, 11, 10; AC 11. They have no primary attributes and always go last in initiative. They attack with one claw that does 1d8 damage. For each extra zombie attacking they collectively gain a +1 to hit. So if there are three zombies attacking one target they all get +3 to hit.)

AREA 19 THE SECRET PASSAGE

This secret passage is connected directly to the private quarters of Surelda and Kalen on level 4. It is cleverly designed to make it look as though someone using it magically appears or disappears, and may also serve as an alternate entrance if the heroes find it on level 4. In this case they come up behind Surelda and Kalen (changing the entire tenor of the final battle), and the Castle Keeper should adjust the flavor text for the level accordingly.

RUNNING THE FINAL BATTLE

The final battle is set up with the heroes' entry into the temple, but could proceed in any number of ways. The Castle Keeper will need to think on their feet and adapt, always keeping in mind that Surelda and Kalen are incredibly intelligent and canny ~ they have, after all, survived for a very long time, building their conspiracy right under the king's nose. The battle could take place entirely in the temple, with the Minok Vale armies arriving in time to do battle with the undead hordes. It could become a mad chase as Surelda and Kalen flee into the secret passage and must be pursued through the complex, to their private chambers (where they may still have guardians) or even into the forest. Wherever they face the two villains down, certainly Surelda has other guardians prepared, from undead and warriors above to possibly demonic horrors.

In the end, play up the dramatic, here. When Surelda is reduced to zero hit points, rather than dying she falls to her knees, utterly defeated. The king, if he is rescued, can demand her life or the heroes can offer it to him if they think to do so. If they allow him to execute his traitorous ex-wife and her unholy progeny, they will gain even further favor with the elves. To up the drama a bit more, Alexis can arrive on the scene with her own retainers, as mentioned earlier, and reunite with her father.

In the earlier adventure, Ramparts High, we discussed maintaining canon with the novels. If you are concerned about maintaining canon, it is essential that Kalen survive this battle. He will escape, and with the death of his mother, throw himself into his study of the dark arts, eventually becoming a feared necromancer. Either he can flee and escape, his body can simply vanish at the end of the battle, or the heroes can be informed later that Kalen has vanished, apparently having somehow survived...

SURELDA (*This chaotic evil elven necromancer has vital stats HP 40, HD 8d4+16, AC 15, Move 30ft. Her primary attributes are constitution and charisma. Her significant abilities are dexterity 15, constitution 16, wisdom 16, charisma 18. She attacks by magic or with a +2 dagger of venom (+4 to hit total) for 1d4+2 plus poison (CL 5, 1d6 poison per round for 1d4 rounds; save each round; a successful save stops all remaining damage). Her special abilities are duskvision, fast reaction, spellcasting, spellcraft, forbidden lore. She carries a ring of protection +3, +2 dagger of poison, and 150 platinum pieces.*)

SURELDA'S SPELL CASTING: *As a chromatic mage, her primary spellcasting school is black (necromancy), and her secondary blue (evocation). Her spells are based on charisma. She can pull 56 threads per day. She has the following spells prepared: 0-level (8): dragon mark, endure elements*, first aid, ghost sound, light, influence*, mage hand, prestidigitation; 1-level (6): bless*, bane*, cause light wounds, cause fear, faerie fire, protection from good*; 2-level (4): acid arrow, dark chaos, spiritual weapon, summon swarm*; 3-level (3): animate dead, cause serious wounds, lightning bolt; 4-level (1): harming circle. Spells marked with an * cost double threads to cast.*

As mentioned earlier in this adventure, spellcasting in Terrigan is different than in standard **Castles & Crusades** games. To cast a spell, a chromatic mage like Surelda must expend threads equal to the spell's level + 1 (0-level costs 1, 1-level costs 2, etc.) and make a spellcraft check using their highest mental attribute with a CL equal to the spell level. Spells outside of a caster's specialized schools (Necromancy and Evocation for Surelda) cost double the normal thread cost to cast and increase Spellcraft CL by 1.

KALEN (*This chaotic evil elven duelist/chromatic dabbler has vital stats AC 18, HP 33, HD 7d6, Move 30ft. His primary attributes are dexterity 17, charisma 15. He attacks with elven scimitars and poniards for 1d8+3 and 1d6+3 damage (1 attack with each at +7/+6 to hit, respectively). His special abilities are Florentine fighting style (improved 2-weapon fighting and AC), taunt (charisma check CL=target's HD and wisdom bonus; if successful, victim must attack duelist exclusively for 3 rounds, at -2 to hit), defensive fighting (take up to -3 to attack to add up to +3 to AC). At this stage in his career he has just begun to dabble in spellcasting. He has 10 threads to pull and can cast the following spells: 0-level: dancing lights, dragon mark, influence, prestidigitation; 1-level: darkness: minor dark chaos. He wears +2 elven chain and carries a matched set of magical elven blades: a +3 scimitar and +3 poniard. He carries 200 platinum worth of coin and gems. For more information about the duelist, see the **Amazing Adventures Companion**.)*

A NEW DAWN

Having saved the life of the king and defeated the former queen, the heroes have averted war and are declared heroes of the Minok Vale. They are given medals and unfettered access to the elven kingdom. The heroes are, in effect, declared honorary citizens of the Vale, an honor that hasn't been granted to non-elves in centuries. They are particularly held in high regard by the King if they thought to offer Surelda and Kalen's lives to him, instead of killing the pair themselves.

If the heroes ask for further rewards, the King is not beyond reminding them that they have been able to keep the treasures they have found, which by rights belong to the people of the Vale. He will, however, deign to grant elven weapons (as detailed earlier in the module) to those who have not come away with treasure. The Castle Keeper would also do well to remind the heroes exactly what an honor and privilege it is for outsiders to have unfettered access to the Minok Vale.

For her part, Alexis gives them some cryptic information about the future of the world and the prophecy in which they are now inexorably entangled. Alexis pulls the heroes aside, and presents them with the book and key.

"A deal is a deal, my friends," she says. "Our kingdom owes you a great debt. Here are your book and key, and I believe I have some additional information that will benefit your quest. The elves have an age-old prophecy regarding the rise of the Abyss Walker, a prophecy in which I believe us all to be playing

an important role. Much of it has been lost to time, but those sections we still know go as follows:

“A day shall come to pass when the mother of mercy shall bear child. This child will be like no other, for gods and men alike will seek to vanquish him. The hate from the hells dwells within his mind, as compassion for the meek guides his heart. If allowed to live, this child will bear the false testimony of the gods, as he ascends the throne of righteousness, while working the magic of evil. The good and evils of the realms will oppose him, but they will be crushed asunder as the scorpion under an anvil of fire, for he shall command both of them alike unto his ascension...”

“Let it be known to all who have wisdom that this child, the Abyss Walker, will have the knowledge and power of a thousand lifetimes, though his mortal body will be younger than the trees he walks among. He will be betrayed by blood that is his own, when he fights that which cannot be fought. He shall defeat that which cannot be defeated and he will ascend that which hath no ascension. He will rise up for forty-two cycles, the last eight will bring about a plague on the land that has never been seen before, nor will be seen again. His emerald eyes will bear the pain of an eternity of damned souls that only the children of the forest may see. His mouth will shed forth such fire that any opposing him will be charred to dust from which they were created...”

“He shall wear the cloak of mourning until his forty-second cycle. When he mourns no longer, the world will begin its mourning, for his wrath will be unleashed on the world. When his fury is sedated, the kings of the Abyss will bow to his feet and call him lord, though he will reject them saying, ‘You bow to me out of fear. That is all you know, therefore you are not worthy to kiss the bottom of my feet.’ The Abyss Walker will then turn to the heavens and all mortals dwelling in Yahna will tremble for they know he is coming, and his wrath is renewed. That will be known as his true ascension...”

She takes a breath and says, “The prophecy is grim, and yet still we know not whether the Abyss Walker be a champion of darkness or of light, only that his arrival will herald and cause the opening of the gates of the Abyss, and an apocalyptic battle between good and evil. I pray that you are to play a part in the side of light in this battle, but whatever role, I believe we are all fated to see it through.”

Alexis kisses each member of the party, affectionately and tenderly, and says, “I wish you all the best fortune, my friends. Know that the goodwill of the elves of the Minok Vale, and of all the goodly peoples of Terrigan go with you.”

The *Wyvern* sets sail for the frozen north, where their adventures continue....

7: ACROSS THE GRAY STILL

Welcome to Episode 7 of our 8-part mini-campaign for **Abyss Walker: The Hallowed Oracle**. This is an adventure designed for characters of level 4–5.

Across the Gray Still is an oversea adventure with island hopping and encounters at sea. As our heroes head north they will encounter a ship wreck, a mysterious island with an ancient temple, a battle with a sea monster, an attack by pirates associated with their enemies, a traitor among the crew, and a murder mystery to be solved.

As the heroes draw near to the climax of their quest, one of the sailors aboard the *Wyvern* is an assassin priest following the party, and sending messages back to her associates in Dawson. When they learn that the ship is crossing the Balfour sea they send a fast galley to the Polar Flats to head it off.

The encounters in this scenario can be played in almost any order the CK desires. The discovery of the mutilated body should occur early, and the discovery of the assassin later, with the final battle between the *Wyvern* and the White Sash pirates taking place at the end.

ACROSS THE SEA

The northern sea is fraught with perils, from pirates and sea monsters to icebergs and environmental hazards. No known ship has successfully picked a path all the way to the flats but, as Silvermane is quick to point out, that doesn't mean nobody has done it or that nobody can. Indeed, if the heroes' quest is true, there must be someone up there, and the map provided by the elves seems to indicate that there is a path. However, the map is very old and the polar geography certainly changes constantly as glaciers and ice floes break off and move.

The goal of the ship is to hop from island to island, skirting land as much as possible so that they can safely drop anchor as needed, and avoiding icebergs in the middle of the ocean.

ENCOUNTER: THE BODY

Things take a dark turn on day three when a body is found horribly murdered, naked, flayed and mutilated below decks. The body is so badly mangled that it is unrecognizable, and every member of the crew has been accounted for. The body was well hidden, stuffed into a corner between and behind several casks of Elven mead for eventual transport back to Dawson.

Of course the heroes and the crew will be concerned about what this means ~ was someone murdered in port and stowed aboard the ship? Is this a setup? What horror resulted in this scenario?

In truth, though the PCs may not determine this immediately, this means that one of the sailors on the crew is an impostor! This person is a White Sash assassin tasked with tracking the crew and sending messages back to her superiors, both on the

mainland and at the Flats. This is a sub-plot that should take up most of the adventure scenario

The Impostor is a White Sash assassin who has dogged the heroes ever since their journey began. She has been responsible in some way for every ill that has befallen them, and has been present for all of their victories and troubles. She is outfitted with an amulet that allows her to take the form of anyone she kills by absorbing their souls. She also has a magical crystal that permits her to communicate with anyone that has another matched crystal in the set. With these two abilities she has infiltrated the crew of the *Wyvern* and is spying on the PCs, acting to sabotage their efforts and keeping her superiors informed of their efforts.

The heroes may indeed think this particular assassin dead if they defeated her in an early module. It is left a mystery how she survived their prior encounter, but she continues to dog them to this day...

RUNNING THE MURDER MYSTERY

The details of the murder mystery aren't provided here; it is left to the Castle Keeper to design this as best befits their campaign. If you haven't yet, it's important now to introduce a number of crewmen (and crew-women) who the heroes come to know, befriend, trust and distrust. Any one of these could be the villain.

As the scenario progresses, drop a series of events as clues, piecing them together as you would like. A few possible clue events follow. Some may point directly to the killer; others may be red herrings or false leads planted to throw off the trail. In addition, these examples are far from exhaustive; feel free to invent your own, drawing threads to create as tangled a web or straightforward a path as you choose.

1. Blood is spotted on the clothing of one of the crew, who claims they cut themselves while working the rigging.
2. Drops of blood appear to lead to a crewmember's room. Inside, a bloody knife is found. The crewmember claims to have been attacked in the night by another member of the crew and was afraid to report it for fear they would appear guilty. The other crewmember may or may not be wounded.
3. A crewmember sports mysterious injuries right around the time the body is found. They claim an accident related to their duties.
4. One of the crew begins acting very suspicious, secretive and withdrawn. If pressed, it turns out that they've snuck an elf from the Minok Vale aboard, with whom they've been having an affair.
5. One of the crew is making unusual mistakes on shift. They claim to have hit their head and are having difficulty focusing and remembering tasks.

6. Another murder takes place, this time the body was brazenly left on deck. Did someone bear witness? And what of the young stowaway that has conveniently been just been discovered hiding below decks?

The key is to build paranoia and tension, among everyone, the crew and heroes.

Here are a few stat blocks for suggested members of the crew that you can integrate into your game.

“SARGE” (He is a lawful neutral 2nd level fighter whose vital stats are HP 15 and AC 13. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and constitution. He carries a cutlass for 1d6 points of damage and a dagger for 1d4 points of damage. He wears leather armor and carries a cutlass and 50 gp worth of coin and jewelry.)

Nobody seems to actually know what Sarge’s real name is. It’s rumored that he was once a member of the King’s Guard in Beykla, but that for reasons unknown, he was driven from the force. He’s a grizzled veteran who is prone to barking orders and keeping strict discipline. Although he’s not technically an officer on the ship, Johnathon and Curtis count on him to keep the others in line. He seems harsh, but he actually cares a great deal about the crew.

OTTO (He is a neutral 3rd level fighter whose vital stats are HP 21 and AC 15. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and constitution. He wears a mail hauberk, and carries a broadsword and 50 gp worth of coin and jewelry.)

This is a job for Otto. He’s a capable sailor, but not really tied to this particular ship. He’s not aloof or standoffish, but neither is he overly friendly. He minds his own business and does his job. He is cordial and polite to his fellow sailors, but one gets the impression he’s a wanderer and here only so long as this job suits him, after which he’ll move on to his next experience.

MERLIK (He is a lawful good 3rd level fighter whose vital stats are HP 22 and AC 18. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and intelligence. His significant attributes are strength 15 and dexterity 13. He wears a large wooden shield and mithril chain suit, and carries a morning star, a +1 flail, and has 100 gp worth of jewelry coin and other possessions.)

Merlik is a jovial fellow with a somewhat crude sense of humor. He gets along with most of the crew, but his jests can sometimes come off as a bit cruel. However, when he does insult someone, he shows deep remorse for it and goes out of his way to make amends. A deeply honorable fellow, he’ll be the first of the crew to stand up and demand that they do the right thing in any circumstance.

BUSTER (He is a lawful neutral, dwarf, 3rd level ranger whose vital stats are HP 20 and AC 15. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and intelligence. His significant attribute is: strength 13. He wears mail hauberk, and carries a +2 battle axe, short bow, sundry gear, and has 1,200 gp worth of goods and coin hidden in his room.)



Buster is a dwarf through and through. He’s all about rigid discipline, hard work, loyalty and a straightforward approach to all things. He is closest with Merlik and Sarge, and has a gruffly cordial personality, except when he’s drinking. At these times he can put it away like nobody’s business and gets more than a little rambunctious. When drinking he’s quick to take offense and demand restitution or retribution, but always in a fair contest that won’t cause undue damage or legal troubles to anyone involved.

ISOLDE (She is a neutral 2nd level halfling rogue whose vital stats are HP 16 and AC 12. Her primary attributes are dexterity, intelligence, and wisdom. Her significant attribute is dexterity 16. She attacks with a +1 dagger or a set of 4, +2 knives of throwing that return after thrown. She can throw 2 knives per round. She carries little and owns less, but has managed to steal away almost 500 gp worth of goods, now hidden and trapped in her cabin.)

Isolde holds the nicknames “Monkey” and “Eagle” among her crewmates. She’s always seen swinging through the rigging, climbing the towers and manning the Crow’s Nest of the *Wyvern*. She has, hands-down, the best eyes in the crew and is always alert to danger on the horizon. She is happy with a bright personality, and generally well-liked by the crew. She’s also a hopeless mischief-maker and prankster, and is constantly playing tricks on the rest of the crew. These tricks are usually harmless, but injuries have resulted on occasion. When her pranks result in harm, she gets sullen and sulks for days, but is rarely wont to apologize.

MORGAN (She is a neutral good 4th level fighter whose vital stats are HP 29 and AC 18. Her primary attributes are strength, constitution and intelligence. Her significant attribute is: strength 15. She carries +1 chain hauberk, +2 bracers of defense, +3 longsword and 200 gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

Morgan sees herself as a woman living in a man's world. She thus goes out of her way, using her formidable skills, to prove that anything the rest of the crew can do, so can she. This can lead her to come off as standoffish or even harsh until she gets to know you. What she fails to realize is that the rest of the crew greatly respects her for her skills both as a warrior and a sailor. She is, however, very close with Isolde, whom she looks after like a little sister. She also enjoys the company of Buster, who she views as a straight shooter who doesn't mince words, a trait she respects.

THE ATTACK

As the heroes draw close to uncovering the identity of the traitor she will take desperate action and attempt to murder one or more of them in their sleep. When she attacks, she will wear her true form rather than that of the crew member as whom she is masquerading. She will not, however, fight to the death and will rush to escape as soon as she is outmatched and use the amulet to assume the form of the replaced crewman again as soon as she is able.

During this attack one or more critical clues may present themselves. The amulet itself may be recognized as one worn by a specific crewmember or the clothing the assassin wears may be recognized as an outfit worn by a specific member of the crew that day. Even if this turns out to be another ruse (the amulet was duplicated and secreted on another crew member, or the clothing stolen from someone else's cabin), it will still bring the heroes one step closer to uncovering the assassin's identity.

THE BIG REVEAL

If the traitor hasn't been uncovered by the climax of the adventure, the big reveal will come when she brutally attacks Johnathon Silvermane himself, by stabbing the captain in the back during the final battle. Again, she will attempt to escape to rejoin her comrades with the White Sash, but it's by no means assumed or necessary that she survive. That is entirely left to the Castle Keeper and the actions of the heroes. If she does survive, she could go on to become an arch-foe for the heroes in their future adventures.

NADIA (She is a lawful evil, half elf, 8th level assassin whose vital stats are HD 8d6, AC 18 and HP 31. Her prime attributes are dexterity and wisdom. Her significant attributes are dexterity 18, intelligence 13, and wisdom 14. Special: She is of human lineage. She sometimes wears leather armor, and carries a dagger of venom, a +2 short sword, an ankle band conferring +2 to armor class, a ring of protection +3, gauntlets of dexterity, three draughts of white poppy, two draughts of mandrake, one draught of meadow saffron and 600 gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

THE ISLANDS OF BALFOUR

There is a small chain of islands to the north of the Minok Vale, but before the Polar Flats. The *Wyvern* intends to skirt these islands before taking to the open sea. Indeed, Captain Silvermane has one final stop to make before the completion of their quest ~ the largest of these unnamed islands which he assures the heroes is populated by a rather insular population who, while they are not hostile to visitors, simply have no desire to engage (or re-engage, as he puts it) with the world.

These people, the Balfourians, are the last remnants of a long-lost civilization whose lands sank beneath the waves long ago. Currently they consist of a single village in the mountainous large island which they still call Balfour. They are a simple folk and are an agricultural, hunting and gathering community heavily driven by concepts of honor. While they still consider themselves a warrior culture, the lack of enemies for so many years and their low numbers has resulted in this aspect of the culture to atrophy significantly.

This is when he drops a bombshell on the heroes: he has a wife and daughter among the Balfourians, who he doesn't get to see very often and he's looking forward to a brief visit to check in. When he was a young sailor, he was a cabin boy aboard a ship whose captain was too brave for his own good. They too intended to sail north to explore the Polar Flats, an expedition very much, he notes, like the foolhardy one they are currently undertaking.

The ship hit an iceberg and went down. He awoke on the shores of the Balfour island where the natives nursed him back to health. During that time, he fell in love with his nursemaid, Mary. They were wed and he remained among the Balfourians for several years before the sea called to him and he built a small sailing vessel to transport him back to the mainland.

He gets back as often as possible, and since they'll be going directly past, this is an opportune time for him to see his family, especially given the dangers of their expedition. Some of the stores he's loaded up in his cargo bay from the Vale are in fact intended for the villagers at Balfour.

He also feels that dropping anchor for a day or two may give them a chance to unravel the mystery of the body found in the hold. In the end, this is a more pressing issue, as neither Silvermane nor (presumably) the heroes wish to have that sort of specter hanging over them for the remainder of their journey. Finally, it will give them a chance for one last stop at civilization before they head for the frozen and unexplored north.

THE VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

The island on which Balfour sits is dominated by rocky crags, and a broken, ancient tower sitting atop the largest. This tower, Silvermane explains, was once the watchtower of the community. It has long since fallen into disrepair, and the villagers don't go there, being that the village is nestled in a valley and has no need to man the tower any longer. In answer to the inevitable question, he says that the tower was looted ages ago and there's not much left there but crumbling rock.

When the boat makes harbor at Balfour, everything at first looks normal. The port is small and hidden at an inlet between the large island and one of the smaller ones. There aren't any docks to speak of. Indeed, the captain says, the village itself is inland and the port has been built specifically for the *Wyvern*. Once they make port, they'll need to journey inland. It's about an hour's walk. He invites the heroes to come along, but understands if they wish to remain on board.

If the heroes remain on board, the next section of the adventure can be skipped. Silvermane will simply return to the ship with his wife and daughter and relay the information about the attacks on the village.

TRAVELING INLAND

If the heroes accompany Silvermane, the trip is not a difficult one. The trail, though hidden, is marked for those who know what to look for and he points out the signs to the heroes as they journey. The island is so mountainous and rocky that it's hard to imagine any crops could grow here. Silvermane explains that there are certain hardy species of grain that the Balfourians have mastered cultivating. They otherwise thrive on root vegetables, nuts and berries gathered in the mountains, and on the mountain rams, which are plentiful and have been domesticated.

Just shy of an hour's walk inland, they clear a bluff and find themselves looking down into a small valley through which a clear and broad creek bubbles. On either side of the creek is a large village. Based on the number of huts it appears to house several hundred souls. The smoke of cooking fires rises from the roofs of the huts and everything looks peaceful.

Silvermane, however, looks grim. "Something," he says, "is wrong. The village should be bustling with activity at this time of day. Where is everyone?" His jaw set and determined, he sets off in a hurry down the trail leading to the village.

As the party enters the village, successful wisdom checks will note that there are springs of a purple-flowered plant with dark green, palmate leaves hanging before, or affixed to, the doors and windows of almost every hut. Any assassin, barbarian, bard, druid, or ranger in the party can, with a successful use poison, deerstalker, legend lore, nature lore or survival check, identify the substance as wolfsbane (aconite).

Silvermane makes a beeline for a hut near the outer central area of the village. He throws open the door, calling for his wife. He is greatly relieved when an attractive woman of her younger middle years emerges from behind a curtain leading to what presumably is a bedding area. She's dressed simply in a dress of linen with an apron and a fur-lined cloak thrown over her shoulders against the chill. Her face is careworn, and her dark brown hair shot through with shocks of gray. Still, her eyes light up when she sees him, and she runs to him taking him in her arms.

"John!" she says. "I'm so glad you're here."

He holds her tightly for a second before pulling back, kissing her, and saying, "I'm here, Mary. What's going on? Where is everyone?" He gets very serious and says, "Where is Freyja?"

Mary leads the group to the bedroom where a young girl, thin and slight, with her brow glistening with sweat, lies bundled in furs. Her eyes light up as well when Silvermane enters the room, and she weakly says, "Papa?"

Silvermane, concerned, rushes to her side. Mary puts a hand on his shoulder. "A seasonal illness," she says. "She's running warm, but I think she'll be all right."

While the Silvermanes will welcome offers of herbal medicine, they will flatly refuse magical healing, explaining that the people of the village would react poorly, and accuse them and their daughter of witchcraft. As it turns out, Mary's diagnosis is correct. Their daughter Freyja has caught a chill, nothing more, and will recover with rest and plenty of fluids.

Later, when everyone is settled in and introductions have been made, Mary explains the situation.

"They came about two moons ago. Beasts, down from the mountains in the night. We had no idea where they came from, or why they appeared so suddenly. They were massive white beasts, like wolves but twice the size of the rams in the mountains, covered in bristling fur, fangs and claws. The men tried to mount a defense, but they were wildly outclassed. That first night alone, we lost ten men ~ five killed outright, another five...taken.

"The attacks lasted about a week, but on the fourth night old Magda was caught in the open when they came. She'd been out gathering aconite for medicinal use, and the beasts shied away from her, from the plants themselves. Since that night, we protect our homes, and the creatures don't enter.

"That was just around a moon ago, and two days ago, the invasions began again, the monsters roaming the village every night looking for prey. Another group of five men went out to find their lair and hopefully put an end to them...only one returned, and he died in my arms after telling us that there were horrors in the old watchtower."

Mary's lip trembles, her eyes well up, and she takes a breath before continuing. "We've also lost ten children, who didn't heed the warning to be in by dark. We've no idea what became of them. We've not found bodies, but the blood...there was so much blood!"

She breaks down weeping, and takes a moment. Then she goes to a trunk in the corner, which she opens and reaches inside. "Aye, just one of the men came back. Just before he died, he gave me this." She offers the group a white sash of a design they've seen far too many times. Seeing the look on their faces, she says, "Do you know what it means? You do, don't you?"

TRACKING THE CULT

It seems that once again the heroes have come across the operations of the Cult of the Dragon, the White Sash. They may deduce that the creatures are werewolves. This makes the third time they've encountered werebeasts on their journey, and at least the second during which the werebeasts were in some



way in league with the cult. For his part, Silvermane is simply worried about his family. He'll take his wife and daughter and leave happily if the heroes wish to slip away. Otherwise, he'll back their play to seek out and destroy the cult's operations on the island. Mary and Freyja, if their opinions matter, want to stay on the island and see this threat to their village destroyed. After all, this is their ancestral home and all that's left of their ancient civilization.

If the heroes decide to leave, you can move onto the next part of the adventure ~ they've skipped a valuable chance to gain some experience, and have likely abandoned these people to their doom. Mary is not beyond asking for their aid, but she's too proud to beg, and will go along with whatever her husband thinks is best. As much as she'd like to stay, she realizes the danger and would rather protect her daughter and be with her husband than risk their lives for pride.

MARY AND FREYJA *(These are simple townfolk. They have largely average stats, AC 10, 1d4 hit dice and 3 HP each. Mary has a wisdom of 14, and is a skilled holistic healer. Assume she has the nature lore ability of a first-level druid and the delay/neutralize poison ability of a first-level ranger.)*

If they choose to challenge the cult, it's left to the Castle Keeper whether he or Curtis accompanies the group.

TRACKING THE SHIP

There are two potential paths the heroes might take. The first is to skirt the island to see if they can figure out from where

the cultists came. Doing so may lead them to another vessel secreted among the crags halfway around the island from the *Wyvern* in a different cove. It's a smaller vessel than the *Wyvern*, and is designed for speed rather than battle.

This path will certainly lead them into battle with the cultists, who still guard the ship against invaders like the heroes. Three warriors, one beast master, one cleric and three winter wolves are guarding the ship at all times. See stats below for the cultists and the winter wolves.

ASSAULTING THE TOWER

The other path the heroes could take is assaulting the tower itself. This is where the cult is making their base. What's really going on is that the Cult of the Dragon discovered the existence of the Balfourans and are taking their warriors for a dark ritual of sacrifice to Dadramadeon, in order to empower the archdemon ahead of the fulfillment of the Abyss Walker prophecy.

As the last remnants of an ancient and powerful civilization, the blood of these people holds a great deal of power. The cult believes that sacrificing ten warriors of this bloodline on the night of a certain stellar alignment will greatly empower themselves, and also align the fates to bring about the prophecy to their benefit.

The ritual attempted by Surelda in our previous adventure was intended to be phase one of this ritual, but the heroes (hopefully) stopped that. Any clerical characters, upon uncovering the ritual plans, will recognize a number of similarities to what Surelda was performing and will be able to link the two as different stages of the same end goal.

This particular sacrifice, however, won't be complete for another month. The victims must be taken under the light of a full moon and then sacrificed under the same. They are still short three victims (only five men still survive from their raids), and are currently plotting next month's raids and ritual.

Of the children that have been taken, seven still live, and are held in cages to be sold into slavery or for their blood to be harvested by those interested in black magic.

It turns out the creatures are not werewolves, as the heroes may have suspected, but are winter wolves in the service of the cult. Their adverse reaction to aconite comes from the taint of the demon's influence which has given them certain weaknesses to magical and medicinal herbs.

There are four types of enemies that will be encountered in the tower: Beast Masters, who train the winter wolves; Cult Guards, warriors who serve the cult; Priests of Dadramadeon; and the Winter Wolves themselves. The numbers following each type of enemy indicate their total number on the island ~ that is, there are 5 beast masters, 10 warriors, 4 priests, and 15 winter wolves total. Of these, at the tower there are 4 beast masters, 7 warriors, 3 priests and 12 winter wolves. CKs keep this in mind as the heroes whittle down the numbers, and also remember that some of these enemies will be with the cult's ship, and not in the tower.

BEAST MASTERS (5) (These neutral evil, 3rd level rangers have vital stats HD 3d10, AC 15 and HP 20. Their primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and intelligence. Their significant attribute is: strength 13. They wear mail hauberk, and each carries a long sword, short bow, sundry gear, and has about 25 gp worth of goods and coin.)

WARRIORS (10) (These are neutral evil, 2nd level fighters whose vital stats are HP 13 and AC 15. Their primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and constitution. Their significant attributes are strength 14. They attack with scimitar or longbow for 1d8 damage. They wear scale mail and shields, and carry scimitars, longbows, and 10-20 gp worth of jewelry and coin upon them. There is a 10% chance of any given warrior's scimitar being a magic sword of a random type (or chosen by the Castle Keeper).)

PRIESTS (4) (These are chaotic evil 4th level clerics whose vital stats are HP 17 and AC 13. Their primary attributes are wisdom, intelligence, and dexterity. Their significant attributes are dexterity 14, wisdom 16. Their suggested prepared spells are level 0 (4): detect alignment, endure elements, first aid, light; level 1 (3): bane, cause light wounds, cause fear; level 2 (2): hold person, spiritual weapon. They can pull 16 threads per day. They wear leather armor and carry maces. Spread among them are a +2 cloak of protection, a +2 mace, a scroll of curse, 5 potions of healing, and 240 gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

WINTER WOLVES (15) (These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 15, HP 24, 28. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite 1d10 points of damage. They are able to trip their opponents as well as cause a freezing bite for an extra 1d4 points of damage. They have a breath weapon they can use once per day which deals 4d4 damage to a single opponent within 5 feet; dexterity save halves the damage. They have scent and a vulnerability to fire.)

THE ASSASSIN

The assassin hiding aboard the ship may, at the CK's option, decide to try to contact the Cult to warn them of the heroes' presence, given the chance (and if she finds out about the goings-on here). This could lead to either an early reveal or, if the assassin is successful, the cult being prepared for the heroes' arrival. It can present further complications for the mystery of the murdered crewman.

THE TOWER KEY

The ruined watchtower of Balfour currently serves as a base of operations for the Cult of the Dragon/Order of the White Sash. It's important for the CK to read through the full description of each level before the heroes enter. While there are multiple encounter areas listed, for the most part each level is a broad, open space and heroes will be able to see everything at a quick glance. As such, the CK must be ready to combine and conflate the descriptive text on each level to a cohesive explanation of what happens when the heroes emerge onto a given level.

OUTSIDE

The stench of unwashed beasts assaults your nostrils as you approach the broken tower. Outside, you can see several men wandering about with gigantic white wolves at their sides. These creatures stand five feet at the shoulder and about eight feet long, plus their tail. Their eyes are an icy blue and filled with a canny intelligence beyond that of normal beasts.

There are four guards and four winter wolves patrolling the outside of the tower. Three of the guards are warriors, and one is a beast master. If the assassin has contacted the tower, they are aware the heroes are coming and will not be surprised. In fact, there may be free reinforcements waiting to join the fray from inside the tower as soon as the battle is joined.

If the heroes' presence has not been revealed, they may be able to sneak up on the villains. However, the wolves' intelligence and scent ability gives them an advantage; wolves make a wisdom save as though it were a prime, with an additional +3 to their check. If they make their save, they will warn their fellows calling out in broken, growling Common speech, "Arm yourselves! Someone attacks!"

LEVEL ONE: WOLF PENS

The first level of the tower houses the winter wolves and their masters. A spiral staircase at the center leads upward.

AREA 1 (ENTRY)

As you approach the front door, a howl splits the air and arrows fly forth as a pack of gigantic white wolves issue forth!

Three winter wolves and two beast masters guard the front door, and any sounds of combat outside will alert them to danger. They will set up an ambush with the wolves attacking via frontal assault while the archers fire arrows from behind cover inside the door. The final beast master will release the other wolves and prepare for battle inside. There is a 30% chance that a cleric will be here as well, consulting on future plans. If so, they may join the battle or flee upstairs to warn their compatriots.

AREA 2-3 WOLF PENS

Crude pens have been set up here, for the purposes of corralling the wolves. There are iron rings set into the wall, with chains and iron collars dangling from them. Unfortunately, the wolves have all been set free and are coming for you!

There are five winter wolves left, and all are here waiting for the heroes when they enter. Standing behind them at the back of the room and firing arrows is the last beast master here. If the opportunity presents itself, he will quit the battle as soon as it goes bad and retreat up the stairs to join the warriors on level 2.

AREA 4 BUNKS

Five rough bunks have been set up next to the pens, each with a crude footlocker at its base. They are little more than straw



mattresses with threadbare, but heavy and well-made, field blankets and bedrolls.

This is the bedding area for the beast masters. Each foot locker holds personal belongings: possibly a spare set of boots, a mess kit, perhaps a bone-handled knife or trench art, but little of real value.

AREA 5 LOUNGE AREA

To the right of the entrance, a table is set up with eight stools surrounding it. There appears to be a half-finished game of chance, consisting of dice, sticks and counters, on the table. A few tankards sit in front of four of the spaces.

This is a common area for the beast masters. The remains of a few games of chance are scattered about the table, which is sprinkled with pipe ash and a couple of crudely-carved, but solid, pipes lay on the table as well. If the heroes wish to scrounge there are several sets of gaming pieces here, between tokens, dice, sticks and cards, enabling a variety of gambling games to be played.

LEVEL TWO: THE PRIESTS' QUARTERS

The stairs appear to be growing more precarious as you ascend, and indeed, looking up from the ground floor you can see that fully half of the second level has rotted and crumbled to nothing. As you climb the stairs, at about the halfway point, a blast of heat assaults you, followed a split second later by a torrent of boiling hot oil pouring down towards you!

Alerted by the sounds of battle, the warriors on the second level have set a trap and poured boiling oil down upon the heroes.

The torrent deals 3d6 damage, plus another 1d6 damage for each of the following two rounds. A dexterity save at CL 3 reduces this damage to 1d6 initial, and 1d4 secondary damage for each of rounds following. A dexterity save at CL 1 or 2 also reduces damage, but results in an additional 1d6 falling damage as the heroes throw themselves off the spiral stairs to escape the oil.

AREA 6 TRAP!

Reaching the top of the stairs, the heroes encounter the remains of the trap that had been set: two massive cauldrons on hinges to allow them to be easily tipped, still steaming hot and dripping the remains of the hot oil.

AREA 7 ARCHERS

These two warriors are poised with bows, ready to fire the moment the heroes emerge. The first two characters to emerge from the staircase will suffer attacks. The archers gain automatic initiative, even if the heroes are expecting the attack (as they should be), because they are poised and ready to fire (holding their actions). After the first round they will drop their bows and draw their scimitars. Following this initial attack roll initiative for the enemy as standard.

AREA 8 WARRIORS

Two more warriors are poised with bows behind overturned bunks. These bunks give the warriors half cover against ranged attacks. They will continue to fire their bows as long as possible, until the moment the PCs move to engage the warriors in area 7. If engaged in melee, they will drop their bows and draw their scimitars.

AREA 9 BEDDING

This is the area where the priests take their rest. There are rough straw beds and crude end tables, some carved with symbols of the archdemon they worship. This area has been trapped with *exploding runes* which erupt the moment someone enters the area without speaking the proper de-activation trigger phrase (known only to the priests). The runes deal 6d6 damage; a CL 4 dexterity save halves the damage, but it also causes the floor beneath the activator to crumble, dropping them down to level one and dealing an additional 2d6 damage (a second dexterity save at CL 1 will halve this damage).

LEVEL 3: THE TEMPLE

Emerging into the top level of the watchtower, you come upon a site that in your journeys is becoming all-too-familiar. A makeshift dark temple has been created here with an altar dedicated to the archdemon Dadramadeon along the far wall and ritual circles painted in blood upon the floor. Once again you find that your approach has been anticipated, as two figures in cleric's robes akin to those worn by the elf queen at the Minok Vale await your arrival and unleash an attack!

By now the heroes should be well aware that someone's waiting for them to stick their heads up. If, in the CK's judgment, they

take proper precautions, they may roll initiative against the clerics. If not, the clerics once more get a free volley off before initiative is rolled. Don't be too kind, here. While the heroes have taken a beating, there are only three clerics on this level. Two are poised to attack, and they do have the upper hand at first.

AREA 10 ALTAR AND ATTACK

Two clerics stand behind the altar and unleash a magical attack on the heroes as they emerge. They will most likely use *cause fear*, *hold person*, or *spiritual weapon*, but the exact nature of their attack is left to the CK. If the heroes retaliate with ranged attacks, the clerics can duck behind the altar and use it to gain full cover. When engaged they will use *cause light wounds* as their primary attack method until they run out of threads.

AREA 11 CELLS

After dispatching the two clerics, you round the corner and note that the floor seems slippery under your feet. The thick smell of lantern oil assaults your nostrils. Before you, you find several large pens, in which a number of beaten, malnourished and broken men and children are chained with heavy manacles around their necks, wrists and ankles. A strange black powder that smells of sulfur has been laid all about the place, with piles of it compacted here and there, in what appears strategic locations. Before them stands a final cleric, playing a desperate gambit. She holds a bow with a flaming arrow aimed at the pens. The smell of lantern oil assaults your nostrils.

“Leave, interlopers!” she hisses. “Leave, now, or we all die ~ you, me, the prisoners, all of us!”

The cleric is not bluffing. She's accepted that there's no escape from this and is playing a desperate gambit to get out of it alive. She's more than willing to sacrifice everyone here if it means taking out this group of meddling adventurers who have become a thorn in the side of the White Sash.

What happens next is entirely up to the heroes. If they come up with a good plan and a fast action to stop her from detonating the tower (the black powder is indeed a magical explosive), they can still win the day. The success of this plan is left entirely to the heroes and the CK. It's a difficult situation. The heroes may defeat the cleric and rescue the prisoners. They may fail to rescue the prisoners and find themselves in a mad flight down the stairs as the entire watchtower comes down around them. They may also die in the ensuing explosion.

The stakes here are serious and real. Their only hope is to stop her from firing the bow and to stop that flaming arrow from hitting the ground anywhere nearby as it will ignite the lantern oil that soaks the floor and all the prisoners. The oil also makes battle difficult; a dexterity save is required every round of movement so long as the heroes remain in this area. Failure means the hero slips and falls and must spend the next round carefully regaining their feet among the slippery surface. This can work against the cleric as well, though her goal here is to go

out in a glorious sacrifice so if she falls, she may simply produce a flint and tinder and use it to spark the oil.

One thing is certain; the cleric will not allow herself to be taken alive for questioning. If necessary she'll throw herself off of the crumbling ramparts, meeting a gruesome death on the rocky ground far below.

AN HEROIC RETURN

If the heroes manage to rescue the hostages, they will be greeted as heroes upon their return to the village. They will also be asked to keep the secret of the village, who wish only to be left in peace to live their lives out here.

If they survive their encounter at the tower, defeat the White Hand, but fail to rescue the prisoners, they will be sadly thanked for eliminating the threat.

Regardless, it's time to go and the *Wyvern* is made ready to set off once more for the Polar Flats.

THE FINAL ATTACK

The journey to the Polar Flats is still a good several weeks out over the open sea. A few days after setting sail for their final destination, the *Wyvern* comes under attack by another vessel, a fast-moving ship that closes on them. A ferocious battle erupts between the *Wyvern* crew and the pirates, who are servants of the White Sash!

This is the climactic battle of the scenario, when all of the various adventures the heroes have had, come to a head. The heroes have had several days to recuperate and heal from their wounds, and along with the healing poultices and unguents provided by Mary, they should be feeling fully healthy by the time this battle begins.

RUNNING THE BATTLE

There are guidelines for running naval combat in the **Castles & Crusades Castle Keeper's Guide**. CK's who wish to run this sequence as a full-blown ship-to-ship combat are directed to that resource. For the purposes of this scenario, however, it's assumed that the pirates seek to board the *Wyvern* and succeed in doing so.

Running the battle itself can be done using the guidelines for mass combat scenarios found in the appendices of this campaign. This offers the heroes the chance to engage in heroic actions each round of combat, and allowing for enhancement of their side's battle check. Alternately, the CK can use the naval combat found in Part 2 to model this one. Simply require the heroes to defeat X number of foes on the *Wyvern* before moving onto the pirates' vessel. Then the heroes can lead the charge against their enemies and win the day by defeating Y number of enemies there.

For the pirates themselves, use the statistics for white sash warriors presented earlier in this adventure. The captain of the pirate vessel is a formidable foe, constantly flanked by his first and second officer, creating a worthy challenge for our heroes

to overcome. He will remain on his own vessel until and unless the *Wyvern* falls.

PIRATE CAPTAIN (*He is a neutral evil 7th level ranger whose vital stats are HP 36 and AC 20. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and constitution. His significant attributes are dexterity 14, charisma 16 (+2). He wears +2 full chain mail, a small shield, and ring of +3 magic resistance, and carries a +2 scimitar (1d8+2) and 250 gp worth of jewelry and coin.*)

PIRATE FIRST AND SECOND OFFICERS (*They are a lawful evil, 5th level fighter whose vital stats are HP 34 and AC 17. Their primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and charisma. They wear chainmail and carry +2 cutlass (1d6+3 damage), dagger, and 300 gp in coin and jewelry.*)

Recall as well, that if the assassin has not yet been unveiled, she will directly attack Captain Silvermane during this battle. A hero who makes a successful CL 4 wisdom check will see her sneaking up on him in her guise clearly about to assassinate him, and will have a chance to stop the attack. She may or may not survive the encounter by diving overboard, changing shape, or otherwise taking advantage of the chaos of the battle, in order to appear in the final adventure. This is left to the discretion of the CK.

The *Wyvern* and the pirate vessel are both roughly equivalent, statistically; both are longships with a crew of 50 for the *Wyvern* and 70 for the pirate vessel. Both are capable of speeds of up to 20 ft./round or 8 mph.

If using the narrative mass battle rules, the *Wyvern* and pirate vessel begin very close to equal in forces, training and ability, though the Pirates have a very slight advantage in training and numbers (treat as “superior forces” and “outnumbered” for purposes of initial Battle Check Modifier; the pirates get an initial +4 for the Captain’s charisma and these two advantages).

GENERAL NOTES ON MELEE

In a boarding action, the attacking crew will generally move towards a specific objective if there is a commander present to keep them in line. Otherwise, they will gear towards finding loot to capture and the wholesale slaughter of their opponents. Those characters and NPCs who are forced to a point where they have nowhere further to retreat will be forced overboard, knocked to a lower deck (if possible), fall from rigging, or may be forced to surrender. Those knocked overboard, from the rigging, or to a lower level suffer falling damage as normal, saving for half.

Breaking through barriers and obstacles like locked doors requires strength checks against a CL based on how thick and heavy the door is (generally from 1-5), set by the CK, or by dealing enough damage with chopping weapons to break through. The CK should set hit points for the door, and when half of these are exhausted the barrier can be kicked in.

Command control area for any officers is equal to their charisma score x 5 in feet, or their charisma score in inches if using miniature figures. Any figures beyond the range of this command control area cannot respond to orders. However, if

there are lieutenants within command control, they can extend the range by half by relaying orders. If orders are made to characters that are directly engaged in combat, a roll of 1-4 on a d6 will enable the character to respond to the orders. Otherwise they will continue their current action.

SWIMMING AND DROWNING

Characters knocked overboard while wearing armor have a chance of drowning. Those in plate armor will automatically drown unless they manage to shed their armor. Those in chain have an 80% chance to drown unless they shed their armor. Leather armor-clad characters have a 20% chance to drown if they do not shed their armor.

Most heroes are assumed to be able to swim, once they have shed their armor. While sinking, a hero can hold their breath for a number of rounds equal to their constitution score. After that, each round a constitution check is required, starting at CL 0 and increasing by +1 every additional round. Failing a check reduces a hero to -7 hit points instantly. They lose one hit point each round thereafter, dying at -10 as standard.

Doffing armor depends on the category of armor worn. Light and medium armor can be doffed in 1 minute; heavy armor takes 1d6+2 minutes to doff.

These times apply to both underwater and above ground doffing of armor. However, the means of doffing is entirely different. Underwater this means by cutting straps free and struggling out of it, all while trying to remain afloat, hold one’s breath and keep calm to avoid drowning. On land this means properly doffing it so that you can put it on again later.

Keeping in mind that a combat round is 10 seconds long. A hero with an average constitution score of 12 can hold their breath for 120 seconds, or 2 minutes, before they run the risk of drowning. For light and medium armor, this is plenty of time to get out of their armor and begin to swim upward. However, during this time their armor is dragging them down, and they may still need to make 1-4 saving throws while frantically swimming upward before they can safely surface.

The pirates have two goals: to kill the heroes before they reach the Polar Flats, and to capture the *Wyvern* if possible to add it to their fleet.

THE AFTERMATH

If all goes well, the heroes and their allies among the *Wyvern* will emerge bloodied and bruised, but intact and victorious. It’s left to the CK whether the pirate vessel is scuttled, Silvermane shows mercy to the pirates, if any of them pledge allegiance to Silvermane (who may end up with the beginnings of a privateer fleet out of this), or what the final result is. The important thing is that the journey continues, and a week later they find themselves approaching the untamed and largely unexplored coasts of the Polar Flats.

The endgame is in sight...if the heroes can survive and prevail.

8: THE HALLOWED ORACLE

INTRODUCTION

Here we are, folks: the final chapter in our eight-part adventure set in the world of Terrigan, from the *Abyss Walker* novels by Shane Moore. In this conclusion, our heroes must traverse the dangerous Polar Flats, an uncharged wilderness of frozen desert, glaciers and nothingness, in the attempt to find the stronghold of the mysterious Order of the White Sash and get to the bottom of the prophecy regarding the mysterious Abyss Walker.

This adventure is a scenario for heroes from levels 5 to 6, and is a deadly challenge ~ working their way through the castle, in fact, could constitute what is popularly known as a “killer dungeon.” Make no mistake, the final battle alone may prove too much for some of the most stalwart heroes. However, the rewards and payoff are equally great. The heroes not only having the opportunity to bring hope to the world, but to gain the kind of riches they’ve heretofore only dreamed of: a literal dragon’s hoard.

Along the way, our heroes will face dire polar bears, savage northern tribesmen, winter wolves, yeti, a host of other dangers, and even a mature white dragon. They may, however, find a few unique allies along the way as well. The Castle Keeper is advised not to pull punches; if you choose to make the adventure easier to increase the survivability rate of heroes, consider reducing the treasure at the end accordingly. The heroes should have to work for this one.

In the end, they will have to infiltrate a fortress in the lands beyond the flats, a realm of jagged rock and ice spires, wherein the cult holds its true base of power. This adventure requires cunning and strategy. Heroes who simply charge in with swords drawn are sure to meet a swift and gruesome demise.

If they make it through the challenges they face, they will discover the core of the conspiracy, the heart of the prophecy. They will discover the “god” this cult reveres, and will likely be surprised at the nature of the revelation.

In the end, they will emerge heroes and saviors in the coming conflict, or they may not emerge at all . . .

THE STORY SO FAR

As fledgling adventurers, our heroes stumbled upon a great conspiracy regarding an ancient prophecy. They were sent by the final wishes of a murdered mentor they’d just met, to take a magical key and book to a sage all the way across the continent. On their journeys, they have battled hordes of Kriel and Greyshalk, participated in the siege of Torrent Manor, uncovered and stopped a dark conspiracy to murder the king of the Minok Vale, and saved a young girl from becoming the bride of a dream demon in the moors.

At every turn, they have battled the cultists of the White Sash, secretly is actually the Order of the Dragon. They have fought

pirates, survived assassination attempts, and along the way come to understand that they themselves are playing a role in the same prophecy they seek to unravel.

Most recently, the heroes signed aboard a merchant and privateering vessel called the *Wyvern* under the command of Johnathon Silvermane. They are currently traveling northward towards the uncharted frozen wastes of the Polar Flats, where their unknown destiny awaits....

A STORM AT SEA

A few weeks into their voyage north, the *Wyvern* enters uncharted waters. The sea becomes rough, the wind icy, and there are dangers everywhere. The ship has several close calls avoiding icebergs that emerge from the dense mists, and going is painfully slow.

Things turn for the worse one night, when a sudden storm erupts and causes the *Wyvern* to strike a glacier. While the ship remains seaworthy, it becomes hopelessly mired in ice, and the crew must begin the exhaustive task of attempting to free the vessel, lest they all die. As they begin their work, Silvermane calls the heroes down and gestures through the thick fog.

“There’s some good news to all of this,” he says. “According to our charts, and from what we can see, we’ve actually run aground. We’ve reached our destination ~ or as far as I can take you, anyway. My people must work to free the ship. As has been



the case since we began this journey, I will await your return as long as we can, but when stores run too low, we must set off for home. May the gods of light go with you, my friends.”

Thus, Silvermane sends the heroes on their journey, promising to do his best to free the vessel and await their return as long as he can. The heroes, following the map given to them by the Sage Laurentia, must navigate the frozen wastes of the Polar Flats and traverse a dangerous mountain pass to find the entrance to the dungeon.

By comparing their map with the charts aboard the *Wyvern*, they heroes can determine, with a successful intelligence or wisdom check, that they must travel north-northwest until they find the next sign on their journey. The trip will be made more hazardous in that the wastelands are constantly blanketed with a thick fog and constant, blowing snow.

THE POLAR FLATS

The Polar Flats exist in the extreme north of the world of Terrigan. They are a broad plane of ice, snow, and hard, rocky ground, constantly blanketed in a thick, icy mist. Harsh winds blanket the planes, blowing stinging crystals of ice with them. Blizzard-like conditions are a regular occurrence.

Despite their name, however, the Polar Flats are not entirely featureless. In the northern regions of the area stands a range of rocky cliffs and spires of ice, forming a deadly maze. It is into this maze of ice and rock that our heroes must penetrate to find the hidden fortress of the Cult of the Dragon, the followers of the Abyss Walker, who have hidden deep within this remote place for countless centuries.

ARCTIC SURVIVAL

The first order of business in the Flats is survival. This is much trickier than it may, at first, seem. In the end, it is left to the Castle Keeper how much they wish to focus on basic wilderness survival, but this sort of challenge can certainly make for an exciting change of pace if it's something that will appeal to the group. Here we'll look at a few guidelines for the problems heroes might face as they traverse the deadly lands of the frozen north.

If, on the other hand, your group prefers heroics and action to this sort of challenge, you can feel free to gloss over their survival with a few SIEGE checks and move on to the later encounters in the adventure.

KEEPING WARM

It's nigh impossible to start a fire as the icy winds prevent sparks from catching. Even if one could start a fire, it's impossible to tell if the ground upon which one stands is ice over rock, or ice over nothing. A campfire in the wrong spot could send people plummeting into icy waters to their certain death.

Keeping warm, then, requires a specific set of survival skills. Rangers and druids can make use of their survival and nature

lore abilities for this purpose, although those PCs that do not hail from a frozen region are at -2 to all checks to apply their training and knowledge to an arctic environ.

Thick, layered clothing is a must for this region, and it requires far more than a normal suit of winter clothing for adventurers. Layering two or three sets of such clothing will help but will also impose -2 to all dexterity-based rolls as well as to combat rolls to hit, and -1 to AC due to the thick layers of padding impeding movement.

At night the best way to stay warm is to either bury oneself in snow, or to build a structure from ice and snow. While it may seem like a massive undertaking to build such an “iglu,” a ranger or druid with a successful survival or wilderness lore check is capable of building a small structure in as little as half an hour. The snow will trap air within, and the use of a simple oil lantern will provide warmth for a number of people to sit comfortably in normal clothing without melting the structure around.

TRAVEL IN THE FLATS

Travel in the flats is slow-going as the travelers have to carefully pick their way over terrain that ranges from uneven, rock-strewn earth, to slick ice floes, and deep snow drifts. The terrain can change at a moment's notice. In general, the speed of travel in these conditions is roughly half that of what a person can manage under normal travel conditions.

It is possible to travel at a normal rate, but heroes suffer endurance reduction and penalties for exhaustion if they do so, as such travel is considered to be “stressful.” Heroes are thus forced to pick their way slowly and carefully across these bleak, frigid wastelands.

FOOD

Wise heroes will have brought provisions with them, but it's more than possible such provisions will run thin or run out entirely before they reach their destination. Finding food is nigh impossible in a landscape where there is no vegetation at all. The best bet for finding nourishment is to hunt and fish. Again, rangers and druids are the best bet for such survival efforts, and successful use of their class abilities will allow for ice fishing and even hunting in the flats.

In addition there will be encounters with creatures such as polar bears and wolves, which can provide meat and blubber for the heroes on their journeys, if they are wise enough to think of it.

VISION

Due to the constant mist that blankets the land, they can see no more than five feet in front of them. Actual light sources ~ even magical ones ~ don't help, as they reflect off of the ice particles in the air and blind the heroes trying to see much further. Treat the entire landscape as though it is blanketed by a perpetual *obscuring mist* spell which cannot be dispelled by any means. Since the mist is everywhere, even magic that conjures wind can't disperse it; it merely agitates the fog.

SOUNDS IN THE DARK

As our heroes wander the wastes, even camping in the evening is an horrific experience. At night heroes will hear disturbing noises coming from the dark, misty land around. It may be difficult to discern if the growls, groans, and cracking are beasts, demonic creatures, or the motion of the ice responding to the presence of living beings and body heat.

The CK should play this up, as it will become important by way of surprising the heroes on several of the encounters to follow. When a single brave hero is all alone in the night, their companions snoring around them, and a sudden crash sounds in the dark, the CK would not be out of line to call for a wisdom check. A failure would impose a deep sense of fear, dread or even panic, as per a *fear* or *scare* spell.

This could affect even the bravest and most stalwart of heroes, leaving everyone wondering if it might be some sort of magical effect. In truth, it's not ~ it's simply the primal fear of the alien unknown.

DAMAGE FROM COLD: ENDURANCE

The best way to handle the kind of damage heroes will suffer from attempting to survive in the arctic climate is through the use of endurance. Endurance is described fully in the **Castles & Crusades Castle Keeper's Guide**, but here's a quick breakdown.

Each hero has an endurance score equal to their constitution and wisdom scores, totaled, plus or minus the bonuses from each score. The final number indicates the number of rounds of strenuous activity a hero can take before they become exhausted. As a round is 10 seconds long, dividing this total by 6 is the number of minutes a hero can go. Dividing it by 60 is the number of hours they can go.

This is under normal conditions. In the frozen north and the harsh conditions heroes undertake here, all of these totals are halved. For heroes not used to this climate, simple travel results in reduction of endurance, as mentioned above.

Once endurance reaches zero, PCs begin to rack up penalties. When the score reaches zero, characters suffer -1 to all physical attribute checks. When they reach -1, mental attribute checks suffer this damage as well. At -2 endurance, add -1 to attack rolls. At -3 endurance, heroes are also at -1 to AC. This pattern continues, increasing to -2 to all attribute checks at endurance -4 and to -3 at endurance -7. When heroes reach -10 endurance, they must succeed at a constitution save with a CL equal to the number of points below zero their endurance is, or pass out.

RECOVERING ENDURANCE

Endurance can be recovered by resting. For each round a character rests, they regain one point of endurance. Healing magic can also recover endurance; *cure* spells will heal an equivalent amount of endurance points. *Lesser restoration* will heal half of all endurance loss. *Restoration* or *heal* will fully restore endurance loss.

FROSTBITE AND HYPOTHERMIA

Heroes whose endurance is reduced to zero from cold in the Flats have suffered hypothermia and frostbite. Such characters only regain endurance at the rate of one point per hour of rest, until endurance is raised above zero. At this point it recovers as standard. Those characters who pass out from endurance loss in the arctic do not recover consciousness until their endurance reaches at least 1 point.

ENCOUNTERS

This particular scenario is comprised of a series of encounters that the heroes will come across on their way across the Polar Flats. These encounters can be run in any order the CK likes, potentially combining multiple scenarios into one, or even skipping some of them if need be. Some are hostile, some friendly, some mundane and some bizarre. They are all designed to give the impression of an alien landscape, almost as though the heroes have wandered onto a different planet altogether. The land is fraught with danger and thoroughly corrupted by hundreds, if not thousands, of years of black magic.

The quest the heroes undertake will see them journeying roughly northwest for about a week and then entering the uneven area marked by gigantic rock and ice formations, jagged spires, narrow passes, and the like. The encounters in this section could take place during either the flat or rocky sections of their quest.

ENCOUNTER 1: DIRE BEARS!

The heroes are either camping for the evening or trudging along during the day when they start to hear the by-now all-too-familiar cracking of the ground around them. Almost too late to react, however, it turns into a rhythmic thumping combined with a roar of primal rage, as two impossibly large white bears appear like magic out of the mist and descend upon our heroes!

These creatures are dire polar bears, and they are starved for a meal, as well as for the sport of the kill. As with most animals, they will fight as long as they think they have an advantage but retreat if they can be scared. They are overcome with rage and near-rabid with hunger, however, so even heroes with the ability to *calm animals* may not succeed. The bears gain +6 to all saving throws against such effects and may reroll any failed save, keeping the better result of the two rolls.

DIRE POLAR BEARS (*These neutral-starved creatures have vital stats HD 8d12, AC 15, HP 60, move 40ft. Their prime attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws (1d12 each) and a bite (3d8). Their special abilities are hug if both claws hit (4d8 damage per round from crushing and biting; strength save breaks free) and blood rage (can continue attacking to -10 hit points; +2 to attack and damage after HP fall below 0.)*)

ENCOUNTER 2: DIRE WOLF PACK!

This encounter begins similarly to the polar bear encounter above, except that the wolves are more canny about their

efforts. They trail the heroes, possibly for days, before actually attacking, and they use pack tactics to do so. This particular scenario might be best had while the heroes are navigating the rocky passes in the north of the Polar Flats, where the wolves can take advantage of the terrain, the caves, overhead passes, and narrow ground to hem their prey in.

There are five dire wolves in the pack led by two winter wolves. Like the bears, they are hungry and looking for food. The wolves are stealthy and may make a dexterity check to avoid being detected, though heroes may get a “sense” of being watched up to a day or two before the attack comes ~ hair standing up on the back of their necks, and a feeling of eyes upon them.

When the attack comes, the wolves will take turns leaping in, attacking, and leaping back into the mists or shadows. As with other animals, they will withdraw if outmatched.

DIRE WOLVES (These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 14 and HP 28, 20 and 19. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 2-8 damage and are able to pull down opponents.)

WINTER WOLVES (2) (These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 15, HP 24, 28. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite 1d10 points of damage, plus 1d4 freezing damage. They are able to trip their opponents as well. They have a breath weapon they can use once per day which deals 4d4 damage to a single opponent within 5 feet; dexterity save halves the damage. They have scent and a vulnerability to fire.)

ENCOUNTER 3: THE WINTER WORM

One of the most feared and terrifying creatures of legend to haunt these wastes is the dreaded Winter Worm. No one knows how many of these creatures are in existence, but they are horrible to behold and to battle...and one of them has discovered the heroes.

This massive, serpentine creature is related to the legendary purple worm. It is slightly smaller than its cousin, but that's little comfort as it's still plenty large to swallow a creature whole. It is covered in an armor-like covering of pearlescent white scales, and has an enormous, lamprey-like maw that it uses to swallow its prey whole. It burrows beneath the rock and ice of the flats and even swims through the subterranean frozen lakes beneath, emerging to attack by surprise to swallow victims with a single, rapid motion. This burrowing often causes tremors that grow stronger as the beast approaches, which can warn heroes of an imminent attack if they think to be on alert.

WINTER WORM (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 10d10, AC 17, HP 60. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite for 1d12 or a sting for 2d4, plus 1d8 poison (constitution save halves poison damage). Its special ability is swallow whole on an attack of natural 19 or higher. Creatures thus swallowed suffer 1d10+10 acid damage/round but can cut free by dealing 20 damage vs. AC 15.)

ENCOUNTER 4: THE YETI

In this encounter the heroes run afoul of a small group of Yeti. The encounter begins when the heroes are seeking shelter from a particularly vicious icy storm. With a successful wisdom check, they discover a small cave system that seems to offer ideal shelter from the cold. If they have entered into the rocky section of the north, the cave can be set just about anywhere. If they are still in the flats, the cave complex will actually go underground.

Inside, the first warning comes as the heroes discover piles of old, bleached-white bones in the antechambers off of the main area. Some have been broken and split and others show clear signs of teeth marks. The corpses of a dire wolf, dire polar bear or even that of Kriel, Greyshalk or human cultists may be found with flesh still on the bones. As cold as it is here the flesh doesn't rot, lending an even darker and more horrific air to the scene ~ our heroes have no idea how long these bodies have lain here.

Some PCs may decide to leave upon finding these bodies. That is certainly an option, but the wind storm outside is so severe that all penalties and endurance damage from the cold are doubled. Further, now that the heroes have invaded the Yetis lair, they have marked themselves as prey and will be hunted wherever they flee, thus ensuring a battle at some point within the next twelve hours.

If the battle occurs in the cave complex (or in another cave complex to which the party adjourns), the Yeti will charge suddenly out of the darkness, letting out a howling roar of feral rage as their full nine-foot height looms wickedly over the heroes. If the battle takes place outside, the Yeti will suddenly appear out of the fog in the same fashion, having silently tracked the party through the cold.

The Castle Keeper is encouraged to build the tension, describing the scene quietly, and then suddenly throw their arms in the air and roar. Any players who are seen to physically jump or flinch see their characters surprised on the first round of combat. Of course, if you're not that dramatic, simply call for wisdom checks for surprise.

YETI (4) (These chaotic neutral humanoids have vital stats HD 5d8, HP 25, AC 14, Move 40ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 fists for 1d10 each, plus incapacitate on natural 20 (constitution save or be unconscious for 2d4 - constitution bonus rounds, minimum 1 round). Yeti may stomp on unconscious victims for 2d10 damage (no hit needed). They are immune to cold and take half damage from blunt weapons.)

THE YETI'S TREASURE: Hidden deep within its lair is the haul the Yeti family has collected from its various victims. This small hoard consists of 5 pp, 100 gp, 100 sp 75 cp. A successful wisdom check at CL 5 uncovers a suit of *elven chain* +2 on the body of a very long-dead knight half-buried in snow, rocks and ice, and a gleaming longsword, its blade gilt in a gleaming alien metal alloy that is brighter than the brightest platinum and harder than diamond, yet light as a feather. Its ivory hilt is



formed in the shape of a number of twisted vines, with a golden pommel emblazoned with an emerald, the whole encased in a crimson scabbard.

This sword is a *Special Bane Longsword* named “Brightbane”, and the knight was a questing hero who had come north seeking the Cult of the Dragon and failed in his quest, falling beneath the talons of the yeti. Etched into the blade in gold is a runic inscription in ancient elven: “Speak, as a lover, the foe upon whom Brightbane visits final sanction.”

This sword is special in that its bane type can be changed four times. The wielder has but to whisper into the blade the type of creature he wishes it to affect, and it becomes that kind of bane weapon. For example, if facing a demon, the wielder can whisper “demon” into the blade, and it will become a demon bane sword. It can become any type of bane weapon, and may become the same kind of bane weapon more than once. However, when the wielder whispers the fourth change into the blade, it forever becomes that kind of bane blade.

When found, it is not attuned to any specific kind of creature and functions as a standard +1 long sword.

ENCOUNTER 5: THE CULT OF THE DRAGON

In this encounter, our heroes are assaulted by their enemies in the Cult of the Dragon (probably still known to them as the Order of the White Sash). This attack can come at any point the CK desires, and take any form desired. The contingent could consist of warriors, assassins, beast masters with winter

wolves, clerics, Greyshalks, kriel (on foot or mounted on owlbears) or any other harassment desired. The cult does patrol their area, and increasing encounters with their patrols should be an indicator that our heroes are on the right path.

If she survived the events of *Across the Gray Still*, it’s possible that Nadia, the assassin who has dogged their footsteps for many months, could attack out of the night. This could be for a final confrontation, or she may again escape back into the mists.

NADIA (She is a lawful evil, half elf, 8th level assassin whose vital stats are HD 8d6, AC 18 and HP 31. Her prime attributes are dexterity and wisdom. Her significant attributes are dexterity 18, intelligence 13, and wisdom 14. Special: she is of human lineage. She sometimes wears leather armor, and carries a dagger of venom, a +2 short sword, an ankle band conferring +2 to armor class, a ring of protection +3, gauntlets of dexterity, three draughts of white poppy, two draughts of mandrake, one draught of meadow saffron and 600 gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

BEAST MASTERS (These neutral evil, 3rd level rangers have vital stats: HD 3d10, AC 15 and HP 20. Their primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and intelligence. Their significant attribute is strength 13. They wear mail hauberk, and carries a long sword, short bow, sundry gear, and has about 25 gp worth of goods and coin.)

WARRIORS (These are neutral evil, 2nd level fighters whose vital stats are HP 13 and AC 15. Their primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and constitution. Their significant attributes are strength 14. They attack with scimitar or longbow for 1d8 damage. They wear scale mail and shields, and carry scimitars and longbows, and have 10-20 gp worth of jewelry and coin upon them. There is a 10% chance of any given warrior’s scimitar being a magic sword of a random type (or chosen by the Castle Keeper))

PRIESTS (These are chaotic evil 4th level clerics whose vital stats are HP 17 and AC 13. Their primary attributes are wisdom, intelligence, and dexterity. Their significant attributes are dexterity 14, wisdom 16. Their suggested prepared spells are level 0 (4): detect alignment, endure elements, first aid, light; level 1 (3): bane, cause light wounds, cause fear; level 2 (2): hold person, spiritual weapon. They can pull 16 threads per day. They wear leather armor and carry maces. Spread among them are a +2 cloak of protection, a +2 mace, a scroll of curse, 5 potions of healing, and 240 gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

GREYSHALKS (These chaotic evil humanoids have vital stats AC 17, HP 12 (HD 3d8), move 30ft. Their saves are physical. They attack with a Khopesh for 2d6 damage. They wear plate and mail armor and carry a khopesh and 2d6 silver pieces.)

KRIEL (These chaotic evil humanoids have vital stats AC 15, HP 8 (HD 2d8), move 30ft. Their saves are physical. They attack with a slam for 2d4 plus a morning star for 1d8. They carry scale armor, morning star, and 2d6 copper.)

OWLBEAR (*This neutral beast's vital stats are HD 5d10 HP 27 AC 15. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks by 2 claws for 1d6 damage and a bite for 2d6 damage. If it strikes with both claws, it grapples the opponent, crushing it for 2d8 additional damage unless a successful strength save is made. Each round a new strength save can be made to escape. The owlbear can automatically bite a victim thus hugged.*)

ENCOUNTER 6: THE HERMIT

Not every encounter in the wastes has to be hostile. They discover a few allies along the way as well. In this encounter the heroes come across an old hermit wandering through the mists who helps them on their way and seems suspiciously familiar. This particular encounter should take place after the heroes have suffered through a hard battle and may be wondering about their ability to continue.

As they sit or trudge along, hopes fading, someone (call for wisdom checks) hears a sound in the mist. As the heroes draw together to listen, a rhythmic sound emerges, like quiet footsteps, but clearly audible to the whole group. Moments later, a hunched old man in brown furs emerges from the mists. He is leaning on a primitive staff off of which hang what appear to be totems and charms. His face is hooded, but a long white beard emerges. He hobbles directly into the midst of the heroes, ignoring any threats or weapons pointed his way, and looks about. Try as they might, no character ever can see his face ~ it always seems to be angled just wrong to see under his hood.

"Well, my friends," the cracked voice says. "What brings you to this barren wasteland?"

Regardless of what explanation the heroes give (or do not give) his reaction is the same. "Aye, aye," he says. "Well, I'm sure you're doing your patrons proud. But you look a bit worse for the wear. Perhaps I can help."

He draws forth from his robe a long, metal cylinder, from which he removes the top. This he inverts to form a cup. He appears to count the heroes and then gives a shake, and the cup turns into enough cups for each hero. He then pops a stopper on the cylinder, and steam pours forth. He fills each cup in turn and hands it to a hero.

"Here," he says. "Drink that. It'll make you feel better."

Any heroes who drink the beverage discover that it has a sweet taste, with a hint of bitterness underneath, and is pleasantly warm and creamy. It instantly warms their body and restores them. All heroes see their endurance scores reset to default levels and will suffer no loss for the next 1d4 days. Likewise, they are healed to full hit points and any injuries or ailments they have suffered are cured.

When they're finished, the old hermit collects the cups, reassembles his container, and says, "There, now. That should get you back at the top of your game. I must be going, now. My time is short. But be well, my pupils, and know that you're doing just fine!"

Without another word, he trundles off into the mist and vanishes. It will never be revealed whether he was Alfgeirr or some other old sage. Let the heroes believe what they will.

ENCOUNTER 7: THE FRIENDLY BEAR

This particular encounter can take place any time the CK likes, but preferably during a time when the heroes are having trouble with shelter or are otherwise in need of general respite from the rigors of the Wastes. It could occur when a battle looks like it's about to go bad ~ particularly one with the wolves or dire bears. If this is the case, a roar erupts from the mists during the battle, and the heroes' adversaries panic and scramble.

Otherwise, a rhythmic thumping comes out of the dark, and another gigantic dire polar bear emerges, far larger than any they've faced so far. As the heroes doubtless draw their weapons and prepare to attack, the creature goes up on its hind legs, stretches out its forepaws, and says, in perfect common speech, in a gruff, but feminine voice, "Ho! Hold, there, my friends! Is this how you treat every traveler you encounter on the road? For a moment I took you for the Dragon-cult, but I see you wear no white sashes."

She waits for the heroes to put up their swords and then plops down on her hind end in the snow. She licks her front paw and tilts her head, regarding the heroes.

"Well, then," she says at length, "I suppose introductions are in order. My name is Kako Alco. And you all appear as though you could use some respite from this accursed fog. Would you care to join me and my family for supper? We have plenty of fish in our den, and a warm fire."

She is more than happy to allow the heroes to go their separate ways if they choose, but her offer is genuine. If they accept, she leads them to her nearby den where three large polar bear cubs await. They squeak, "Mama!" when she gets home. The heroes, however, will not hear the cubs say another word in Common the entire time they stay.

She is a giant awakened polar bear who has lived for countless ages on the Flats. She is raising her three cubs, the offspring of a regular dire polar bear (she has no idea where the father is, nor does she care). If the heroes have gotten themselves lost, she can point them on their way to "that accursed fortress," especially if they tell her that their intent is to bring down the cult.

If they mention the god that the cult worships, she simply hangs her head and says, "That poor creature," but refuses to discuss the matter further.

The cult doesn't bother her and her children because, "they got tired of losing men."

She's not willing to accompany the heroes because she has her children to think of, but she does wish them well. She'll tell them what she knows about the fortress; that one cannot see it until they are on top of it, that it is well guarded, surrounded by an equally-hidden village populated entirely by fanatics of the Cult of the Dragon, and that an ancient creature of great

power lies at the heart of the place, worshipped by the cult and guarding their greatest treasure. She hasn't seen the beast, but she's quick to wink and point out that the cult is known as "The Cult of the Dragon." That's all she knows, however, as she hasn't made an effort to infiltrate the place.

As she promised, dinner consists of fish cooked over an open fire ("I find," she says, "That cooking it improves the flavor, don't you?"), and a strange beverage she serves up in glass bottles. It is of a thick, brown consistency and sharply effervescent as well as potently sweet. As she takes a deep pull on the bottle, she lets out a satisfied, "Hrmmmmmm."

After dinner, she is eager to hear the travelers' tales, and after talking deep into the night, she bids them good night and shows them to a chamber where they may take their rest. "Be at peace," Kako says, "None will harm you here, my children."

In the morning, she bids them farewell and offers them each six bottles of the beverage to take with them. Again, she refuses to provide further help; she cares only for her children and is firmly convinced that any darkness that should befall the world of men won't touch this untainted wasteland. Her world is not the world of humans, and she has no part in its quarrels. She has lived for countless ages in this arctic desert, time enough for the world to rise and fall many times over, and she has endured.

If the heroes issue a veiled threat such as, "If we fail, they will certainly come for you," she'll simply smile and say something to the effect of, "Then I suppose I shall have to trust that you will not fail."

Stats for Kako are provided in case the heroes foolishly try to fight her, but she is not intended as a combat encounter. If they attack her in the wastes she will fight just long enough to make her escape. If they assault her anywhere near her children, she will fight to the death to defend them.

KAKO ALCO (This neutral good magical awakened dire polar bear has vital stats HD 10d12, AC 20, HP 85, move 40ft. Her prime attributes are all. She attacks with 2 claws (1d12 each) and a bite (4d8, plus 4d4 freezing damage). Her special abilities are immune to cold, hug if both claws hit (5d8+4d4 damage per round from crushing, biting and cold); strength save breaks free), blood rage (can continue attacking to -10 hit points; +2 to attack and damage after HP fall below 0), and breath weapon (3x/day; cone of frost (20' cone, 10d8, dexterity half).)

ENCOUNTER 8: THE LONELY CREATURE

In this encounter, our heroes come across what at first appears to be an undead monstrosity, or a construct built from human parts. In reality, this giant but pitiful creature is little more than a sad and broken man mourning the death of his creator at the creature's own hands.

This encounter can be placed anywhere in the adventure, or skipped over entirely. It is little more than a whimsical distraction from the labors of the road and allows the heroes a chance to hear an all-too-familiar tale.

As the heroes are trudging across the wastes, they see a glimmer of orange light ahead piercing through the mist. The light may come and go at first, as it is far off. The Castle Keeper should lead the heroes to wonder if it is perhaps an illusion or delusion. Call for wisdom checks. Sometimes a successful check sees a light, and sometimes a stronger check loses sight of it, making the heroes sure there's nothing there.

As the party draws closer, however, the light grows steadier and stronger. At length, they come across an iglu in the wild with the warm glow of a fire burning within. As they draw near, they can hear what sounds like quiet sobbing from inside. If they choose to enter, they see a massive form, easily the size of an ogre, hunched over a lantern. Its great shoulders heave in sorrow. As they catch its attention, the creature starts and spins. It lets out a bestial roar, swinging wildly and stumbling backwards. It seems at first as though it is being aggressive, but it quickly becomes apparent that it is, in fact, afraid, defensive, and exhausted. Its massive arms swing not in attack, but to ward off the blows he seems certain are coming its way, and its roars are actually overwhelming sobs.

Eventually, it wears itself out, and stumbles backwards. It falls on its behind and leans against the wall, saying, "Get on with it, then. Just do it. I can take no more. Let it end here, and be quick."

As the party gets their first good look at it, they can see that it is truly hideous. Although it is the size of an ogre, its features appear human, but hideously scarred. A closer look with a wisdom check by a skilled healer such as a cleric will reveal that the scars are left over from sutures. It is as though it's been torn apart and sewn back together. It has long, matted, black hair and yellow, jaundiced eyes that are full of sorrowful tears.

If the party can convince the creature that they're not out to hurt it, it will permit them to share his fire. It will beseech them to tell their story, after which, it will regale them with its own sad and tragic tale. If they ask its name, it will simply and sadly reply, "I have no name. My father never named me."



THE CREATURE'S TALE

The tale that the creature tells is doubtless familiar, and the Castle Keeper should feel free to expand upon it and alter it as they see fit. The basic details are as follows.

The creature's memory goes back about 100 years, to the day it awoke in the city it now knows as Crossroads, hanging from chains in a dank room that reeked of putrid chemicals and rot. Its father was there, but reacted in horror at the monster's birth, striking it, pushing it away, and running. In confusion and despair, the monster grabbed an old cloak and rags in which it wrapped itself against the chill, and went out into the city. There it was viciously attacked by the horrified townsfolk, who it now knows believed it to be a plague-bearer.

Fleeing into the woods, it took refuge near the shelter of a woodsman and his family in the forest. There the creature came to know what love was as it observed the family day after day. Peeking in on the children as they received their lessons, it learned along with them or re-learned skills like language, reading, and numbers, which seemed to come back to it as it went along. In return, it did work in secret for the family, harvesting their crops at night and gathering wood. The people began to leave treats and gifts out for their guardian spirit, and the creature came to love them.

In the pocket of its cloak, the creature discovered a battered, leather book that was indeed the journal of its creator, Frederick von Holtzenberg of Dawson. It detailed the creature's own creation. How it was assembled together from a collection of dead parts, each selected for its beauty, but the whole together forming a hideous malformation. The creature mourned the tragedy of its life, but had some hope in the last entry. It indicated his father believed him to be dead, a failed experiment. He resolved then to make himself known to these people that had been so unknowingly kind to him and to seek out his father.

It first encountered the blind grandfather, who invited it in and treated it with true kindness. Upon their return, however, the family reacted with predictable horror, driving the creature into the forest before gathering their things and fleeing for civilization.

Alone again, the creature wandered towards Dawson, where Frederick's diary indicated he intended to return. In its efforts to find its creator, the creature encountered fear and violence everywhere it went. It accidentally killed Frederick's own brother in trying to find its creator and, its rage growing at the refusal of people to accept it, framed Frederick's sister for the murder. It then finally confronted its creator, demanding that he make it a mate. When its creator refused, the creature set out to take everything from this cruel man, murdering his bride on their wedding night, and fleeing into the wastes, pursued by Frederick, who eventually died from exhaustion and exposure.

Ever since, it has sat in this place, awaiting death, wracked with sorrow and regret at the tragedy of its life and the crimes it has committed. It has come to the conclusion that death will never come for it and that it is doomed to pay for its crimes for all

eternity, here, alone in the wastes. It will not attack the heroes unless they attack it. As to whether it will let them kill it or will fight for its own miserable survival is left to the Castle Keeper to determine.

If the heroes have not yet encountered Kako, the Creature can be a substitute for her as a source of information. It knows much of the same information she does, save that it once wandered into the village of the cult and was viciously attacked until it fled into the wastes. It will not go there again. It has absolutely zero interest in the Abyss Walker or the fate of the world of men, which, as far as it is concerned, can go straight to Hell. If the heroes do convince it to accompany them, it may well (60% chance) betray them at a critical moment, by siding with the cult to bring destruction to the world.

THE CREATURE (*This neutral construct's vital stats are HD 7d10, AC 18 and HP 49. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks opponents with two fists for 2d4 points of damage each. It can be struck only by magical weapons with a +2 bonus or better. It is immune to nearly all magic; cold spells slow it for 2d6 rounds. Electricity heals it. It is perpetually considered to be berserk as soon as it enters combat, receiving an additional +2 to all attack rolls.*)

THE FORTRESS OF THE DRAGON

At length, our heroes find the entrance to the fortress of the Order of the Dragon. It is located through a narrow, rocky pass and beyond an illusory curtain of nothingness, rising high into the sky, and again, is strangely familiar to their eyes.

As the heroes emerge from a pass, at a time that seems completely random, they walk once more into a curtain of fog...and then find themselves on a ledge overlooking a valley. The fog is gone, and the clear night sky rises above them, filled with stars. In the valley below, the lights of a village glitter in the night. Beyond this rises a keep that appears to be constructed of opaque crystal in offsetting tones of black and white.

A wisdom check while observing the valley below will reveal that it is populated largely by humans, elves, kriel and Greyshalks, all wearing the distinctive white sash. There are hundreds and possibly thousands of people down there, men and women. Though no children are seen, it could be that it's night time and they're all in bed (in truth, this is a full cult community and there are children). They are a solid mix of all the different types of enemy the heroes have met before, and martial training is part of their culture.

Every last one of them is a warrior of some type, trained from the time they could hold a sword to fight the forces of light. Use the stats presented earlier in this scenario and, indeed, from anywhere else throughout this campaign to represent members of the Cult of the Abyss Walker.

THE CASTLE

The heroes' goal is the castle itself, but approaching it and gaining entry are all but impossible. There is no way to circle

around the village to come at the castle from behind, and entering through the front door is not the best idea. It is left to the players to come up with a solid plan for entry, and to the Castle Keeper to play it out. This is the primary stronghold of the worldwide Cult of the Abyss Walker. It is not a simple matter to enter, as it being guarded magically and with traps.

The castle provides the final, and most deadly challenge the heroes will yet face. It's filled with Kriel and Greyshalk, as well as human cultists, who worship the "God Behind the Door." If the heroes can speak to the cultists (who will not be inclined to speak to their dinner) they can gain further hints that the "god" is a dragon. The castle is also littered with traps, which are easily bypassed by those who belong in the castle. They know the silent pass phrases and subtle gestures needed to keep them from activating.

In the end, the characters must enter the Vault of the Dragon, and overcome the high priestess of the cult. It turns out she is a white dragon guarding what appears to be an old man weighed down in magical chains ~ the God Behind the Door. He is, in truth, an ancient silver dragon named Darrion-Quieness.

THE TRUTH

The truth of the matter ~ and Darrion-Quieness is well aware of this ~ is that the entire mess is the result of what amounts to an ancient case of stalking and has little to do with the Abyss Walker. It's true that Darrion is the silver dragon prophesied to warn the world about the coming of the Walker. Centuries ago, the white dragon Ingisted fell madly in love with Darrion. Disgusted by the white dragon's evil ways and outlook, Darrion shunned her repeatedly.

The jilted white began tracking the silver anywhere he went, determined to win him or die trying, wreaking havoc wherever she arrived. Entire towns were destroyed in her efforts to impress Darrion, and, as the years dragged on, she became more and more mad with lust, jealousy, and rage. Finally, she brought vaunted levels of sorcery to bear, which she had gained from dark deals with the archdemon Dadramadeon. She trapped Darrion in human form and bound him in her chapel with heavy, magical chains.

Around the tower, she grew a vast lair in the shape of an ice castle. Through dreams and portents, Dadramadeon drove his followers north towards her. These followers grew to worship the God in the Vault, who they believed to be the essence of dragonkind. The legend of the Abyss Walker became intertwined in their minds with this "God." Seeing the advantages of power and beholden to her deal with the archdemon, Ingisted set herself up as the high priestess of the Cult of the Dragon and spread her influence across the world in the form of the Order of the White Sash.

Over the years, the Order has spread its own power. Its scholars and priests, while still paying lip service to Ingisted, have discovered the truth of the Abyss Walker. Some suspect that the God in the Vault is indeed the silver dragon prophesied to bring word of the Walker's arrival and are content to keep him

hidden for that reason. The cult truly worships Dadramadeon and respects the power of Ingisted, but the leaders also realize that the priestess is quite mad and stay out of her way for the most part.

Inside the castle, Ingisted visits Darrion daily, begging him to return her love. He staunchly refuses, having wisely realized that he is playing a role in a prophecy that goes far beyond his free will. He continues to maintain his own sanity and mind over the years through sheer, incredible force of will. Daily, she beats him after his refusal, and leaves him once more in misery, swearing that until she can have him, neither can the world.

As long as he remains thus chained, Darrion appears to be an elderly, white-bearded human male in silvery white robes. He sits, weak and decrepit in his chamber. The moment, however, those chains are removed, he can resume his full draconic glory and will be a force to be reckoned with. And that is exactly what the heroes are here to do...

INGISTED, HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE CULT OF THE DRAGON

Ingisted is an adult white dragon, centuries old, and completely mad. To make matters worse, she has formidable abilities that no normal white possesses. Somewhat offsetting this is that her madness has stagnated her mentally and emotionally. She is well over 1,000 years old, but she is roughly as powerful as an Age Category 7 dragon, rather than the age category 11 creature she should normally be.

Nevertheless, she is a brutal foe, and the major antagonist of this campaign. Battling her may well be a deadly prospect for one or more characters. The rewards, however, are vast ~ after all, she is a dragon, which means she possesses a dragon's hoard. In addition, freeing Darrion will instantly restore the silver to full power, and freed, he is more than a match for her.

DARRION AND THE DRAGON'S HOARD

It is suggested that if Darrion is used to bail out the heroes that they not be granted access to the full hoard of Ingisted. It is left to the Castle Keeper to make such a determination, and to concoct a reason why the full hoard is not available. Perhaps it is destroyed as the castle crumbles around the heroes and they must flee for the exit. Perhaps it simply wasn't as large as they'd expected, owing to Ingisted's madness. In the end, it's left to you.

MAP ONE: CASTLE KEY

The castle is nothing short of vast, with cavernous rooms and high, vaulted ceilings. The ceilings themselves are at least 30 feet high in every room. Most rooms are at minimum 20 feet across, with some being 40 or more. This is so the dragon Ingisted can assume her natural form if she needs to do so, though she generally wanders the halls in human guise. While much of the furnishing is of roughly human scale, there are certain areas that boast gigantic furniture (see the Guest Suite in area 7) This may provide a hint as to what the heroes are up against.

INGISTED'S CASTLE
1 SQUARE = 20'



1. GUARD HOUSE

This building houses ten Kriel guards and encompasses temporary bunks, a table, and benches. It is always manned, though the specific guards are rotated every few hours. There is also a 20x20 cell for holding prisoners. It is currently occupied by a young man who has been beaten and brutalized. He is a warrior who traveled north to investigate mystical portents and was captured with his party. One by one over the past three years, they have been fed to the priestess on high holidays and at rituals. He's the last. He does not know that Ingisted is a dragon. He simply thinks she's a mad cannibal demon worshipper.

KRIEL GUARDS (10) *(These chaotic evil humanoids have vital stats AC 15, HP 8, HD 2d8, move 30ft. Their saves are physical. They attack with a slam for 2d4 plus a morning star for 1d8. They carry scale armor, morning star, and 2d6 copper.)*

2. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

These are the administrative offices of the castle and are staffed by Greyshalk and Human minions. They encompass office facilities, desks, and more prison cells (currently unoccupied). There are fifteen workers here at any time (priests and warriors).

PRIESTS *(These are chaotic evil 4th level clerics whose vital stats are HP 17 and AC 13. Their primary attributes are wisdom, intelligence, and dexterity. Their significant attributes are dexterity 14, wisdom 16. Their suggested prepared spells are level 0 (4): detect alignment, endure elements, first aid, light; level 1 (3): bane, cause light wounds, cause fear; level 2 (2): hold person, spiritual weapon. They can pull 16 threads per day. They wear leather armor and carry maces. Spread among them are a +2 periapt of wisdom, a mace of disruption, a scroll of cause light wounds, 5 potions of healing, and 100 gp worth of jewelry and coin.)*

GREYSHALKS *(These chaotic evil humanoids have vital stats AC 17, HP 12 (HD 3d8), move 30ft. Their saves are physical. They attack with a khopesh for 2d6 damage. They wear plate and mail armor and carry a khopesh and 2d6 silver pieces.)*

3. BARRACKS

These are the dormitories for the castle guards (Kriel/human/Greyshalk). They are generally segregated by species with humans occupying one building, and Kriel and Greyshalks occupying separate sections of the larger of the two rooms. There are a total of one hundred fifty guards in the castle, but it is rare that all of them (or even most) will be in the barracks at any given time. It's left to the Castle Keeper how many are currently in place.

At the far corner of each barracks is situated a guard tower with spiral stairs leading up to the parapets. Each staircase has a wall scythe trap which, when triggered by stepping on a pressure plate on the first stair, causes a pair of scything blades slicing out, dealing 4d6 damage (dexterity save for half) plus a Type IV poison (1d8 damage and -1 to all checks with a successful constitution save, or 2d8 damage and a 2d4-day-long coma on a failed save). The trap is CL 3.

Use the stats for Greyshalks and Kriel above; human warriors and beast masters are found below. The priests do not live here.

BEAST MASTERS *(These neutral evil, 3rd level rangers have vital stats: HD 3d10, AC 15 and HP 20. Their primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and intelligence. Their significant attribute is strength 13. They wear mail hauberk, and carry a long sword, short bow, sundry gear, and about 25 gp worth of goods and coin.)*

WARRIORS *(These are neutral evil, 2nd level fighters whose vital stats are HP 13 and AC 15. Their primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and constitution. Their significant attributes are strength 14. They attack with scimitar or longbow for 1d8 damage. They wear scale mail and shields, carry scimitars and longbows, and have 10-20 gp worth of jewelry and coin upon them. There is a 10% chance of any given warrior's scimitar being a magic sword of a random type (or chosen by the Castle Keeper))*

4. STAIRS TO PARAPETS

These stairs allow access to the parapets where guards continually patrol. They are protected by a magical Icy Mist Trap which is triggered by failure to make a specific gesture as one walks through. The CL 4 trap fills the entire staircase with a burning cold, icy mist dealing 2d4 damage to any in the area plus an additional 1d4 damage for each of the 1d4 following rounds. A successful constitution save halves the initial damage and negates ongoing damage.

5. STABLES

These stables house the winter wolves and owlbears used as companions and mounts by the Kriel, Greyshalks and human beast masters. Each 20'x40' stable holds two creatures of the same species. All in all there are ten winter wolves and ten owlbears held here. The stable doors are unlocked and the creatures can leave any time they like. They stay due to being well-trained (and in the case of the wolves, sheer desire to stay). The moment they sense a threat or someone they don't know, they will attack.

OWLBEAR *(This neutral beast's vital stats are HD 5d10, HP 27, and AC 15. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with 2 claws for 1d6 damage and a bite for 2d6 damage. If it strikes with both claws, it grapples the opponent, crushing it for 2d8 additional damage unless a successful strength save is made. Each round a new strength save can be made to escape. The owlbear can automatically bite a victim thus hugged.)*

WOLVES, WINTER *(These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 15, and HP 24, 28. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite 1d10 points of damage. They are able to trip their opponents as well as cause a freezing bite for an extra 1d4 points of damage. They have a breath weapon they can use once per day which deals 4d4 damage to a single opponent within 5 feet; dexterity save halves the damage. They have scent and a vulnerability to fire.)*

6. CHAPEL

This is a chapel to Dadramadeon, though it is much more like a cathedral than a chapel in its dimensions and grandeur. There are Greyshalk guards walking the parapets atop the chapel, looking down into the courtyard. A basic wisdom check will allow heroes to notice this; a wisdom check at CL 3 means they possibly notice the Greyshalk before the Greyshalk notice them. See Map 2 for details.

7. GUEST SUITE

This suite of rooms exists more for show than for any practical reason. In a normal castle, it would be used to house dignitaries, honored guests and similar people. In truth, Ingisted intended it to be the personal apartments of Darrion when she took him as her consort. Somewhere in her madness she still hopes it will suffice for that purpose. To that end it is well kept with several demons appointed as retainers to provide maid and butler service just to these rooms. Other than that, the rooms are unused, though they are outfitted in a distinctly masculine style, with hues of silver and platinum the dominant color scheme throughout.

THE GUARDIANS OF THE GUEST SUITE: Scattered throughout the guest suite are the demons Ingisted uses to upkeep the rooms. There are, in total, six ice demons, and six ice mephits.

ICE DEMONS (6) (*These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 4d10, AC 18, and HP 31. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with two claws for 1d4 and one bite for 1d6 damage points of damage. They are immune to cold and fear or fear type spells, can move 40 feet per round and cast burning hands three times per day, though the damage is cold rather than heat. They are vulnerable to fire damage (double damage)*)

ICE MEPHITS (6) (*These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 15 and HP 14. They attack with a bite for 1d6 and a stinger for 1 point of damage plus 2d6 cold damage (constitution save half).*)

A. BEDROOM

The northern room, totalling 60'x80' in size, is dominated by a lavish bed comprised of a full 40'x40' arrangement of plush cushions in various shades of silver and gray. The southern bedroom is substantially smaller, and contains human-sized furnishings of similar design.

B. CLOSETS

These are filled with elaborate robes in sorcerous, priestly or noble style, in shades of silver and gray with shots of red and black accents. Some bear the holy symbol of Dadramadeon, though none appear to have ever been worn or used. The closets in the southern area of rooms are empty.

C. PRIVATE STUDY

These two rooms are lush studies with leather chairs, plush divans, and a hardwood desk made from some sort of silver wood, which appears to be of elven craftsmanship. Shelves for

kitsch line the walls, though most are empty, awaiting décor. The southern room is appointed in earth tones and is substantially smaller (though is still 20'x40' in dimension). Upon the desk are leather-bound notebooks and journals, quill pens that have silver and gold nibs, and inkwells of silver. All are in good condition but unused.

D. PRIVY/BATH

Contains a bronze tub and chamber pot. Otherwise this room is empty, unoccupied, and covered in a thin layer of frost and dust.

E. SITTING ROOM

Another room with leather couches and chairs, plush divans, and designed strictly for comfort. Though a gigantic room, the furnishings in here are human-sized. There is a table with a decanter filled with the best brandy from Dawson. An aura of magic hangs heavy over the room. When someone enters, the fireplace bursts into flame and fills the room with warmth, but the icy walls of the castle do not melt from the heat. The desks have empty notebooks, vellum scrolls, and writing utensils.

F. LIBRARY

There are shelves full of books, mostly on magic, history (largely religious and military), demonology, the gods, dragonkind, occultism, and similar subjects. There are study desks, comfortable sofas and chairs scattered throughout.

8. GREAT HALL

The great hall is a vast, cavernous room, probably far larger than any the heroes have ever been inside. The high, vaulted ceiling appears to be made of a single piece of crystal. If there are any dwarves or craftsmen such as architects or stonemasons in the party, they will note that it doesn't appear that any tools were used to form the room. The workmanship is inexplicable and exquisite. Statues adorn the walls of great dragons and demons, depicting battles of the demonic forces and the evil gods defeating the good gods in horrific battles. Tables and benches fashioned from the same ice-like crystal line the room, enough to seat hundreds, perhaps a thousand or more, people. Wind howls through the place, moaning like a banshee, but carrying none of the chill of the outside.

A. THRONE DAIS

This dais, 20'x20' in size, features a lavish throne comprised of white ivory and crystal, elaborately decorated with dragon motifs.

9. KITCHENS

These massive kitchens are where food is prepared for Ingisted. There is constantly something (or someone) being dressed, butchered and cooked in here by Kriel and Greyshalk servants. At any given time there are 6 servants in the kitchen. These use the stats for Kriel and Greyshalk warriors presented earlier, but they attack using large meat cleavers and butcher knives dealing 1d6 damage. Their leather aprons function as leather armor, reducing their Armor Class to 12.

Upon investigating the meat being butchered and/or stew being prepared, an intelligence check at CL 3 will reveal the meat as that of human beings.

10. WINE CELLAR: A short set of stairs leads into the wine cellar. It is full of some of the best wine, mead and spirits to be found across the northern realms of the world. Also found here are a large number of bottles that hold wine, mead and spirits mixed with human blood ~ a delicacy Ingisted enjoys very much. Simply smelling the wine will allow for a wisdom check at CL 2 to catch the coppery, salty odor, faint underneath the bouquet of whatever spirit or wine they are sniffing. Tasting the wine reveals that it tastes “off,” allowing another wisdom check at CL2 to discern the taste of blood in the spirit.

11. PANTRY/LARDER

The stores for the castle can be found here. Unlike most of the castle it is definitely freezing in this room, to preserve the food stores within. There are large stores of grain and some fruit and vegetables, largely for the cultists living in the village outside. Most disturbing of all, however, are the 20 or 30 dead, naked human beings hanging on hooks around the room, waiting to be prepared for service.

Though the heroes have no way of figuring this out, most are the spoils of hunting parties of Kriel and Greyshalk sent out to bring back prey for their priestess. Once per month, however, a lottery is held in the village, with one male and one female sacrificed to Dadramadeon. This sacrifice is then used to feed the dragon and, indeed, the villagers as well, who are in fact willful cannibals.

MAP 2: CHAPEL/ORATORY

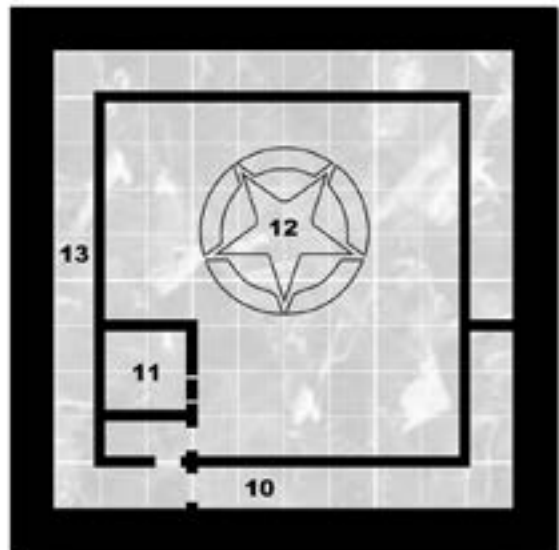
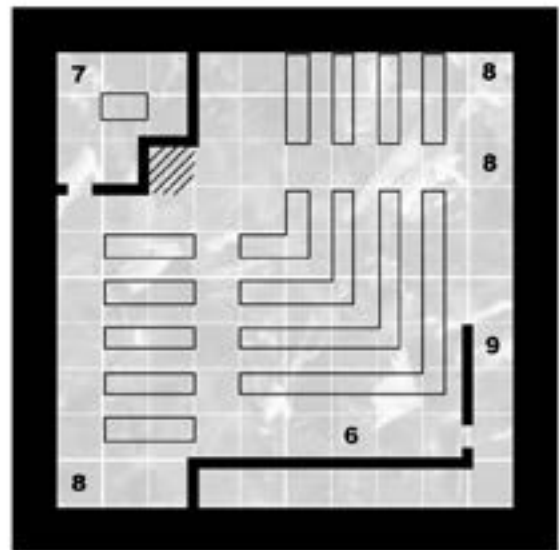
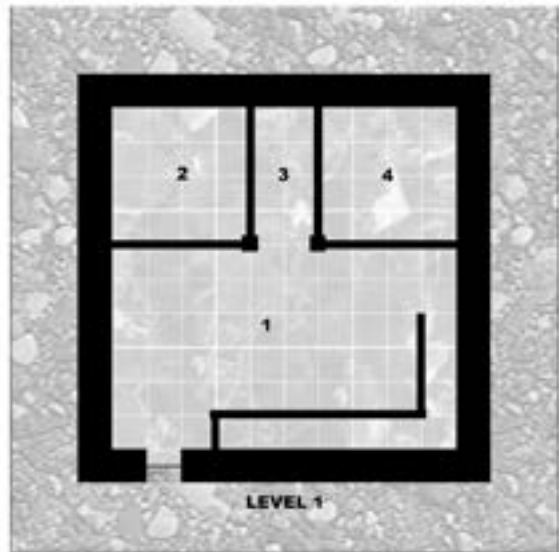
This chapel is a corrupt sanctuary in honor of Dadramadeon and the Abyss Walker. It is heavily trapped and all but sentient. The demon’s very consciousness infects this place and sees into the hearts and souls of all who enter. Any who are not pure (that is, goodly characters or those who are enemies of the cult) will be targeted by the deadly traps of the place. There are a total of 12 priests in the chapel. It is left to the CK to determine their exact disposition and locations at any given time.

Please note that in the interest of showing detail, this map uses a different scale than the other two (10’ squares instead of 20’ squares).

PRIESTS (These are chaotic evil 4th level clerics whose vital stats are HP 17 and AC 13. Their primary attributes are wisdom, intelligence, and dexterity. Their significant attributes are dexterity 14, wisdom 16. Their suggested prepared spells are level 0 (4): detect alignment, endure elements, first aid, light; level 1 (3): bane, cause light wounds, cause fear; level 2 (2): hold person, spiritual weapon. They can pull 16 threads per day. They wear leather armor and carry heavy, iron-shod maces. 125 gp worth of jewelry and coin, 10 potions of greater healing, and clerical scrolls with bane x2; spiritual weapon x3; hold person x1.)

CHAPEL TO DADRMADEON

1 SQUARE= 10'



LEVEL ONE

1. ENTRY HALL

This vast entry chamber is a gathering and social area for the priests of Dadramadeon and their guests. The very door itself is marked by a *chain lightning* trap which is triggered just by crossing the threshold. It attacks any character of good alignment. It deals 6d6 damage to the hero who triggers it and 3d6 to all within a 20' radius. The trap is CL 6 to detect, and though it cannot be disarmed, it may be avoided by carefully stepping around a cleverly hidden rune in a single block on the floor. The trap will also alert the priests in areas 2 and 4.

2. RECTORY DORMITORY

This is the sleeping area for the priests in the castle. It is neatly laid out with 15 beds, each with a footlocker, but is otherwise very spartan in design. The most the heroes might find in here are some personal effects, perhaps a demonic "bible" of sorts with rituals and prayers to Dadramadeon but little else of value.

3. HALL OF THE WHITE WOLF

This hall is where the priests keep their "pet," an enormous winter wolf named Fritzbig. Fritzbig is abnormally large (even for a winter wolf; he is easily the size of a horse), keen of intellect, and vicious. He likes only the priests and will viciously attack anyone whose smell he does not recognize.

FRITZBIG (*This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 8d8, AC 15, and HP 40. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a bite for 2d6 points of damage, plus 1d8 freezing damage. He is able to knock opponents to the ground on a successful bite (strength save negates; getting up requires full movement the following round). He has a breath weapon he can use 3x per day which deals 3d6 damage to a 10 foot cone; dexterity save halves the damage. He has scent and a vulnerability to fire.*)

4. RECTORY STUDY

This room is lined with shelves of scrolls and codices, outlining the religion of Dadramadeon and, indeed, many of the other religions of Terrigan. While some references to the Abyss Walker can be found here, none are clear exactly as to who or what the Abyss Walker is, or what role it will play in the coming apocalypse. The cult appears to be waiting for him, but to what end, none are certain.

One fact of interest that may be found here is the distinct reference of the cult as the Cult of the Dragon in addition to the Order of the White Sash. Indeed, the CK may wish to "info dump" any information they like about the cult using the information herein. This can be as big or small a payoff as you like. The heroes may even find references to the God in the Vault, separate and distinct from the high priestess Ingisted. It should not, however, be revealed that Ingisted is anything more than a powerful priestess ~ certainly, she shouldn't be revealed as a dragon as even the clerics here are not sure of that fact. There could, however, be indications that she might be some sort of demonic force in disguise.

5. RAMP TO LEVEL 2

This ramp leads up to level 2, the temple proper. When not actively open for a service, it is trapped with a razor wire trap (CL 4). Hidden in recessed blocks in the wall, this trap springs forth to fill the corridor, appearing as though out of nowhere. All within the area must succeed at a CL4 dexterity Save or suffer 4d6 damage. A successful save halves the damage suffered. Thereafter, navigating the 30' long area webbed with razor wire requires a CL 3 dexterity check per 10 feet traveled, suffering 2d6 damage on a failure.

LEVEL TWO

Level two is the chapel proper. It is accessed by the ramp (area 5 of level one), which continues upward to level three. A doorway allows access to this level.

6. MAIN CHAPEL

This area is marked by several rows of pews facing an altar. Elaborate tapestries line the wall celebrating the archdemon Dadramadeon, but also show a white dragon as the demon's consort. Clerical characters will note this is out of alignment with the demon's normal mythology in which there are no featured dragons of any kind.

7. SANCTUARY

This raised dais holds a 10'x20' altar of marble, upon which a set of elaborate ritual instruments rest. These instruments ~ a kris bladed dagger, a bowl, a chalice and a tome ~ are all gilded in gold and gems, but also thoroughly tainted by evil and marked with the signs of Dadramadeon. Together, the items would be worth at least 10,000 gp. The tome itself is a holy book devoted to the archdemon.

The altar is also magically trapped via permanent incantation. Anyone who touches anything on it without speaking the proper holy prayer to the demon will subject the entire sanctuary area to a 7d6 blast of frost (constitution save for half damage). The only way around this trap is to speak the proper words. A traps check at CL 7 can detect it, but only a CL 10 wisdom check by someone with the right clerical or legend lore background can divine the proper incantation to bypass the trap, which resets immediately upon activation (thus, touching the dagger would set off the trap. A survivor attempting the same thing again would again set off the trap).

Anyone struck by the trap is also prone to drop anything they grab immediately. Holding onto an item during the blast requires a CL 7 strength check and is only possible if they succeed at their initial constitution check.

8. GARGOYLES

There are three demonic statues situated in the room. These are gargoyles which will attack any interlopers who do not make a holy gesture to the demon upon entering the room. They will fight to the death. These creatures also sound a mystical, silent alarm to the guards on level three, and Ingisted, alerting them to the presence of interlopers.

GARGOYLES (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 16, and HP 28. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d4, a bite for 1d6, and a gore for 1d4 points of damage. They fly at a speed of 75 feet per round. They have darkvision 60 feet and are able to appear as stone statues by freezing themselves in place.)

9. RAMP UP

This ramp continues from floor one to floor three.

LEVEL THREE

Level three is the rooftop of the chapel. It consists of a rampart which is staffed by several Greyshalk soldiers and is marked by a massive pentacle and ritual trappings.

10. RAMP UP/DOWN

This is the ramp that has carried the heroes from the ground floor up, and back down again. It leads up onto a rampart where guards can walk the parapets.

11. GUARD HOUSE

This is a simple barracks-like building with tables, chairs, and a few bunks, where the guards can take respite from the cold between shifts.

12. SUMMONING CIRCLE

The trappings are a summoning circle which allow the guards to summon a demon to aid them, should interlopers appear. If the heroes have fought the gargoyles on level two, the Greyshalk are waiting for them and stage an ambush, attacking as soon as the heroes emerge while one activates the circle. Otherwise, one of the Greyshalk will use its first turn on melee to activate the circle. Indeed, if anyone (hero or enemy alike) disturbs the circle in any way, the demon will be summoned.

13. RAMPARTS

This 10-foot-wide walkway circumnavigates the roof of the temple and is elevated about ten feet high. Normally the guards walk the parapets to watch for danger (and as such, may well have been aware that the heroes were coming before they even arrived).

There is one Greyshalk per player character here in addition to the demon, a bone demon in the service of Dadramadeon. The Greyshalks are not foolish. They will stand on the parapets and attack with ranged weapons, save the one that will leap down into the circle to trigger it.

GREYSHALKS (These chaotic evil humanoids have vital stats AC 17, HP 12, and HD 3d8, move 30ft. Their saves are physical. They attack with a khopesh for 2d6 damage or heavy crossbow for 1d10 damage. They wear plate and mail armor and carry a khopesh and 2d6 silver pieces.)

BONE DEMON (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 9d10, AC 21, and HP 54. Their primary attributes are

physical. They attack with a variety of bone weapons for 3d6 points of damage. They have powers common to all demons, take half damage from piercing weapons, and an SR 12. Upon a successful hit with its bone weapon of 18-20, the bone devil impales its victim for automatic maximum damage. It is able to strike with its claws as well, and upon a successful hit blast chunks of bone into the victim's face. They must make a successful dexterity save or be blinded for 1d4 rounds. Furthermore, the bone fragments lodge into the skin and calcify it, turning it into bone (imparting a -2 to hit, -2 damage). They are able to use the following spell-like abilities: dispel magic (3/day) fear (1/day), icestorm (1/day), lightning bolt (1/day), ray of enfeeblement (2/day) and wall of ice (1/day).

MAP 3: KEEP

This is the castle keep; the place where Ingisted makes her home, and where she keeps Darrion hostage. It is a tall, round tower with four levels, each accessed by a central, spiral staircase. As with the rest of the castle, the keep's rooms are vast with each square equaling 20 ft.

LEVEL ONE

1. ENTRY

The entry of the keep is heavily guarded. If Ingisted has in any way been warned that the heroes are coming, a portcullis will be lowered, inside of which the guards from area 2 wait with crossbows to attack. Lifting the portcullis requires a strength check at CL 10. Up to four heroes can attempt to lift the portcullis with each additional hero that joins the attempt adding their level and strength modifier to the check. However, it also takes at least 2 rounds to lift it high enough to pass beneath, during which they will be subject to attacks against which they cannot defend.

Alternately, a roguish character could attempt to scale the walls and enter via the windows on Level 4. This will, however, open them to the full fury of Ingisted, who will be waiting for them. Climbing the tower to the top requires a CL 10 climb check; the walls are slick and icy. Nonetheless, if a hero succeeds, and thinks to attempt to circumnavigate the tower, it is possible they might see into area 21 and free Darrion. This will greatly alter the entire landscape of the battle.

2. GUARDS

There are three guards here per hero ~ one Kriel, one Greyshalk, and one human warrior. Each wears an oddly specialized holy symbol to Dadramadeon. These give off a faint aura of abjuration magic, if any sort of detection is used upon them. With a CL 4 wisdom check, clerical characters will note that they seem to be unholy symbols mixed with a sign of protection. These medallions allow entry through area 7 without suffering the magic missile trap.

GREYSHALKS (These chaotic evil humanoids have vital stats AC 17, HP 12, HD 3d8, move 30ft. Their saves are physical. They attack with a Khopesh for 2d6 damage. They wear plate and mail armor and carry a khopesh and 2d6 silver pieces.)

INGISTED'S KEEP



KRIEL (These chaotic evil humanoids have vital stats AC 15, HP 8, HD 2d8, move 30ft. Their saves are physical. They attack with a slam for 2d4 plus a morning star for 1d8. They carry scale armor, morning star, and 2d6 copper.)

WARRIORS (These are neutral evil, 2nd level fighters whose vital stats are HP 13 and AC 15. Their primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and constitution. Their significant attributes are strength 14. They attack with scimitar or longbow for 1d8 damage. They wear scale mail and shields, and carry scimitars and longbows, and have 10-20 gp worth of jewelry and coin upon them. There is a 10% chance of any given Warrior's scimitar being a magic sword of a random type (or chosen by the Castle Keeper))

3. ANIMATED ARMOR

The door to the left is guarded by a suit of animated armor, which can be called upon by the guards to join the fray. Otherwise, it automatically animates and attacks upon the death of the last guard. The suit is, in fact, animated by a wraith that is bound to the armor, and so counts as undead.

WRAITH ARMOR (These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 5d12, HP 37, AC 18. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with a longsword for 1d8 damage, plus incorporeal touch for 1d6 points of damage (a hit with the sword also deals incorporeal touch), and a successful hit drains the victim of one level of experience. Wraith armor can only be hit by a magic weapon. Animals fear wraiths and will not willingly approach within 30 feet of them. They can create spawn from any that they slay with their energy drain ability.)

4. SKELETAL WARRIOR

The right hand door is guarded by a lesser skeletal warrior wearing an identical suit of armor to the wraith (that is, they look the same at a glance). It will animate under the same conditions as the Wraith.

SKELETAL WARRIOR (LESSER) (*These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 5d10, AC 18, and HP 45. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a great sword for 1d10 points of damage. They are immune to mind controlling spells and cause fear for any creatures 4HD or less (charisma Save negates). They have an SR of 10.*)

5. SPIKED PORTCULLIS TRAP (CL 5)

After entering the right hand door, if the correct sequence of small pebbles inset into the doorway is not pressed, a spiked portcullis will slam down upon anyone entering, dealing 4d6 damage. The trap then instantly resets. A successful dexterity save negates the damage, allowing someone to dive through without being hit.

6. SOLDIERS' LOUNGE

This area is a lounge for the guards. By the time the heroes enter, it has been emptied, leaving an empty table with a few gaming sets (dice, cards, sticks, etc.) and flagons of mead.

7. MAGIC MISSILE TRAP (CL 7)

Anyone crossing the threshold of this door who is not wearing an amulet with a holy symbol of Dadramadeon will trigger a magic missile trap, and be struck by 4 missiles for 4d4+4 damage. There is no save. Upon detecting this trap (a traps check at CL 7 to spot very faint scorch marks and two wands embedded in the wall), defeating it is possible, but it requires a CL7 strength or dexterity check to jump far enough to clear the trap trigger.

Those who cross through and survive may, with enough effort and work, chisel free the wands. This takes 1d6 hours of work per wand. Success yields two greater wands of magic missile, each with 10 charges, that cast as a third-level caster (2 missiles, each at 1d4+1). The wands regain 5 charges at midnight each day. If either wand is ever reduced to 0 charges, it crumbles to dust and is forever destroyed.

LEVEL TWO: THE BONE DUMP

Level two acts as something of a barrier between the personal quarters of Ingisted and the guard area on level one. She maintains it as a warning and deterrent. It is two rooms that are full of bones, many splintered and gnawed, some years old and some still with flesh attached to them. The area stinks of death and rot and is infested with danger.

8. ENTRYWAY

Stepping off the staircase onto this level affords the only roughly safe area on this floor. It's pitch dark. There are no torches and only darkvision will allow the heroes to see in this area. A listen check at CL 3 will detect scraping, scuffling and rattling

sounds from the shadows. Any heroes who can see (via light or darkvision) will see piles of bone scattered throughout the place. The stench of decay both old and fresh is heavy in the air.

It is impossible at a glance to determine what kind of bones lay scattered about without entering the room and checking. Doing so will identify countless species of human, demihuman and beast. All show clear signs of being splintered and gnawed.

9. CADAVER CATERPILLARS

At first glance, as with everything else in this area, this appears to be a large and haphazard pile of bones with rotting flesh hanging off of them. A hero might be drawn to it by the glint of light off of something red and glimmering deep within the pile. Indeed, there is a small pile of gems buried at the center of the pile ~ rubies, emeralds and sapphires worth 150 platinum pieces in all.

Unfortunately, there are also five cadaver caterpillars infesting the pile and they will attack if the pile is investigated. These gigantic, grotesque caterpillars are a sickly purple in color, have a mouth full of flailing tongues, and six antennae, which can infect victims with paralyzing poison.

CADAVER CATERPILLARS (5) (*These neutral animals have vital stats HD 3d10, HP 26, AC 17, and move 30ft. Their prime attributes are physical. They attack with antennae for 1d2 damage plus paralysis (2d4 turns; constitution save negates). Victims thus paralyzed may be fed upon for 2 points of damage automatically every round thereafter, and remain paralyzed so long as the caterpillar feeds. The caterpillar may feed on a victim and still attack another with its antennae if it needs to defend itself. Alternately, it may choose to deal 1d3 damage to a victim and lay eggs in the wound. Eggs can be easily scraped away, but touching them inflicts paralysis as though touched by an antenna.*)

10. GIANT SPIDERS

Again, this area resembles large piles of bone. Hiding beneath the bone are four giant wolf spiders, laying in wait for a hero to come within 30 feet. At that point the spider will ambush the hero, leaping the full 30 feet to attack (CL 3 wisdom save to avoid surprise).

SPIDER, GIANT WOLF (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 19, AC 14, move 30ft, jump 30ft. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite, for 1d4 points of damage, plus poison requiring a constitution save or the victim is slowed as per the spell for 1d6 hours. A negate poison, lesser restoration, restoration or heal spell will remove this effect.*)

11. GHOULS

This area is haunted by priests who have displeased Ingisted, all of whom have been turned into ghouls. They still wear their tattered robes and regalia. If they are defeated, a number of clerical scrolls can be found among them with the following spells: *cure light wounds* x2, *remove poison*, *bane*, *restoration*, *cause fear*.

GHOULS (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 12 each, and AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d3 points of damage and a bite for 1d6 points of damage. Victims must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4 minutes. Remove curse or remove paralysis negates the effect. Elves are immune. They have darkvision 60ft.)

12. UNDEAD PRIEST

This is the undead spectre of a priest, a great hero named St. Lamonica, who challenged Ingisted and lost. It wears the regalia of a priest of light (any god of the CK's choosing). It is mad, but lawful, and wishes to be released from its torment. It will fight to the death, but will scream at the heroes to kill it while attacking with abandon. It is, ironically, forced to fight while desperate for death. If defeated, however, it will very calmly step back and smile, released from its burden. It will thank the heroes in the name of the gods of light for freeing it and, as its final act, will cast *mass heal* on the heroes before fading away. Successfully turning the priest will have the same effect of releasing him and allowing him to heal the party.

SPECTRAL PRIEST: (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 7d10, AC 15, HP 45, and move 30ft. Their primary attributes are mental. It attacks with an incorporeal touch for 1d8 points of damage. It can only be struck by magic or magical weapons. It is able to drain levels through an energy drain attack. Those struck by the creature lose 2 levels. The spectre gains 5 hit points per level he destroys. Animals avoid spectres, and the creature is able to create spawn from those it has killed. They are powerless in sunlight. Special: Cast *mass heal* as 13th level Cleric on any who defeat it in battle.)

13. BONE GOLEM

The Bones in this area are enchanted with necromantic magic to rise and attack anyone who approaches within ten feet of its pile.

GOLEM, BONE (This chaotic evil undead creature's vital stats are HD 8d10, AC 18, and HP 45. Its primary attributes are physical. It slams opponents with its fists for 2d6 points of damage. It can be struck only by magical weapons with a +1 bonus or better. It is immune to most magical effects, but can be turned and any normally beneficial magic such as healing has the opposite effect. Thus, cure light wounds will deal 1d8 damage to the creature instead of healing. Lesser restoration will reduce its remaining hit points by 25%, while heal or restoration will reduce its hit points by 50% and greater restoration will reduce hit points by 75%.)

LEVEL THREE: STUDY AND LOUNGE

This level forms the first part of the private chambers of Ingisted. The furnishings in here are a bizarre confluence of human-sized and gigantic, as she varies between human and draconic form. The first room (areas 15-16) consists of a giant white cushion, 40'x40' in size, and a lounge and easy chair (human sized). The second room is a laboratory in shambles. There's very little in here of any material value, but she's trapped it, nevertheless!

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14. ENTRY

Stepping off the staircase sees the heroes between areas 15 and 16, looking between the two in a bizarre juxtaposition of gigantic and human-sized. It's a well-appointed room with white velvet trappings, gently lit by a soft, blue light that is magically created from gems inset high into the walls. Shadows seem to magically and rhythmically dance across the place (and indeed, they do, attacking when the heroes enter either of the next two areas). Getting to the gems (sapphires enchanted by continual flame) requires scaling the walls, which like everything else are made from magically maintained ice (CL 10 to climb). Then the heroes must chisel them free (1d4 rounds; CL 7 check to keep grip each round).

15. DRAGON BED

This area is an enormous set of cushions with the imprint of a vast body. That is, something huge has lain on this bed on a regular enough basis to leave a body print behind. The heroes have no way of knowing this for certain, but this is Ingisted's lounge area where she sometimes drags victims to consume them before spitting their bones down the stairs to area 2. A CL 3 wisdom check will note specks of dark blood spattered here and there on the cushions.

The shadows on the walls here are just that: shadows waiting to attack anyone who isn't Ingisted who invades the area. There are four shadows in the area.

SHADOW (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d12, HP 15, AC 13, and move 30ft. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with an incorporeal touch for 1d4 points of damage. They can cause strength drain (1 point per attack; if strength reaches 0, victim dies and rises as a new shadow). They can be hit only by +1 or better magical weapons. They have darkvision 60 feet, are able to blend with their environment, and have sunlight vulnerability.)

16. HUMAN LOUNGE

This area consists of a cushioned couch and easy chair ~ human sized. There is a decanter of what looks like dark red wine on a table. It is, in fact, blood that Ingisted enjoys drinking while she reads her own crazed notes. There is a journal nearby, but it is utterly indecipherable. Even someone with the ability to decipher languages will not be able to work out what it means ~ this is because it's Ingisted's own mad scribbles and it does, in fact, mean nothing.

The area is also guarded by her pets: three shadow mastiffs, hiding in the shadows of the room.

SHADOW MASTIFF (These neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 23, and AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 2d4 points of damage. They are able to blend with darkness, have a bay attack that can cause fear for 2d4 rounds on those who fail a charisma save, as well as trip their opponents. They can blend into shadows, becoming invisible, and are incorporeal, being affected only by magical weapons. They have darkvision 60 feet.)

17. ACID GAS TRAP (CL 7)

This entry area to her “laboratory” is guarded by a trap. Stepping on a pressure plate in the floor triggers a jet of scalding acid gas to fill the area. The acid deals 4d6 damage to anyone passing through the area, plus an additional 1d6 damage for the next 1d8 rounds. This acid affects equipment as well as flesh. The gas simply hangs in the air in the doorway and for a 20 x 20 space beyond, and will not dissipate on its own for hours. Certain magic spells such as *create water*, *gust of wind*, *neutralize poison*, or other creative solutions could, at the CK’s discretion, be used to force it to dissipate. A dexterity save will allow a victim to dive out of the way, suffering no damage. The trap can be avoided simply by hopping over the pressure plate if the trap is discovered.

18. LABORATORY

At first glance, this looks like a laboratory for a wizard or alchemist. Upon closer inspection, however, it’s full of nonsensical notes about failed rituals, love spells that didn’t work, efforts to summon and bind demons, and all manner of other twisted efforts, clearly penned by a lunatic. Any powders and liquids here are pungent and toxic, but have no magical value whatsoever.

19. SCYTHING BLADE TRAP (CL 5)

Upon passing through this door, the victim is attacked by a scything blade that swings across the doorway. It attacks with +5 to hit, and on a successful strike deals 4d6 damage. On a natural 20, the blade renders one limb completely useless unless *greater restoration* is cast. It can be bypassed by sliding a stone near the doorjamb to lock the blade in place.

LEVEL FOUR: INGISTED’S PRIVATE ROOMS

This area is Ingisted’s private bedchamber. It is also where she will be laying in wait for the heroes, and is where she holds Darrion prisoner. The room itself is sparsely decorated, holding only a gigantic cushion upon which the priestess lounges in her true draconic form. As with each other room below there are two doors leading to another room beyond. These are closed and locked (and yes, they are trapped).

There is no way to surprise Ingisted. By the time the heroes come this far, she knows they are coming and is ready for them. When they emerge, they are immediately greeted by the sight of a beautiful young woman with flowing white hair and ice blue robes with pure madness in her crystal eyes.

“Greetings,” she says. “I’ve been waiting for you. And you can’t have him!”

Then, before their eyes, she transforms into a huge, white dragon!

INGISTED (This chaotic evil adult white dragon has vital stats HD 15d12, HP 105, AC 19, and move 60ft/200ft (fly)/30ft (burrow). She attacks with 2 claws (1d4+5), wing (1d6+5), tail (1d6+5), and bite 2d8+5). She can instead tail sweep up

to 10 creatures for 1d6+5 (dexterity save for half damage). Her breath weapon is a 20’ cone of frost dealing 15d4 damage (dexterity save for half damage) that can be used 3x/day. When flying she can windblast (dexterity check or be knocked prone). Her special abilities are dragon magic (as above), frightful presence (charisma save or panic for 4d6 rounds; targets with 5+ HD are shaken instead; -2 to attack, damage, ability check and saves), spell like abilities (fog cloud 3/day, summon 6 ice mephits (at will)), icewalking, immunity to cold, sleep and paralysis, keen senses, deepvision and darkvision 120ft, scent, and superior hearing.)

For more on Dragons, see **Castles & Crusades Monsters & Treasure**.

Through her ancient deal with the archdemon Dadramadeon, she has also gained powerful magical abilities, roughly equivalent to the dragon magic wielded by a gold dragon, including the ability to alternate form. She does not, however, have the ability to function as a wizard, as her madness precludes the studies required for this.

This power has given her the ability to cast five spells of each level 1 through 5, as well as using the spell-like abilities of a white. She casts as though she were a 9th-level caster. She does not need to pull threads, nor make a spellcraft roll. Her spells simply function as intended. In total, her magical abilities are as follows:

1ST-LEVEL SPELLS: (1/day each) *charm person, hold portal, sleep, magic missile (5 missiles), shield*

2ND-LEVEL SPELLS: (1/day each) *acid arrow, darkness, mirror image, reduce attribute, scare*

3RD-LEVEL SPELLS: (1/day each) *dispel magic, haste, iceball (as fireball, but cold damage), lightning bolt, suggestion*

4TH-LEVEL SPELLS: (1/day each) *bestow curse, charm monster, confusion, ice storm, wall of ice*

5TH-LEVEL SPELLS: (1/day each) *animate dead, cloudkill, cone of cold, feeblemind, summon monster*

One of Ingisted’s spell-like abilities is to summon 6 ice mephits at will. She can do this as often as she likes, but, as with any spell-like ability, using it takes up her action for the round just as though she were casting a spell. Ice mephits are vile creatures, part elemental and part demonic, tied to the proto-elemental plane of ice.

ICE MEPHITS (These neutral evil creatures’ vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 15 and HP 14. They attack with a bite for 1d6 and a stinger for 1 point of damage plus 2d6 cold damage (constitution save for half damage).)

21. INGISTED’S TREASURE VAULT

Entering the treasure vault requires bypassing the doors between the rooms. Each door is the same and has a CL 7 lock to bypass, followed by a CL 7 *chain lightning* trap. Crossing the threshold

deals 8d6 damage to the person crossing the threshold, plus 4d6 damage to each of that person's allies in the room. There is no bypass to this trap; getting past it means going through it. Alternately, the blue, dragon-headed key carried by the heroes will open either door, and holding the blue book will allow the threshold to be crossed without suffering the trap.

Upon passing through the doors and traps and entering the vault, the heroes are first bedazzled by the piles of coin, gem, and valuables herein. At the far end of the room, they see what appears to be a feeble old man bound by heavy silver chains (CL 7 to pick the locks or the blue key will free them). If the heroes can free the old man, he assumes his own natural form, of a silver dragon named Darrion-Quinness. If the battle is still raging, he will aid the heroes.

DARRION-QUIENNESS (*This silver dragon is weakened, currently, but his statistics should be relatively equivalent to those of Ingisted (though he cannot summon ice mephits and the CK may wish to mix up the spells he can cast). In addition, besides his freezing breath weapon, he can spew a viscous glob of paralyzing gas that works as a hold person or monster spell for 10 rounds (strength save negates).*)

INGISTED'S TREASURE HORDE

Ingisted's horde consists of the following:

Coin: 300 pp, 2,200 gp, 3,000 sp, 9,000 cp

Gems: 3 amethyst (250 gp each), opal (100 gp), 2 amber (5 gp each), fist-sized blood red ruby (5,000 gp), banded eye (10 gp), bloodstone (50 gp), amethyst (5 gp), white agate (50 gp), 3 tiger eye (25 gp each)

Extraordinary Items: Silver plated trencher (4 gp), wood carving of a winter wolf with platinum inlay and sapphire eyes (1,500 gp value), miniature stone carved figure of a Yeti (100 gp value), ancient painting depicting the fall of the gods (550 gp), chart of genealogical references from the lost civilization of Balfour (25 gp), stone tablet with ancient glyphs (550 gp), golden signet ring with diamonds (1,000 gp), red velvet tabard with silver and gold brocading and a golden crest depicting a cobra (11 gp), jade and ivory buckle (1,000 gp), arm band fashioned of gold with silver inlay (500 gp), silvered arrow with rosewood shaft (+1 nonmagical hit and damage; resists breakage; 25 gp), silvered long sword with gem-encrusted pommel (+2 nonmagical hit and damage; 600 gp)

Magic Items: Bastard sword, demon bane (13,500 gp), breastplate +2 (4,000 gp), cloak of charisma +2 (4,000 gp), necklace of fireballs Type III – 7d6 (1), 5d6 (2), 3d6 (4) (4,350 gp), fingerbone of St. Lamonica, in platinum case (10,000 gp; once per day can serve as a strand of prayer beads ~ any function the user desires.)

EPILOGUE: A DRAGON'S GRATITUDE

After the battle is ended, the dragon hangs his head low and says, "There are no words that will suffice for the gratitude that I owe you, my friends. I am the treasure Ingisted was guarding, and I am the "God" the Cult of the Dragon unknowingly worshipped,

though surely I am no god. For centuries that witch has held me captive here, in the sad hope that one day I would grow to love her, or join her in madness. I was beginning to fear that I would never be freed. But now that you have freed me, I must fulfill my part in this tale, for it is my task to raise the alarm, to prepare the world for the coming darkness of the Abyss Walker.

"One day, very soon, though none can say exactly when, a young man will rise, distraught by grief at the loss of someone very dear to him. In his lust for vengeance and his desperation to get back that which was lost, this man will traffick with dark powers, and will rend open the gates of the Abyss itself. He will unleash the hordes of the underworld upon this plane, and a great and final battle will begin. That which was once pure and light, will turn sour, dark and corrupt, and the entire world will suffer for it. This is the prophecy of the Abyss Walker.

"It is my lot to prepare the way for the powers of light, to establish vigilance the world over, that the world may have a chance to fight back. Mayhap with my help, we can avoid this tragedy altogether. If not, at least we may stand against the rising darkness, and possibly beat it back, and survive the onslaught of evil.

"You have no idea of the effect you've had, of the chance you've given this world, I will spread your names as well, the heroes that gave us this chance to fight back. Your names will be sung throughout the ages."

He turns his head to the treasure horde. "The treasures of Ingisted are yours, my friends. But I also sense you have traveled far. May I be of assistance or aid in helping you leave this place?"

He is happy to transport the heroes, and their treasure horde, back to the *Wyvern*. He is also willing to aid in freeing it from the ice floe in which it is mired. He may even, at the CK's discretion, have the power to raise a dead hero or two, if needed. The heroes have emerged victorious, and their epic adventures in the world of Terrigan are only just beginning. After all, while the Cult of the Dragon's power base in the North is broken, the White Sash, a worldwide network of spies and assassins, is still out there, and the heroes will now be their top enemies. Yet, they've also made powerful friends on the way. Many potential seeds for future adventures have been planted herein, but those stories are left for you to tell.

If there's one thing that's certain, it's that the future holds interesting times...

AFTERWORD

There you have it, friends! This has been a long journey for us all, but we sincerely hope it was worth it and that you have enjoyed your epic journey through *The Hallowed Oracle*. If you enjoyed what you saw here, please be sure to read the entire novel series by Shane Moore. You can find more information at <http://www.shanemoorepresents.com/abyss-walker.html>, and keep your eyes peeled for the *Hallowed Oracle Player's Guide*, with even more information about the world of the Abyss Walker!

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MAGIC IN TERRIGAN

Magic in the world of the Abyss Walker: Hallowed Oracle setting comes from a combination of innate talent and learned skill. Chromatic mages have the ability draw power from a web of mystical energy that encircles the world. Exactly like a spider's web, this mystic energy field is made up of strands or threads. Unlike a spider's web, these threads are of different colors, with each color representing a specific type of magical energy. These color energies are sometimes known as schools of magic. The chromatic mage draws threads from this web, reshapes them and releases them once more to create a magical effect.

The colors of threads or strands (the two terms are used interchangeably) determine the effects of the magic they can produce. The colors and general magical effects are as follows:

- Evocation-Blue. These chromatic mages are also referred to as evokers.
- Abjuration-Orange. These chromatic mages are also referred to as abjurers.
- Necromancy-Black. These chromatic mages are also referred to as necromancers.
- Enchantments-Green. These chromatic mages are also referred to as enchanters.
- Illusion-Red. These chromatic mages are also referred to as illusionists.
- Transmutation-Brown. These chromatic mages are also referred to as transmuters.
- Divination-White. These chromatic mages are also referred to as diviners.
- Conjunction-Yellow. These chromatic mages are also referred to as conjurers.

Each mage begins their training and progresses through lower levels of ability with a mastery of one color. As these magi increase in power and proficiency, they learn to draw upon other threads. At the highest levels, they can even learn to combine them in astounding feats of magical prowess.

CASTING SPELLS

To cast a spell of her chosen color, the mage must pay a number of threads equal to the spell's level plus one. She must then make a spellcraft check. This is a SIEGE check using her highest mental attribute (which becomes her primary spellcasting ability) at a CL equal to the spell's level. Casting spells outside of her color is more difficult, and is detailed below.

PRIMARY SPELLCASTING SCHOOL

The spells upon which a chromatic mage can call are based upon the primary spellcasting school chosen by the chromatic mage at character creation, and representing his or her philosophy towards and method of understanding magic. The chromatic

mage chooses one color of magic, as outlined above, and may choose spells related to that thread color. Magi can cast spells outside of their primary school, but doing so costs double the normal thread cost. Thus, a spell that would normally cost 3 threads costs 6 threads to cast outside of a mage's normal school. In addition, the CL to cast these spells is one higher than normal.

SECONDARY AND TERTIARY CASTING SCHOOLS

As the chromatic mage grows in power and experience, she gains a limited ability to draw upon threads of other colors at standard cost and CL. At sixth level, she may choose a second color thread to cast spells from without paying double the thread cost and without the increased CL, but only of first level power. Her maximum level spell in her secondary thread will always be two levels behind her maximum level in her primary. Attempting to cast spells higher than her maximum level still carries an increased CL and thread cost as above.

At tenth level, she may cast first level spells in a tertiary color; the maximum spell level for her tertiary spells will always be four levels behind her primary. The number of spells she may have prepared daily does not change; only those spells to which she has access. Thus, for her first level spells, the tenth level caster may choose from her primary, secondary and tertiary lists. For her second through third level spells, she may choose from her primary and secondary list, but for her fourth and fifth level spells she may only choose from her primary list.

CONVERTING SPELL CASTING CLASSES

The magic system herein is quite different from that in **Castles & Crusades**. A full character class for the Chromatic Mage will be presented in the **Abyss Walker: The Hallowed Oracle Player's Guide** forthcoming. In the meantime, using standard C&C spell casters with this system is possible.

WIZARDS

Wizards use the guidelines above; they must choose a primary school (color) as well as secondary and tertiary schools when the time comes. Since the definitive list of which spells function in which regard is still to come, the Castle Keeper should use the following guidelines in determining which spells fit which colors:

- Evocation-Blue spells focus on creating elemental effects.
- Abjuration-Orange spells focus on protection, warding and defense.
- Necromancy-Black spells focus on energies that manipulate life and death.
- Enchantments-Green spells focus on the entrancement and beguiling of other people and creatures.
- Illusion-Red spells affect the mind, dazzle the senses, and create trickery.

- Transmutation-Brown spells change the very nature of a substance from one thing to another.
- Divination-White spells focus on revealing that which is unseen or unheard. They tell the past and future, observe things that are far away, and enhance the senses.
- Conjunction-Yellow spells bring something into being that was not previously there, whether it's creating a sword from thin air or summoning a creature from another place or plane of existence.

The largest core change to the wizard class is that in Terrigan, wizards have access to every spell in every spell list. Rather than being restricted by spell lists, wizards are restricted by the schools they choose. When it comes to spells that appear on multiple lists at different levels, the wizard spell list will trump others, if the spell appears on that list. Otherwise, for a given spell that appears on multiple lists, use the highest level to determine when wizards can cast it.

OTHER SPELL CASTING CLASSES

Every other spell casting class is exactly as written, except that to cast spells they use the rules herein ~ that is, they must expend threads equal to the spell's level + 1 and make a spellcraft check using their class' primary spell casting attribute, at a CL equal to the spell's level, to cast the spell. Spell casting attributes for each class are as follows:

- Cleric, Druid: Wisdom
- Illusionist: Intelligence

Should it become necessary for a given spell's color to be known, the CK can make a judgment call based on the guidelines under the wizard, above.

DETERMINING THREADS PER DAY

To determine the number of threads a caster can pull per day, multiply the spells they have for each level, by the spell level + 1, and then add the total together. Thus, if a wizard has 4 0-level spells, 3 first-level spells, 2 second-level and 1 third-level, you would grant $4 (4 \times 1) + 6 (3 \times 2) + 6 (2 \times 3) + 4 (1 \times 4) = 20$ threads per day to cast spells.

APPENDIX B: NARRATIVE MASS BATTLE RULES

There are three approaches to running mass battles in a **Castles & Crusades** game. The first is to use our **Fields of Battle** miniatures rules, and statistics for the army units for each side will be included in Appendix C for those Castle Keepers who choose this route. The second is to review Chapter 11 – Going to War in the **Castle Keeper's Guide**, which presents detailed rules for mass combat and warfare. The unit statistics in the end of this section should be useful for this version as well.

The final method is purely narrative and fast-playing. This narrative method heavily abstracts the battle, breaking it down into a series of simple bonuses and penalties that affect a basic

Battle Check. This means that it won't directly matter whether you have cavalry, archers, or the like, save to determine the overall nature of your army (superior, poor, highly organized, etc.) The goal is to run combat fast and fun, and to allow the CK the opportunity to describe the melee as they see fit, rather than get bogged down on what archers do this round vs. how your infantry fares against their cavalry.

THE BASIC SYSTEM

The battle proceeds in a number of battle rounds, each of which encompasses approximately ten minutes of game time, and the outcome of each round is made with a simple Battle Check on either side.

This Battle Check is a d20 roll using the intelligence, wisdom or charisma modifier (whichever is best) of each side's commanding officer, representing their ability to command underlings, establish and execute strategy. If the ability score in question is prime, add +6 to the roll ~ this is, essentially, a basic SIEGE check.

This check is modified by the general disposition of the forces, plus modifiers or penalties based on the momentum of the battle and the morale of the troops, as explained below. Player characters have the ability to directly affect these rolls by performing heroic actions at some point during the battle round; success grants a bonus to their side, while failure grants a bonus to the enemy.

MOMENTUM: Battles are often a factor of momentum. This means that bonuses and penalties are cumulative and carry over from one round to the next, continuing to increase and decrease as the battle goes on. The higher one side goes, the more likely they are to continue winning, barring a major event to turn the tide (see "The Actions of Heroes," below).

In the end, the final Battle Checks of each side are compared; the higher roll wins.

TABLE B: BATTLE CHECK MODIFIERS

Circumstance	Modifier
Highly Superior Forces*	+3
Superior Forces*	+1
Inferior forces*	-1
Poor forces*	-3
Highly organized forces	+2
Moderately organized forces	+1
Disorganized forces	-1
Forces in chaos	-1
Per 25% outnumbering foe	+1
Per 25% outnumbered by foe	-1
Fortified Defenses	+1 to +4**
Siege Engines (Attacker)	+2
Won prior round	+1***

Lost prior round	-1***
Per hero successful	+1 (or situational)
Per hero failure	-1 (or situational)
Successful morale prior round	+1
Failed morale prior round	-1

*In terms of training, experience, equipment, etc. A force of highly trained soldiers with cavalry and archers against a mob of untrained peasants with pitchforks, for example, would gain +3 for being highly superior, while the peasants would be at -3 for poor forces.

**Depending on the nature of fortifications (CK's judgment); Siege engines add +1 to fortification rating.

***Cumulative for each successive round won/lost

DETERMINING CASUALTIES

After battle checks are resolved, casualties and morale must be checked. Regardless of the winner or loser of a battle, both sides will always check casualties from the carnage.

Casualties are determined by the roll of 1d10, with the result representing the percentage of casualties the enemy has suffered. Thus a result of 1 means the enemy has suffered 1% of casualties, while a result of 10 means they suffered 10% losses. Such losses are to their total forces.

The winning side of a battle, however, suffers only half the die roll in damage, rounded down. This means if they roll a result of 1, the winning side gets through the battle round with no casualties.

SIMPLIFYING PERCENTAGES

Not everyone is a math wizard who can instantly deduce percentages in their mind, and few people want to keep a calculator handy. As such, figuring out percentages needn't be mind-boggling if you take some basic steps to simplify the process.

For purposes of determining casualties and keeping the math simple, it's often best to round forces off to the nearest 100, and round casualties as well. Thus, 6% casualties would be 6 men per 100; 8% would be 8 per 100, etc. This means in a force with, say, 525 men, you would round down to 500 when checking casualties. If the result comes up to 8%, you could easily determine that 40 men die (8 per 100, times 5).

Of course, if doing the real math isn't an issue for you, then go for it!

WAR MAGIC

War Magic is a specialized form of wizardry that is specifically adapted to the battlefield. Normal magic doesn't deal damage on mass combat levels, though it can affect the outcome of The Actions of Heroes (see below). The art of magic in the battlefield is considered a lost art; should it come into play in your game, it simply allows the mage to use their normal spells at mass battle scale.

In game terms, each spell must be separately learned and prepared at the War Magic level. That is, just because a mage knows the *fireball* spell and has it prepared, that does not mean they can apply it at battlefield strength. Rather, they must prepare *Fireball (War Magic)* as a separate spell after learning it and adding it to their special War Magic spellbook.

If a wizard knows War Magic, they may cast one spell per round, using normal spell casting rules. This spell will deal its normal effects to the oncoming army. Thus, a War Magic *Fireball* will deal an extra 1d6 casualties per level of the caster. In some cases the CK will need to adjudicate and make judgement calls on the effects of a spell. For example, in the case of a spell like *Sleep*, he could rule that the spell causes a number of temporary casualties equal to the hit dice rolled, and a penalty to the enemy's morale from the fear of facing a spellcaster. Sleeping casualties then awaken 1d4 rounds later and return to battle. A spell that causes Fear, on the other hand, may result in an immediate morale check at a -10 penalty.

CKs should look at the spell in question, determine how it functions on a man-to-man basis, and extrapolate those effects for war magic while taking into account the effects that the player intends their character to create.

SIEGE ENGINES

For general purposes of this scenario, the use of siege engines are folded into the overall battle check. If the CK desires, instead of this, he can assign Strength Points to a fortification and allow any siege engines to automatically deal damage to the fortification each round, weakening it until it is breached.

Siege engines within a fortification can be used to deal damage to an attacking army (treat in the same way as war magic; roll the siege engine's damage and add that to the casualty percentage suffered), or it can be used to deal damage to another siege engine.

Detailed rules for fortification walls, siege engines, their crew requirements, damage and ammunition, can be found in the Castle Keeper's Guide or **Fields of Battle**.

THE MORALE CHECK

After casualties are determined, morale must be checked. Morale has a positive or detrimental effect on the Battle Check of the following round. In addition, if forces are below 50% of their original total, the Morale Check can result in rallying, retreat or rout depending on the result.

A Morale Check is a wisdom save using the average wisdom score and hit dice of the army in question. There are two factors that come into play when determining if the save is made as a Primary (CB 12) or Secondary (CB 18) ability.

If the commander of the checking army is still alive, and wisdom is a prime for them, OR the checking army won their battle check this round, the save is made as a prime with a CB of 12. Otherwise it is made with a CB of 18. There is no CL for this check.

In addition, the check gains +1 for each percentage of casualties below 6% suffered by the checking team, or -1 for each percentage above 6%.

RALLY, RETREAT AND ROUT

Once a force has fallen below 50% of its original strength, a morale check can have greater effects than a bonus or penalty to the next round. Determine the amount by which the save succeeded or failed, and consult the chart below.

Success or Fail	Result
+10	Rally
+5	Stand Fast
+3	No effect
-3	No effect
-5	Retreat
-10	Route

RALLY: If the forces were currently in retreat, they return to battle, albeit at a -1 on next round's Battle Check. If they were standing fast, they gain a +2 on next round's Battle Check. If they were operating at "no effect," they gain +3 next round.

STAND FAST: The forces stand fast in the face of the enemy, gritting their teeth and gaining +1 on next round's battle check.

NO EFFECT: Next round's battle proceeds as normal

RETREAT: The enemy withdraws from battle. Their commander may make a charisma check to return them to combat, but at a -2 to next round's Battle Check.

ROUT: The forces quit the field in utter chaos, or they surrender to the victorious forces.

THE ACTIONS OF HEROES

As the battle goes on, the actions of the heroes are taken into account. Each battle round the heroes have a chance to get directly involved in the events of the battle in some way. Exactly what occurs is left to the discretion of the Castle Keeper, but a few examples include:

- One-on-one combat with a lieutenant or dangerous foe on the other side
- Rescuing a civilian caught in the line of fire
- Taking an opportunity to properly shore up or improve defenses
- Work to support a fellow soldier in jeopardy
- Place oneself directly in danger to draw attention from another warrior, or from a weak point in the defenses
- The hero throws themselves off the battlements into the thick of the enemy forces to buy time for his allies to shore up a breach in the defenses...but must then find their way back inside.

Never should a Battle Check gain a bonus without the potential for failure as well. This means that, at very least, a SIEGE check

should be required to allow the PC to succeed at their task. More likely the circumstance should be narrated and kept exciting.

Optionally, the CK can allow players to determine exactly what happens to them during the Battle Round, and then play out the scenario as the player describes. The more dramatic the scenario, the higher the stakes and the better chance the hero has to affect their side's fortunes in a big way.

Should the hero succeed in their "mini adventure" they add a bonus to their side's battle check next round as their heroics are noticed by their compatriots, who are bolstered by their actions.

Should they fail, on the other hand, their side witnesses this failure, and is further demoralized by their heroes' fall. Their next Battle Check suffers a penalty as a result. The default is +1 for a success and -1 for a failure; however, Castle Keepers are free to increase the bonus or penalty based on the degree of success the hero achieves or the importance of the action.

TURNING THE TIDE: If a battle is going very badly for the heroes' side, the CK can optionally come up with a scenario that would Turn the Tide (or alternately, allow the players to come up with such a scenario). This should be a suitably epic event that involves the entire group. If they are successful, instead of delivering a flat bonus, they wipe out their side's penalties entirely, enabling them to start fresh. It's left to the CK what constitutes "going very badly," but the players are within their rights at any time to request an event that allows them to Turn the Tide.

APPENDIX C: NEW MONSTERS

DREAM DEMON

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: Medium

HD: 8 (d10)

MOVE: 40ft., fly 60ft.

AC: 18

ATTACKS: 2 claws (1d6) and bite (1d6)

SPECIAL: Darkvision 120ft, Immune to Fear, Gweits, Spell-Like Abilities

SAVES: M

INT: Genius

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar (demon)

TREASURE: N/A (lair is in Hell)

XP: 1040+8

Formed in the levels of the Abyss dedicated to lust, seduction, betrayal and pure corruption, dream demons are among the most feared corruptors in the universe. In their natural form, they appear as stunningly beautiful humans with angular features, skin the color of the midnight sky, and piercing amber eyes. A pair of moth-like wings hang like a cape at their back.

These creatures feed upon the corruption of the mortal soul, and generally attempt to avoid combat. They instead seek to corrupt others into fighting their battles for them. While they cannot actively summon other demons, they almost always appear with a vast retinue of demons and undead at their disposal. It is

unknown whether this is because they are officers in the armies of the Abyss, they are somehow mystically attached to these creatures, or for some other reason.

Dream Demons cannot walk the earth on their own. They can, however, influence the dreams of people with darkness in their souls. All it takes is a single, earnest wish made with the darkest intentions to open the gateway to bring forth a Dream Demon, after which the monster will stalk the world, wreaking chaos and destruction until it is destroyed.

Alternately, on occasion dark sorcerers will summon a Dream Demon in hopes of controlling its formidable reality-bending powers. Such efforts rarely end well for the necromancer, who just as often ends up being in thrall of the demon as the other way around.

COMBAT: Dream Demons prefer not to engage in direct combat. If forced to do so, they will attack with two claws and a bite. They often attempt to grapple opponents, fly high into the air, and simply drop them. They far prefer, however, to use their dreaming power to place their intended victims into living nightmares, corrupting them into darkness and viewing the demon as a trusted friend who saved them from their worst fears.

GWEITS: When a Dream Demon is injured, horrific maggot-like worms called Gweits spill forth from its innards. It appears to have no blood nor internal organs, but its insides are infested with these burrowing flesh-eating worms. When the Dream Demon dies, the creatures burst forth and attack whomever dealt the killing blow, or whoever happens to be closest. Treat this swarm as a summon swarm spell cast by an 8th level caster with a result of “centipedes.”

SPELL-LIKE ABILITIES: Dream Demons can call upon a broad range of spell-like abilities to twist and corrupt others. They can cast *alter self* (2/day) to appear as a member of any humanoid race they desire. They may cast *color spray* (2/day) and may use *inflict light wounds*, *detect thoughts* and *charm person* at will.

THOUGHT PROJECTION: The most devastating ability possessed by a Dream Demon, they may create an illusory reality into which a victim is placed. This power works identically to the 9th level illusionist spell *dreaming*, but the demon need not touch the victim. Rather, the ability has a range of 250 yards and can be used on any victim the demon can see or whose thoughts it can detect. Victims are entitled to a charisma save to resist at CL 5.

GWEITS

In the world of Terrigan, Dream Demons are infested with parasitic worms called Gweits. Gweits are demonic, flesh-eating worms from the abyss that infest most of the demons from those hellish realms. They burrow into the flesh of Abyssal denizens and are often used as spies, as other demons can consume the Gweits to see anything the Gweits' former host has seen. A few Gweits don't do enough damage to seriously harm a host ~ they are rather benign parasites, though infestation by Gweits can be excruciatingly painful ~ but if an entire swarm or colony

is encountered, they can be devastating to the life forms they devour. It is believed by many scholars that Dream Demons, in fact, are the source of Gweits.

What happens to Gweits that are unleashed in the world and not destroyed has yet to be solidly proven. Some scholars believe they eventually metamorphose into imps. Others say they become Naga, Lamia Queens, or any other number of horrific creatures. Still others think they are eventually simply sucked back into the Abyss once freed from their host. The truth may be more sinister than any of these beliefs.

LYCANTHROPE (WEREHYENA)

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 10-80

SIZE: Medium

HD: 4 (d8)

MOVE: 30ft, 50ft (as hyena)

AC: 16

ATTACKS: 2 claws (1d6) and bite (2d4)

SPECIAL: Curse of Lycanthropy, Hyena Empathy, Trip, Alternate Form, Twilight Vision, Scent, Enhanced Hearing, Protect, Regeneration 2, Maddening Laugh

SAVES: P

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil

TYPE: Shapechanger

TREASURE: 4

XP: 200+4

Werhyenas are similar to werewolves in that they are tainted by complete evil, and are among the most vicious and terrifying hunters one can encounter in animal form. Also like werewolves, they are far larger in animal form than a normal spotted hyena. They live in deserts and savannahs and are night hunters. They are also highly social and live in groups called clans of up to 80 individuals.

Despite being neutral evil, their social structure is very rigid and nepotistic. Position is handed down from parent to child. Position can, however, be challenged through battle and often is. What is given, can also be taken away. Territorial boundaries depend largely on the availability of food and the proximity of other, competing species.

Werhyenas get along well with Kriels, and the two can often be found sharing territory.

COMBAT: Werhyenas use pack tactics and attack en masse, slashing and tearing at their victims. Their initial attack is always a bite, attempting to lock their jaws on before clawing it. They are intelligent, clever, and dangerous.

TRIP: A werhyena will seek to drag prey to the ground to more easily finish the kill. When it makes a successful bite attack, the victim must succeed at a dexterity save to resist being pulled down. Failing this save means losing initiative the next round.

ALTERNATE FORM: Werhyenas can assume human form once per day. They can retain this form as long as they like, unless it is a full moon. During a full moon they are forced to assume

hyena form. While in human form, they retain their heightened senses and twilight vision and can change back to a hyena any time they choose.

SCENT: The werehyena can identify locations, items and people with a successful wisdom check. They gain a +2 bonus to track a target by scent, which functions out to 30ft. Combined with hearing, this enables them to pinpoint hiding or invisible targets.

ENHANCED HEARING: The werehyena gains +4 to all wisdom checks based on hearing, and can hear sounds that are twice as quiet as those that a human can. Combined with scent, this enables them to pinpoint hiding or invisible targets.

PROTECT: Werehyenas instinctively protect others of their kind who are in danger. This leads them to gain +2 to attack and damage rolls if another member of their clan is taking damage.

HYENA EMPATHY: Werehyenas empathize and enjoy the company of normal hyenas. They can telepathically communicate with any hyena within 1 mile and can summon 1d10 hyenas or 1d6 giant hyenas to their location if they are within one mile. Summoned hyenas arrive within 2d6 minutes.

HAUNTING LAUGHTER: Werehyenas let loose a haunting and disturbing laughter-like sound in the heat of battle or hunting. All non-allies within 30ft. who hear this laugh must succeed at a charisma save or be frightened, suffering -2 to all attacks, saves and ability checks so long as the laughing continues. The save may be repeated each round, ending the effect on a success.

ROT GRUB

NO ENCOUNTERED: 1-100

SIZE: Small (tiny)

HD: 1 hit point

MOVE: 5ft.

AC: 11

ATTACKS: 0

SPECIAL: Burrow

SAVES: None

INT: Animal

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Vermin

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 5+1

Rot grubs are tiny worms that look like normal grubs or maggots. They are driven entirely by the instinct to feed and can be found in living and rotting matter where they reproduce. They viciously swarm and burrow into living flesh, which they crave, and are deadly and insidious parasites who kill their victims more rapidly than some vipers.

Because undead creatures are not subject to damage from rot grubs, they sometimes become infested with them. Upon a successful attack they can leap upon a living target.

COMBAT: Rot grub lie in soft, pliable soil and attack anything that passes near or over them. Though they can not move quickly, they can attach themselves to almost any surface.

BURROW: The rot grub's burrowing deals 1 point of damage immediately. Once attached, the grub is anchored and begins to dig into the skin, a process which takes 1d4 rounds to accomplish. If the victim does not apply fire to the creature (taking 1d4 damage in the process) during these 4 rounds, the rot grub will get into the skin and burrow to the heart, resulting in the victim's death within 30 minutes unless *remove disease* is cast. Breaking the rot grub off is not possible; the creature is impossibly strong and resists any amount of pulling and tearing. Even if pulled free, it may indeed flip around and begin to use the pulling hand to burrow.

SWAMP BEASTS

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 5-50

SIZE: Small

HD: 3 (d8)

MOVE: 30ft., 40ft. (swim), 60ft. (leap)

AC: 15

ATTACKS: Spear (1d8)

SPECIAL: Darkvision 120ft., Great Leap, Slime, Tongue Lash

SAVES: P

INT: Low-average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Aberration

TREASURE: 1

XP: 40+3

These degenerate monstrosities reside in the most corrupt of bogs and swamps, but can manifest in any watery area where deep corruption has taken root. They resemble a strange cross between a goblin and a toad, and have no desire or goal other than to hunt, torture and kill. They communicate with a guttural croaking sound. Nobody knows if they have the capacity for other language as they don't bother to try and communicate with civilized peoples.

They have sometimes been seen working in conjunction with other fell creatures, be they goblinoid races, locathah, sahuagin, or demonic and undead creatures. Eventually the alliances turn in upon themselves, for these creatures barely hold their own society together, in which "Survival of the fittest" is the primary and sole rule of survival.

COMBAT: Swamp beasts attack viciously, seeking to overrun their opponents with sheer numbers and ferocity. They use crude spears and their natural weapon, an acidic tongue. Given the chance, they will cement foes in place with their viscous saliva and stab them to death, in order to eat the meat and bones later.

GREAT LEAP: Once per round instead of regular movement, the swamp beast can leap 60 feet laterally and up to 10 feet high.

TONGUE LASH: The saliva of the swamp beast is sticky and acidic. Their tongues act as a whip which deals 1d6 damage, plus an additional 1d4 points of acid damage. Swamp beasts may attempt to grapple with their tongue. If they do, acid damage is automatic every round, but this leaves them vulnerable to having their tongue cut off. The tongue itself has an AC of 18 and 15 hit points (which don't count against the creature's

hit points). A severed tongue will regenerate in 1d4 weeks, assuming the swamp beast isn't murdered and eaten by its tribe members before that time.

SLIME: The acidic saliva of the swamp beast may be spewed as a thick, viscous globule, with a range of 30ft. Those who are struck by this globule suffer 1d6 points of acid damage and must succeed at a strength save or be paralyzed as per the *hold person* spell as cast by a 5th level caster. A new save is permitted each round to break free. Alternately, an unrestrained ally can spend one round cutting away the thick mess.

APPENDIX D: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

COLLAR OF LYCANTHROPY: This item, when donned, immediately transforms the wearer into the type of lycanthrope to which it is attuned (a collar of werewolves turns the wearer into a werewolf, collar of werebear into a bear, etc.) The transformation, however, is into a hybrid beast-man form and is permanent. The wearer may not transform to any other form. The character's hit dice become d10s and they become Large, growing to over eight feet tall. Their strength also increases to 18, and their AC increases to 18, unless it is already higher. Alignment changes to that of the werebeast's standard alignment. Personality becomes archetypal for the creature, though they retain their mental ability scores, memories and skills (they keep their character class abilities). The wearer is immune to any and all transformations while wearing the collar.

Additionally, the character gains the ability to communicate with and control all animals of the associated type, including other lycanthropes. They are also driven by their animal instincts: to hunt, to feed, and by an overpowering instinct to spread the line. The wearer must make a charisma save to avoid turning someone into a werebeast whenever the opportunity arises.

Finally, the line of lycanthropy runs through the collar's wearer only as long as they wear the collar. If the collar is ever removed, all lycanthropes changed by the wearer immediately revert to normal with no memory of the time they spent under the wearer's control. Once donned, however, the wearer will never willingly take it off, and it must be removed by force. Only a *remove curse* cast by at least a 9th-level caster can be effective, and then there is only a 50% chance of the wearer being willing to remove the collar.

Regardless of this limitation, the collar is not considered a cursed item, and will identify exactly as what it is. There are many who would choose the power such an item offers.

CURSED RING OF IMMORTALITY: This ring renders the wearer functionally immune to aging and death from disease or poison. However, it also immediately corrupts their soul, causing their moral alignment to shift to evil while their ethical alignment remains (thus, a lawful good character would become lawful evil, while a chaotic neutral character would become chaotic evil). It also instills a bloodlust in the wearer. The ring must be "fed" once per month by bathing the ring in the blood of an innocent the wearer has murdered in cold blood. Detection for magical properties makes it seem as though it were a *ring of regeneration*. Once donned, the ring's beneficial effects take effect immediately with the soul corruption occurring over the course of the next week. In addition, once placed on a finger, the wearer will resist removing it even unto death. It can only be removed forcibly by cutting off the finger that wears it, killing the wearer, or by casting *remove curse* upon the wearer.

DAGGER OF POISON +2: This +2 obsidian dagger on a successful hit injects a magical poison into the victim's blood stream. This poison deals an additional 1d6 points of poison damage per round for 1d4 rounds and reduces the victim's constitution score by 1d4 points. The damage to the victim's constitution returns at 1 point per day (assuming they survive).

A successful constitution save with a CL equal to the attacker's level or hit dice will negate the constitution loss and will limit poison damage to the initial round. If the save fails, the victim may attempt a new save each round, ending the ongoing damage on a success.

NEEDLE: This magical silver main gauche deals 1d8 damage and is +2 to hit and damage. It also has the magical property to be effortlessly and completely concealed in any kind of clothing. This can be up a sleeve, within the folds of a robe or tunic, or by any other means. Casual examination will not reveal the dagger's presence. It can only be discovered by physically patting down the wielder, and succeeding at a CL 8 wisdom check. This effect only works if the dagger is being actively hidden. If the dagger is held in hand it is always visible as any weapon. When hidden, the dagger can be instantly summoned to the hand of the wielder so long as it is somewhere on the wielder's person and the wielder has a free hand in which to summon it.

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