

THE WEIRD THAT BEFELL DRIGBOLTON





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DRIGBOLTON

*Being an odd adventure
set near Dolmenwood,
the perilous Ur-forest*

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The Weird That Befell Drigbolton

The Weird That Befell Drigbolton is an investigative, event-based scenario for characters of experience levels 3-5, set in and around the quaint rural hamlet of Drigbolton, on the northern edge of Dolmenwood (hex 0702 on the campaign map). The sequence of events happening around the adventurers is, to an extent, predetermined, but the player characters may alter the outcome if they manage to unriddle what's happening in Drigbolton.

Not in Dolmenwood?

If you're not running a game in Dolmenwood and want to set this adventure in your own campaign world, you can simply locate the 6-mile hex described in this module in any backwater region, close to a moor or forest. The events and encounters described in these pages are largely campaign-agnostic, though, as referee, you will need to give some thought to the wider repercussions of these strange events in your campaign world.

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Background

This is a description of events prior to the PCs' arrival in the area:

☾ An occult ritual to summon the spirit that inhabits the pale star Wermuth has backfired on the summoner. A dabbler named Alhoyle Spinnewith, the latest Hearth-Laird to preside over the moor and woodlands around Drigbolton, has made fundamental errors in his research. Instead of calling forth the daemon that resides in the star, he has brought down both that malign intelligence and the burning, eldritch hull that houses it.

☾ Wermuth's fall was perceptible for many miles around. Heralded by a brilliant flash in the middling hours of night, those sleepers who did not witness the star falling were certainly aware of the resultant tumult when Wermuth crashed into the moor.

☾ Its flames doused by the cold winds of space, the star's fragmented, black core is all that remains. The core rests in a crater on Bolton Moor (area 2 on the regional map on p6) and from its wounds exudes a bitter, phosphorescent jelly. Three important organs of the star broke off during its descent and are located at the Oath House (area 3B), Nob's Spinney (area 4), and Bolton Bog (area 5). These organs possess a certain degree of independent consciousness and seek to return to the core of the star to make it once more whole and fully potent.

☾ Smaller fragments that broke from the hull during the star's fall lie scattered throughout the locality of Drigbolton—these are formed of a metallic substance greatly valued by earthlings.

☾ Locals have mistaken Wermuth's gelatinous vitae for a gift from Heaven in response to the famines that the area has been subject to for the last several winters. Since the star's fall, they have been collecting the stuff in buckets and using it to bake their breads, glaze their meats, and flavour their beers and ciders. Wild animals, too, have taken to slurping up the star-jelly. Despite its underlying bitterness, the stuff is palatable and somewhat nutritious. This is by design. Wermuth wants these creatures to consume its essence for, once inside them, it exerts its will over their bodies, effectively turning them into new limbs and sensory organs.

☾ The presence of the core of Wermuth, the jelly, the star-metal, and the separated organs has begun a process of transformation in the area and the men and beasts which inhabit it. Left unchecked, the unseemly contact between celestial and terrestrial will transform the area beyond recognition.

Hooks

An odd event has been noted. A week ago, there was an unnatural illumination of the night sky that lasted for an instant—or several minutes—it's hard to remember. Most witnesses agree that the unaccountable light shone with an array of colours that have no earthly analogues. This phenomenon was followed by a series of tremors that persisted until dawn. If the player characters were in the Dolmenwood region, they will have heard of this matter and may have witnessed it themselves.

Following are a few ideas for hooks which can be used to draw the PCs to the region where the star has crashed (or indeed to the Dolmenwood region, if they are currently elsewhere). The journey to the hex where the events of this module take place may be played out as a prelude to the adventure. Alternatively, the referee may simply begin play with the PCs arriving from the west, on a poorly tended and deeply rutted road called the Cart Way (location 9 on the area map, p6).

I: *Star-Metal Salvage*

Magic-users of all stripes, astrologers, seers, and would-be prophets are mumbling about a star falling from the sky. And where there's a fallen star, there's bound to be something of great value: star-metal. The stuff's as rare as hen's teeth and known for its utility as an alchemical agent. Fist-sized fragments are valued at five times their weight in gold/diamonds/mithril/unobtainium.

A patron offers the player characters a contract: Find the site of the star-crash and retrieve as much of the star-metal as possible. This patron has even managed to pinpoint the location of the impact and has marked it on a map. However, before s/he can feel good about handing the map over to a bunch of cutthroats, the patron requires some kind of assurance that the party won't break their contract and attempt to sell the star-metal to the highest bidder. She or he will offer them a considerable reward, of course, but ask that they submit to a *geas* that would bind them to the letter of the deal.

Possible patrons within Dolmenwood include the sorceress Ygraine (hex 1802) and Mostlemyre of Prigwort (hex 1105).

If your campaign doesn't do *geases*: Then the patron will need to have some kind of leverage over the party that would compel them to keep their word. Or be offering them something that no other can provide.

2: *In Search of the Black Book*

The Black Book of Llaeggub, kept in secret by the master of the Oath House (3 on the area map), is a rare tome of notorious repute, said to contain candid instructions for occult rituals of great power. It is, naturally, suppressed by the religious orthodoxy of the Church of the One True God and greatly sought after by those who lust for occult power.

The player characters are on the trail of a copy of this book: For whatever reasons suit the campaign—most likely either to destroy it or use it—the PCs seek this tome. Their freshest lead suggests that a copy of the book was recently purchased by a Mr Spinnewith of the hamlet of Drigbolton. This information draws the PCs coincidentally into the backwater region where the star has fallen, where they will find a somewhat more complicated situation than they had perhaps imagined.

3: *Uncover the Arch-Mage*

To those in the know, it is clear that a supernatural agency of great potency must lie behind the fall of the star Wermuth. But as no arch-mage is known to dwell in the region where the star fell, suspicions are aroused.

A powerful individual or institution commissions the player characters: They are charged with travelling to the region of the arcane disturbance (which has been pinpointed as emanating from the vicinity of the obscure hamlet of Drigbolton) to investigate goings on, uncover the perpetrator, and report back. Various orthodox institutions such as the Church, the Duke of Brackenwold, or organised guilds of wizards would be the most likely to feel threatened by this occurrence and thus wish to send a party to investigate. An individual wizard in the region may be another possible patron.

The Passing of Time

This is an event-based scenario, meaning that, as time passes, a predetermined sequence of events will take place in the various locales described. Many of the areas detailed have a section entitled “*Happenings in...*”—these sections describe what occurs there each day. The events are on a daily basis, with the first day being the day of the PCs’ arrival on the scene (whenever that may be).

Of course, the presence of the PCs has the potential to completely alter the course of events, depending on the level of involvement/meddling they engage in. The referee must judge which of the listed events would be delayed, altered, or prevented by the actions of the group of adventurers.

This module only describes events during the first week after the PCs’ arrival. By this stage, if the PCs have done nothing to interfere, the organs which broke away during the star’s descent will have found their way back to the core of the fallen star, restoring its full consciousness and potency (see p18 for details). What exactly the reawakened star does next is left for the referee to decide.

If, on the other hand, the actions of the adventurers prevent the star from reassembling itself, it will remain in the crater which it gouged out as it fell, inert. Again, the referee should decide what repercussions the presence of the dormant core will have, in the long term. It may well be that when, after several years, the protective pools of star-jelly have all been consumed, the core of the star will simply dissolve into a toxic mass of exotic matter and seep into the earth, to be forgotten.

It is also worth noting that the module does not describe any pre-determined way in which the player characters may eradicate the star Wermuth and its doings in the region. The fall of the star is intended as a major event in Dolmenwood with potentially wide-ranging repercussions. Indeed, the events of this module may lead to a continuing series of adventures, as the PCs (and/or other concerned parties) wrangle with the presence of Wermuth.

A few ideas for some directions in which the events of the module could be taken, suited to different tones of campaign, follow.

Apocalyptic: A Hole in the Sky

In the long term—whether the star Wermuth successfully reassembles itself or not—the hole which its fall wrought in the firmament may cause problems on a much wider (possibly global) scale. If the referee wishes to take things in this direction, there is potential for a whole series of adventures: unless the fissure is somehow repaired, it will have repercussions of a most grave nature. Initially, the rupture in the heavens grows large enough to be visible at night and during the day, appearing as a sickly violet nebula, growing larger over the coming weeks. Powerful alien entities from the void may begin to gather around the

rupture in the firmament, attracted by the scent of the escaping planetary radiations and proceeding to enter the upper strata of the atmosphere and slowly descend to earth. They are visible during the day as black spots in the sky, gradually descending and growing larger. In the long term, if the rupture is not repaired, the unseemly mixing of cosmic and terrestrial energies will radically and permanently alter the nature of reality across the entire world.

Political: Wermuth as Weapon

The fall of the star into the outer reaches of Dolmenwood did not go unnoticed by the Drune, that brotherhood of ascetic occultists whose hold on the wood grows ever stronger, like brambles engulfing a ruin. The ominous signs of the star's descent to earth galvanized the Drune to action: on the following morn, several groups under their sway were already on their way to investigate and report back. Upon hearing that significant parts of the star's body have, in fact, survived the impact, larger, more overt parties will be despatched to the scene, their goal: to seize or enslave whatever cosmic entities are to be found and to bring them to the Drune Lodge for analysis. In all things, the Drune remain coldly neutral, their only interest being the hoarding of occult knowledge and the expansion of their own power in Dolmenwood. A being of cosmic origin, such as the daemon of Wermuth, if it could be psychically enslaved, could be used as a weapon of great potency, tipping the delicate balance of power in the forest strongly in favour of the Drune. In a short period, they may begin to challenge and overthrow the forces of Law (the Church and the Duchy of Brackenwold) and Chaos (Atanuwe) in the region.

Whimsical: The Nag-Lord's Ball

The Nag-Lord, Atanuwe, is to host a great ball in his court in Dolmenwood and invitations have been streaming out on many planes: to fairy lords, time travellers, petty gods, elemental princes, and arch-wizards around the cosmos, including the daemon inhabiting the star Wermuth. Such an event is rare and not to be missed; the small matter of a few trillion miles' travel through the howling void of space is no obstacle to an immortal star-daemon! So, unbeknown to any of mortal birth, the fall of the star to earth was purposeful, arranged by the star itself by means of temporal manipulation (...that the book containing the instructions to summon it should fall into the hands of one who will perform the ritual at just the right moment). Following its reassembly, the star thus makes haste into Dolmenwood, arriving in perfect time (that is, fashionably several days late) for the ball. (If the star is not complete, emissaries of the Nag-Lord may emerge from the forest and attempt to carry the pieces of the star individually, to be reassembled at the ball, no doubt to the delight of the other guests.)

The Local Region

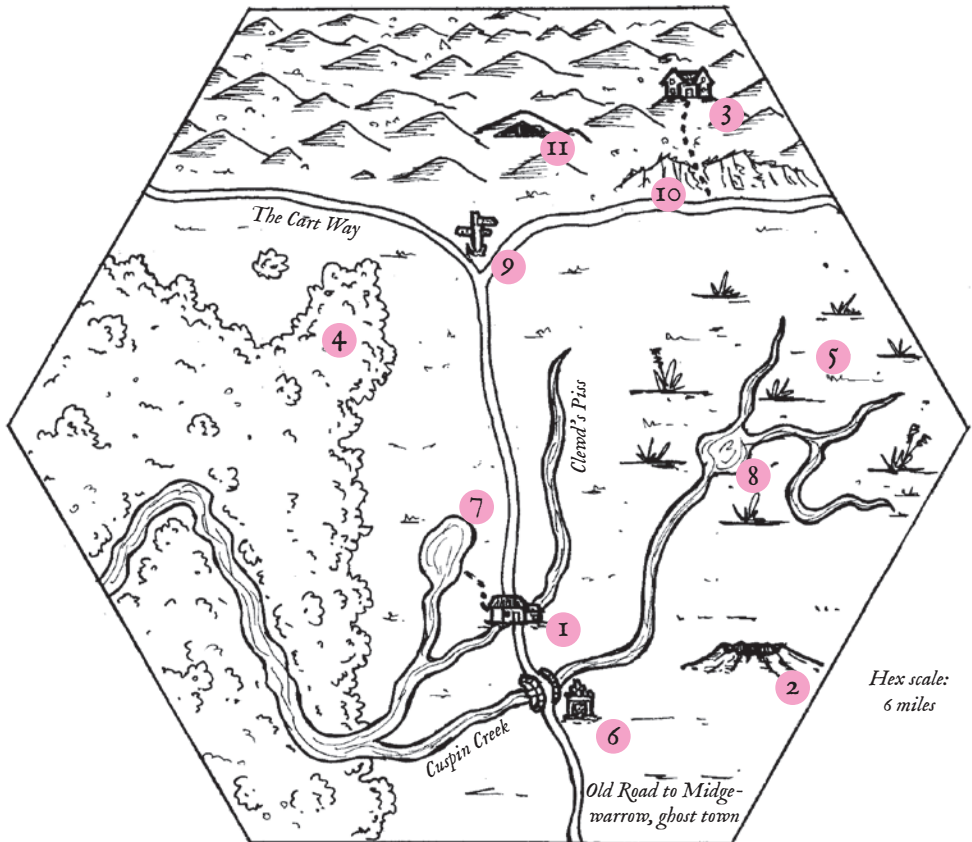
The events of this module take place within a six-mile area of sodden heathland on the northern fringe of Dolmenwood. The map below shows the areas of greatest interest to the strange goings-on. Each numbered area is described in detail, in the coming pages.

Random Happenings

As the player characters wander through the area, they may come across lesser fallen fragments of the star or may encounter other wanderers, local people, or monsters. Tables for determining random encounters and events in the area are provided later in the book.

A Note on Boxed Text

Each of the descriptions of the areas noted on the map commences with a short section of boxed text. This *is not* intended as read-aloud text for the players! It merely exists to provide the referee with a quick summary or overview of the area being discussed. More detailed notes on various features may follow.



I. The Hamlet of Drigbolton

A backwater settlement barely worth placement on maps of the region. The hamlet consists of a cluster of cottages among small divisions of pasture. A wooden, cone-roofed church stands on a hill at the north of the hamlet and a water mill sits by the river at the east. Many of the buildings in the hamlet are bedecked with colourful flags.

Dashing adventurer types would have almost no reason to visit Drigbolton, if it were not for the chance falling of the star Wermuth in the vicinity. It is now a hotbed of activity and the villagers self-proclaimed experts on the lore of the fallen star.

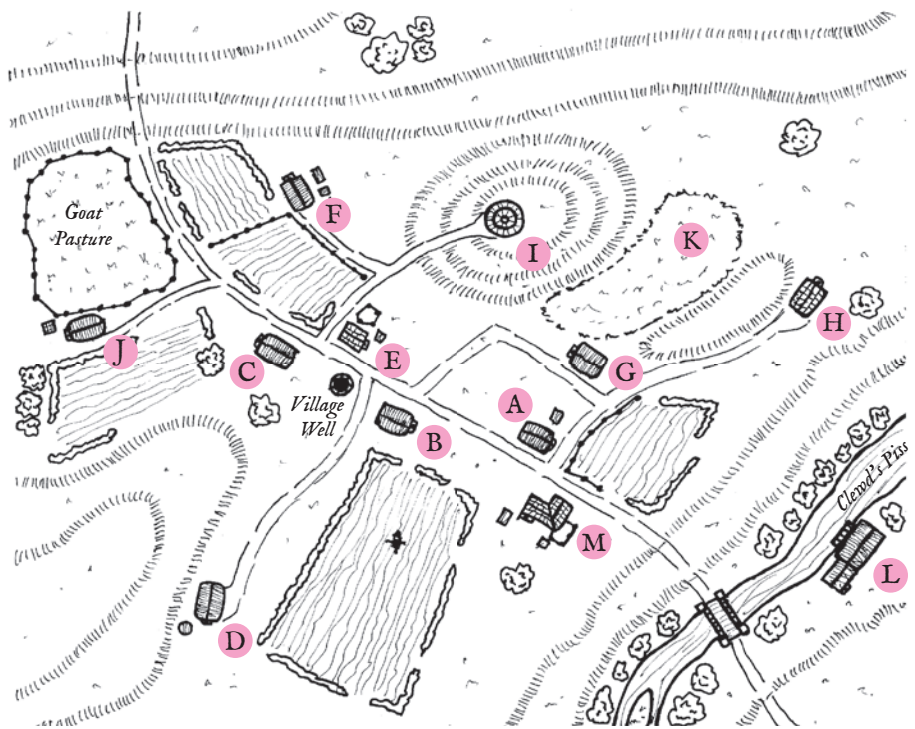
Population: 24 adults (human)

Wealth: Poor (subsistence farming)

Government: Consensual pettylordship under an Elected Headman who pays fealty to the laird of Oath House (see area 4).

Production: Goat's milk, goat-flesh, einkorn (wild wheat grain), eggs, breads, chicken-flesh, crabber (crabapple mead), simple tools, and textiles.

Threats: Starvation, disease, wolves, frostbite (in winter), infertility.



The Manna Feast

Since their discovery of the jelly surrounding fallen core of Wermuth, in the crater to the east of the village, the folk of Drigbolton have experienced a time of plenty, religious fervour, and great hope for the future of their small settlement. Each day, groups of villagers make their way to the crater (area 2), laden with whatever vessels they have at hand (crocks, buckets, baskets, jugs, etc), scoop up copious quantities of the star-jelly, and return to the village. Practically all of the food and drink in the village is now infused with the stuff.

As a large part of their sustenance is now being provided by the star-jelly, many of the villagers have ceased to ply their normal trades as farmers, hunters, or fishers. They believe that they have been provided for by heaven and that the village, the Church, and the nearby shrine of St Craven are to become centres of pilgrimage, famed throughout the Duchy. Consequently, the village has taken on an air of festivity. Ecstatic music and dancing is commonplace, the Sunning crockery is permanently on tables, people walk through the lanes in gaudy dress, animals are allowed to run loose, and the cottages (except cottage D—the home of Griya the Crone) are bedecked with gaudy flags.

Effects of Consuming Star-Jelly

Anyone who consumes star-jelly will come under the spell of the fallen star. All of the folk of Drigbolton (with the exception of Griya the Crone) are wolfing down copious quantities of the stuff. As long as daily consumption is kept up, the effects are as follows. Abstaining from jelly for a week reverses all changes.

First day: A giddy desire to gaze up into the sky at night, as if awaiting a missive from the heavens.

Second day: A 50% chance of rising at night to wander through the wild woodlands in search of star-metal to take to the crater (area 1).

Third day: The dreams of those who remain asleep (50% chance) encroach upon the objective world in the form of phantasms which may be observed by any who are abroad.

Fourth day: Eyes glaze over with drifting, iridescent hues.

Fifth day: The flesh of the thighs and forearms begins to squirm and vibrate. In the evening, long, metallic-violet hairs emerge.

Sixth day: Jelly-eaters undergo a more extreme physical transformation, sprouting rainbow-hued, feathery appendages from their backs.

Seventh day: At midnight on the seventh night, those who have continued to consume the star-jelly awake, transformed into rainbow-feathered angelic beings, and drift off toward the core of Wermuth singing beautiful, wistful songs.



Repast Rooms

In ancient times, the region to the north of Dolmenwood was a centre of ancestor-worship. Fragments of these pagan traditions have survived into the present era. Each cottage possesses a locked chamber called a *repast room*. In these sacred, windowless chambers, the mummified corpses of a family's ancestors are propped in chairs at a long dining table. A fire is maintained in the repast room's hearth at all times, creating a dry atmosphere that helps preserve the dead and subdue some of their stench. Each corpse is bound to its chair with cords of maiden-hair, its hands tied together in an attitude of solicitous prayer. Ritual dictates that the dead gathered in the repast room must be fed at dusk each day. This task is designated to the women of the cottage, who hand-feed each corpse a meal of einkorn groats that is then washed down with a small mug of cold crabber. The activity is purely symbolic—groats and cider mingle in a bowl set under each corpse that is emptied daily.

In cases of severe decomposition, corpses will be removed from the repast room and packed into chests. Outsiders will likely be unaware of the taboo, but it is considered gauche to speak of a family's repast room. Even amongst themselves, the townsfolk will avoid any discussion of their stinking chests and coffers. To do other than this is a great impropriety that may possibly spoil an opportunity for friendly discourse.

Cottages in Drigbolton

Cottage A—Home of Lubbins the Woodcutter (2)

Town drunk Lubbins the Elder lives here with his boy-son, Junior. Since the death of his wife during the previous winter, Lubbins has sunk into a murky depression nursed into suicidal ideation by his constant consumption of home-fermented crabber (which he shares with no one). His disgruntled son Junior attends to the felling of trees and gathering of wild apples each autumn.

Cottage B—Home of Headman Unwick (3)

Headman Unwick, his hideous wife Gorgelle, and their attractive, adult daughter Ponsefine live here. Unwick is highly suspicious of outsiders travelling through Drigbolton and expects a full description of any stranger(s) entering the village within a half-hour of their arrival.



Cottage C—Home of Miglin the Goatkeeper (2)

Old Miglin lives here with his granddaughter Bea, fresh into her maidenhood.

Cottage D—Home of Griya the Crone (1)

Griya the Crone is a shut-in spinster living alone in the cottage of her forebears. She has not consumed any of the star-jelly, believing that the star was sent by an evil fairy lord—the Cold Prince—and that it heralds his return to claim Dolmenwood for his own. Thus, Griya is not a “sleepwalker” and is aware of the changes taking place in Drigbolton since the fall of Wermuth. Since then, she has become even more reclusive and will not interact with the other village-



folk, believing them to be possessed by evil spirits. Griya is a hedge-witch of very minor ability. She believes her power comes directly from St Gretchen.

Cottage E—Home of Salt the Ploughman (2+)

Salt maintains the fields of Drigbolton year-round. He lives here with his second wife, Wegley, who is pregnant. It is well-known that his first wife abandoned him for a woodwose. (He is eternally salty about this fact.)

Cottage F—Home of Breag the Blacksmith (5)

Red-bearded Breag, his wife Murnie, and their three juvenile sons spend much of their time fueling and operating the forge located in their home. Breag has little experience in crafting weapons, but he is a practiced toolsmith. Murnie collects kindling as well as local herbs and mushrooms.

Cottage G—Home of Yarrow the Baker (2)

Yarrow and his idiot-brother Higg live here. Yarrow spends much of his time at his hearth or in his kitchen preparing simple breads from einkorn flour. Higg is tasked with tending the chickens cooped behind their home. He is notorious about the village for being a clumsy buffoon. The local expression for botching a task is to Higg something to bits, as in “Those foolish folks from the south have really got things all Higgged to bits”.

Cottage H—Home of Sir Thomish the Knight (retired) (2)

Sir Thomish is a disgraced knight from the south who married into the village of Drigbolton when he promised to wed his ill cousin’s daughter, Branwena, in exchange for his cousin’s cottage. Thomish was once a wealthy man. He brought many of his furnishings and much of his other finery to Drigbolton with him. Thus his outwardly modest home is a clutter of valuable china and table silver, exotic oil lamps and massive family portraits.

I: *The Church of St Gretchen* (I)

A dour, single-story structure of rough-hewn cedar boards with a conical roof. It is 30' × 30', windowless, containing an open, carpeted area facing a harshly illuminated altar in which the carnelian likeness of its eponymous saint stares forth balefully. The red idol is the collective property of the people of Drigbolton. It is regularly anointed with goat's milk under the watchful eye of elderly Pastor Gwyne. Jar after jar of wobbly, pink star-jelly now litter the floor in front of the idol.

Outsiders (especially clerics or religiously inclined characters) may note that the church has no graveyard. This is due to the locals' alternative means of caring for the dead (see *Repast Rooms*), but may strike strangers as unusual.

St Gretchen—the Maiden Saint—is patron to goatherds (hence the Drigbolton folks' interest in her) and victims of battle.



J: *The Communal Barn* (I)

A large, one-roomed, wooden hall used for several purposes: shelter for the village goats during the cold months; the storage of grain and hay for the goats during said period; occasional dances, during certain yearly festivals.

Under the sway of the manna-fever which sweeps the village, the barn has been transformed into a nightly dance club, led by the innkeeper's sons, Wiggyl and Brag, on their fiddles. This is much to the dismay of Pourplish, the apprentice goatherd, a straggly youth who lodges here in a cot in the rafters and is not quite so enamoured of the festivities as the other villagers.

K: *The Green*

A bowl-shaped expanse of pasture used by the village for recreation. In the daylight hours, it is now common to find groups of villagers gathered here slurping down mugs of star-jelly and praising the beneficence of Saint Gretchen.

Near the center of the Green are the Great Stone Feet—a pair of crudely carved, three-toed feet of black stone about four feet long. They are all that remain of a shattered idol. Local lore holds that the rest of the demonic god now rests at the bottom of Pike Pond (area 7).

L: The Mill (3)

The miller Pagwash lives here, among sacks of einkorn grain and barrels of star-jelly, with his wife Milly and their infant daughter.

M: The King Deer (Tavern) (4 + guests)

A small, cosy place, with three round tables and stools enough for fifteen. Behind the bar, goats' horns are displayed on wooden plaques, each marked with the name and date of the original bearer. (These are the horns of the village's prize goats, as judged upon midsummer each year.) Stairs lead up to a small second level with rooms for rent and the private chambers of the proprietors. Two doors lead to adjoining rooms: a shared room for guests and the tavern's *repast room* (this door is kept closed and locked, see *Repast Rooms*).

The Proprietors

The proprietor of the tavern is a tall, elegant, middle-aged woman named Frey, her second husband, Limber (a thickset, red-haired man from the south, beyond Dolmenwood, who came to this region to avoid execution after committing a series grisly crimes), and Frey's two adult sons from her former marriage, Wiggyl and Brag.



Patrons

Of an evening, the common room is full of laughter, music, and the quaffing of crabber (augmented with dollops of star-jelly, naturally—jugs of the stuff sit on the bar and tables). Drigbolton is rarely visited by outsiders, so locals will assume that strangers are here to join in the festivities.

Some rumours that may be gleaned from the locals in the tavern are listed overleaf.

Price List

- ▶ Lodging in a cramped, private room upstairs (2 available): 4sp per night.
- ▶ Lodging in a shared room next to the bar: 15cp per night.
- ▶ Meals (porridge with goat curds, goat-meat pasty, forest greens and mushrooms, etc—all laced with star-jelly): 1d6sp. (For those who have it, the *Common Tavern Fare* generator in *Wormskin* issue two may be used here.)
- ▶ Mug of crabber: 8cp.
- ▶ Shot of einkorn moonshine: 2sp.
- ▶ Stabling and feeding of mounts in the communal barn: 1sp.

Happenings in Drigbolton

The villagers (except Griya, cottage D) are affected, on a daily basis, as described previously (see *Effects of Consuming Star-Jelly*). The following events occur in the village over the first week after the PCs arrive on the scene.

First day, star-gazing: Villagers gaze giddily at the heavens, around midnight.

Second day, nocturnal activity: Some villagers seemingly stay up all night, returning bleary-eyed to their beds at dawn.

Third day, manifested dreams: Phantasmagoric visions of giant, ivy-crowned chickens roam the village at night. The fowl emanate from the dreams of Higg and congregate around his cottage (G).

Fourth day, the stricken knight: Sir Thomish (see cottage H), roaming the moors to the north of the village, stumbles upon the psychometric lobe (see area 5) and returns to the village stricken with babbling madness.

Fifth day, the dead rise: Having also been lovingly fed on star-jelly pies and wafers, the dead rise from their resting places and wander the night, aiding in the search for star-metal.

Sixth day, the return of the Lairds: The deceased Hearth-Lairds of the Oath House (see area H of the Oath House) make their way to the village after dark to kidnap everyone present and press them into forced servitude (which they, of course, consider their noble right).

Seventh day, howlings on the moor: The howlings of wolf-stags (see area 8) are heard abroad on the moor at night, filling any locals who have held onto a shred of sanity with dread.

Talk of the Town

The villagers will gladly tell anyone who asks the full tale of the fall of the star—they regard this event as a blessing from heaven:

- ▶ In the night several days before the PCs' arrival, lights in the sky heralded the fall of the star. This was followed by rumblings of the earth for hours.
- ▶ Aside from the main body at the crater, many fragments broke off from the falling star. Three very large pieces were particularly visible, falling further to the north. The Hearth-Laird up at the Oath House doubtless knows where these crashed; he is sure to have seen them with his big "telling-scope".
- ▶ The morning after the crash, the crater on Bolton Moor and the pools of pink star-jelly ("manna from heaven!") were discovered.

Aside from this, other possible topics of local discussion may be randomly selected from the list on the adjacent page.

1. Junior Lubbins (see cottage A), wandering in the woods to the north of the hamlet, discovered a huge hunk of steaming metal in a witch-glade in the region of Nob's Spinney. He returned home with clothing in tatters, after being attacked by living brambles accursed by some sorcerers.
2. Bolton Bog, to the north-east, was home to a strange folk called the Hoar-grim, who served an antlered god. This beast-god granted his followers an unnaturally long life and resistance to sickness, but demanded the lifeblood of every second infant born to each woman. The beast-god and his depraved followers were slain by St Craven and their village sank into the bog.
3. Dobbin's Mere, on the southern edges of the bog, is haunted by the spirit of an ancient stag-headed beast-god which once dominated the folk of the region. The spirit is known as Crooked Dobbin. On the nights of the equinoxes, Crooked Dobbin roams the moor in wolf-stag form, hungry for blood.
4. Headman Unwick (cottage B) heard from a travelling seller of linens that the Oath House appears to be empty at present. The man said that he knocked at the door, but received no answer. This is odd news, as the Laird and his manservant (the Headman's cousin, Godfried) are never away.
5. The best hunting in the region is to be had in the small wood called Nob's Spinney. Traditionally, the spinney was the preserve of the Lord of Midge-warrior, but the demise of the town and its lords in the plagues has left the wood in the hands of the locals of Drigbolton.
6. Laird Spinnewith of the Oath House shows no interest in the courting of eligible lady-folk, preferring scrolls, sextants, and stuffed foxes to dances and teas. The Laird is hardly a young man, so his behaviour imperils the entire family line. If only his eye could be turned to a lady of good breeding.
7. A special event is planned at the communal barn this evening—Pagwash the miller has collected enough star-jelly to fill his copper bath tub and is going to transport it to the barn for the refreshment of all. Naturally, a dance is to ensue, into the wee hours.
8. The Headman's younger cousin, Godfried, works up in the Oath House, doing for the master and tending to the grounds. As the only other inhabitant of the manor, he is privy to the Laird's secrets, but remains tight-lipped. He visits the village regularly and, as a man who is known to enjoy song and dance, is sure to come and join in the festivities.
9. A hellmouth is located in the caves to the north-east of the crossroads. It is the dominion of the imps called clooneys, who delight in pulling teeth out of people's heads.
10. Old Miglin (cottage C) was up by Dobbin's Mere, searching for a wayward she-goat who had wandered astray. He saw some strange sights in the mere: the water was steaming and he would swear that he saw the accursed statue move!

2. The Crater on Bolton Moor

Here, amid the windswept ridges and tumbled cairns of the desolate moor, lies the core of the fallen star Wermuth, brooding in the crater (250 yards across) gouged from the earth by its impact. Surrounding the star, filling and overflowing the crater, and splashed in random gobs around the perimeter, is a morass of phosphorescent, rose-pink jelly. Animals of various kinds lounge around, slurping up the jelly. Local people may also be present, collecting it in buckets.

Jelly-Drunk Beasts

Like thirsty beasts around a desert oasis, oddly mixed congregations of birds and animals—both predators and prey—are gathered here, gorging themselves on the delicious star-jelly. The sated lie happily by the crater, atop mounds of jelly, lolling in peaceful slumber or relaxation. As is to be expected, earthly creatures cannot subsist on such stuff and remain unchanged. The behaviour of the crater-loungers is described in *Happenings at the Crater*, overleaf.

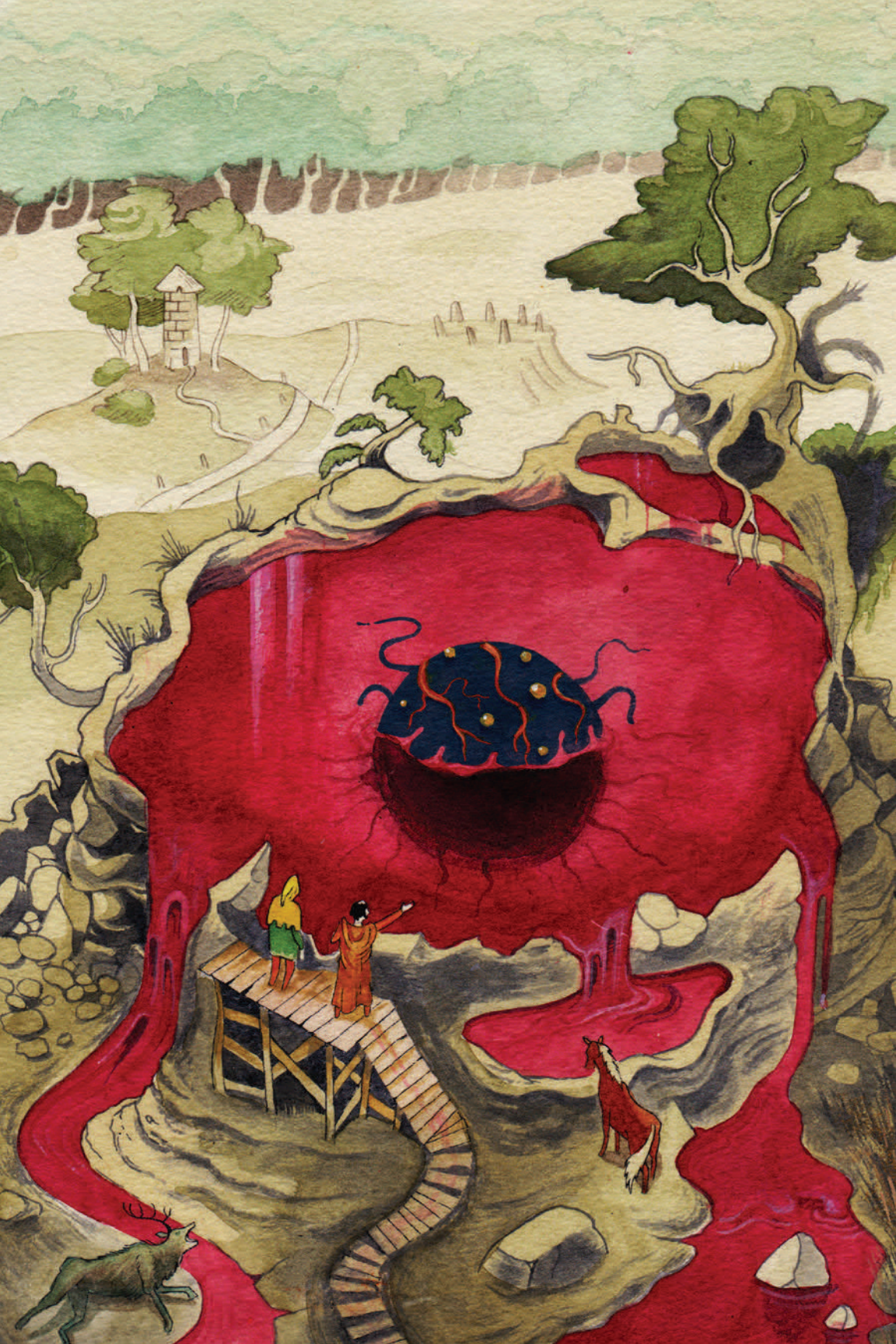
Jelly Collectors

The star-jelly is not only attractive to dumb beasts—local folk file here from the hamlet of Drigbolton to harvest jelly in baskets, buckets, and carts. There is a 3-in-6 chance of 1d6 villagers being present here, in the day time. (Humans who eat of the jelly are affected in many and strange ways, although the effects on humans are somewhat different. See *Effects of Consuming Star-Jelly*, p10.)

The Star-Jelly

The wobbly, pink jelly inspires an unexpected sentiment in those who look upon it: one of frivolity and mirth. The cause of this feeling is far from clear. What is clear, to all of mortal blood, is that the jelly is edible, nutritious, and delectable. Those who indulge in this tempting treat from the heavens experience the odd simultaneous sensations of delightful sweetness and intense bitterness. Overall, the taste is pleasing and very moreish. If removed from the crater, the jelly does not decay, maintaining its playful wobbliness and temptingly refreshing appearance indefinitely.

Continued overleaf..



The Core of the Star

Those who approach the lip of the crater, wading through the jelly, may observe the submerged core of Wermuth— a rough sphere around 100 yards in diameter, black as the deepest chasm, pocked with shining nodes of scintillating gold, striated with pulsing, rust-coloured veins, and dotted with what appear to be long, thin, black hairs (tentacles?) lying tangled amidst the mass of the jelly. In three locations on the star's surface, deep mauve gashes are visible—signs of the forces which wracked it as it tore through the firmament, causing three of its vital organs to break loose and plummet separately to earth. From these gashes oozes a deep purple, ink-like colouration, seeping into the lower strata of the jelly.

Interacting With the Star

- ▶ *Detect magic* indicates a potent arcane force in the star's core. The jelly also radiates a mild enchantment.
- ▶ Detection of alignment indicates Chaos (though not evil, *per se*).
- ▶ The consciousness of the star is so alien to that of humans that communication is difficult. Initially, the core is utterly unresponsive to speech or telepathic contact. Upon reunion with the *psychometric lobe* (day five), it may be contacted psychically, but will yield nothing but nonsense. Upon the reunion of the star with the *spiralstar concrescence* (day seven), it regains the ability to communicate in all mortal languages via telepathic projection.

The Core of Wermuth: HD 30 (100hp), AC 0, Att: 4 × 2d12 (energy rays), MI 10, Mv 240' (80')—rolling or levitating, AI C, XP 5,000. The core is immune to all mundane damage and can only be harmed by spells of 4th level or higher or enchanted weapons of +3 or greater magnitude. It is initially dormant and immobile, but regains the ability to move and attack when its missing organs are restored. All who look upon the fully awoken star are afflicted by *fear*.

Happenings at the Crater

The following changes occur around the crater as time progresses, if the PCs do nothing to change the flow of events:

First day, star-metal seekers: Beasts who have eaten the jelly awake in the night in a trance-like state, under the influence of Wermuth, and begin to roam the surrounding land. They are seeking, moon-eyed, for chunks of star-metal—which they will collect in their maws and bring to the crater—and signs of the missing organs which broke away from the star during its descent.

Second day, frothing jelly: The star-jelly filling the crater begins to froth and vibrate. Upon close examination, miniature figures of people and animals are seen playing across its surface. Whole histories, and perhaps glimpses of the future, can be perceived in these figments.

Jelly-eating animals begin to undergo odd physical changes—eyes swell, limbs become supple and rubbery, fur or feathers stand on end and wave to and fro.

Third day, the core illuminates: The *greater warp-dome* (see area 4) arrives at the crater in the dead of night, floating above the earth. It melds with the throbbing core of Wermuth, which henceforth crackles and glows with bursts of magnesium-flare lightning, illuminating the mass of jelly.

By now, most animals feeding at the jelly pool are hideously deformed (see the creatures described in the section on random encounters for examples). 2d6 individuals of each type listed are found in the vicinity of the crater at all times.

Fourth day, a noxious pink fume: Wracked by the energy storms around the star below, the mass of jelly which fills the crater begins to bubble and boil, emitting a noxious pink fume which hangs over the crater like fog. Anyone approaching the rim of the crater must save versus poison or start coughing up chunks of lung, dying within 1d6 minutes. (The jelly around the edge of the crater is unchanged and can still be gathered and consumed safely.)

Fifth day, the star speaks: The *psychometric lobe* (area 5) is carried here by a throng of enthralled beasts and cast into the crater, melding with the crackling core of the star. With this reunion, the star's consciousness begins to coalesce. Henceforth, while in the vicinity, sentient beings experience the unnerving phenomenon of the star speaking in their minds and through their mouths. This manifests as a synesthetic glossolalia, whereby the cosmic consciousness of the star is expressed as a barrage of mental images (incomprehensible and yet of seemingly great significance) forced through the vocal cords as words in all languages.

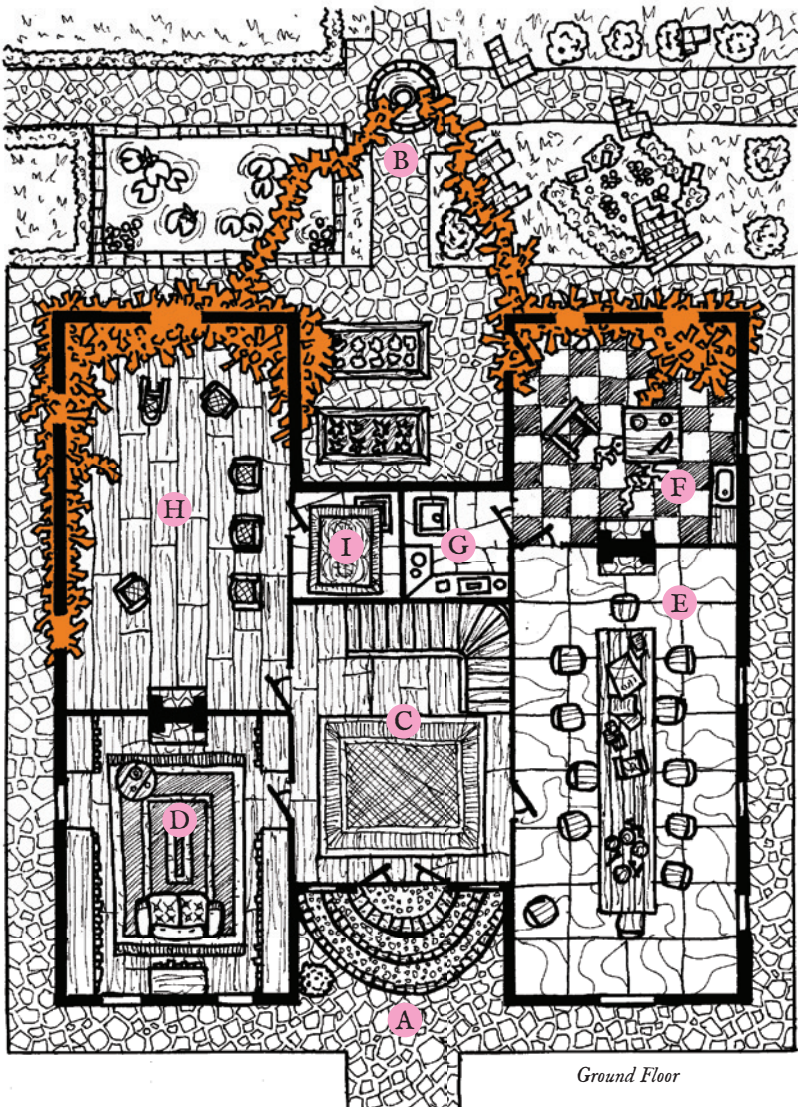
Sixth day, awakened beasts: All animals who feed on the star-jelly are imbued with human-level consciousness and gain the ability to speak all human languages, though their vocal apparatus is not strictly suited to producing the correct sounds. Such creatures are haughty and aloof in their interactions with humans.

Seventh day, Wermuth awakens: Finally detaching itself from the ruins of Oath House, the *spiralstar concrescence* (see area 3B) is carried by a throng of cavorting marble statues to the crater to join with the core of the star. With this final piece, Wermuth is whole once again and regains the ability to think and move. What it will do and what happens next are left for the referee to decide. It is likely that the presence of a now fully conscious star on earth will have serious repercussions.

3. The Oath House

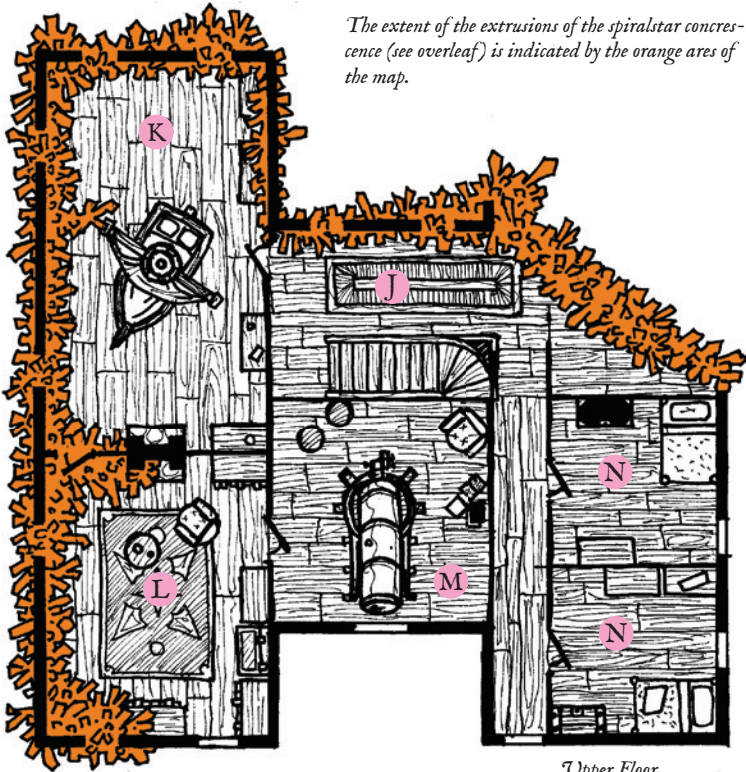
Nestled in a valley in the chalk downs stands the small, two-chimneyed manor known locally as the Oath House. The manor is some centuries old but maintained in a good state of repair, with rows of tidily clipped hedges and neat garden borders surrounding it. Architecturally, the manor is noteworthy for its single central tower (area M), directly above the main entrance.

Since the fall of the star Wermuth, all is not well at the house—a fragment of the star broke off during its descent and collided with the upper floor, decimating several rooms. This chunk of star-flesh, technically known as the *spiralstar concrescence*, now lies brooding in the fountain in the rear garden (area B).

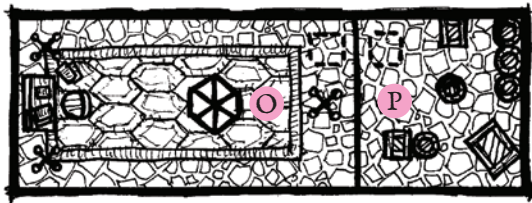


Ground Floor

The extent of the extrusions of the spiralstar concrete-
cence (see overleaf) is indicated by the orange areas of
the map.



Upper Floor



Cellars

The Oath House is the ancestral home of the local “hearth-laird”, an old customary position in this region, separate to the more recent feudal hierarchy of lords, barons, earls, etc. The hearth-laird’s function in society is now mostly vestigial, descending from ancient pagan religious orders and reduced in modern times to the overseeing of a small number of yearly rituals within the local community. The most prominent of these is the “hearth sweay”—taking place shortly after midwinter—in which local folk gather in the Oath House to re-confirm their loyalty to the laird.

Spiralstar Extrusions

Glistening, amber, crystalline extrusions extend from the star-organ in the fountain toward the house. The northern and western sides of the building are covered in these extrusions, which are gradually penetrating the physical structure of the manor. The contact between the cosmic matter of the star and the earthly matter of the manor results in a series of odd changes:

- ▶ Non-living matter in contact with the concrescence or its extrusions is endowed with a form of artificial life, becoming animate, aware, and possibly intelligent. The effect is unique to each item—a sword may become a singing snake, a glove may root itself into the earth and grow swaying, phantasmagoric, fern-like fronds, a pebble may erupt into a maelstrom of spiralling dust. When contact with the concrescence ceases, the affected object returns to normal after 24 hours have passed.
- ▶ Living matter, on the other hand, comes under a time-nullifying effect similar to the *temporal stasis* spell, preserving it indefinitely in a state of unchanging timelessness. This effect also ends 24 hours after contact ceases.
- ▶ Fire—as a non-living, animate substance—disrupts the extrusions of the spiralstar concrescence, causing them to crackle, blacken, and evaporate. The main body of the concrescence does not have this vulnerability.
- ▶ As air comes into contact with the extrusions, a high-pitched crackling and keening is emitted, intensifying with the force of the wind.
- ▶ Magical items which contact the extrusions are not in any way affected.

Inhabitants of the Oath House

Godfried Whelm: HD 1 (3hp), AC 9, Att: none, Ml 8, Mv 120' (40'), Al L, XP 10.

Godfried is 24 years old, of scrawny build, with bulbous eyes, frizzy hair, a prematurely balding pate, and a straggly moustache. He is the cousin of Headman Unwick of Drigbolton and has regular contact with the Headman and his family. Godfried has lived in the Oath House for three years, since the old manservant died. He knows about the trapdoor in the store (area I), which he believes leads to a second cellar where the Laird keeps a collection of rare and precious wines. He knows that the Laird spends much time down there and believes him to secretly be an alcoholic.



Alhoyle Spinnewith IV, the Hearth-Laird:
HD 1 (3hp), AC 9, Att: none, Ml 9, Mv 120'
(40'), Al N, XP 10.

The laird is a pale, delicate man in his fifties, with a sensitive gaze, clear grey eyes, enormous grey sideburns, and dazzlingly perfect teeth (revealed when he smiles—seldom). He dresses in quality but well-worn clothing of purple and red silks and linens, typically sporting a plush smoking jacket to accompany the pipe which he puffs on constantly.



The laird is unmarried and set to be the last of his line, with no children—he has devoted his life to the study of several fields of esoteric interest and has little time for dalliances with women. His primary interests are: botany, taxonomy, astronomy, and astrology. His years of study and fastidious collection of books (slowly exhausting the wealth of his ancestors) have made him something of an unsung expert on the hierarchies of the stellar cosmos and the astrobiology of heavenly bodies (he could certainly identify any of the detached organs of Wermuth). These avenues of research led him to the recent purchase of a rare copy of the notorious *Black Book of Llareggub* (see area O), which contains the ritual which allowed him to (albeit unwittingly) invoke the fall of Wermuth, as described in the introduction.

As the star Wermuth fell to earth, the laird observed its descent and noted the locations at which it and the broken-off organs landed.

Although he possesses much magical paraphernalia, the laird of the Oath House is not a magic-user and is unable to memorize or cast spells.

A. Entry

Cracked granite steps lead up to a tiled porch containing solid, black-lacquered double doors which form the front entry of the manor. A cobblestone path leads around both sides of the house to the rear gardens (area B).

The doors have a polished brass door knob and a knocker in the form of a mermaid. The front doors are locked and barred from the inside.

Roses climb from the foot of the stairs, over the porch, and up the front of the house, in summer months covering it with dainty pink flowers. In addition to the climbing roses, the house is now partially clad in amber extrusions of the spiralstar concrescence, visible creeping over the upper floor of the west wing.

Characters approaching the house may also notice the tower above the main entrance, that the right-hand chimney is destroyed, and that the left-hand chimney is smoking.

B. Gardens

A series of small, neat gardens, separated by hedges and low brick walls. The rubble of the partially decimated upper floor of the house is strewn here. In the centre, a circular paved area with an elaborate marble fountain. The spiralstar concrescence lays in the basin, extrusions extending toward the house. A procession of marble statues cavort and dance around the edge.

The Spiralstar Concrescence

The star-organ is a rough ovoid of 10' diameter, unearthly pale white, emitting a soft pink light. The surface of the entity is fractal in nature, exhibiting an infinite, rippling complexity of spiralling star formations, the largest layer of structure taking the form of thickly coiled, constantly in-turning, star-shaped tentacles about 3' in length.

The object is too much for mortal eyes to comprehend, incurring a saving throw versus magic. Those who succeed the save quickly realise the madness that lies within the object and manage to avert their eyes. Those who fail the save feel their gaze and consciousness drawn down into the infinity which washes over the surface of the entity, experiencing a time-lapse wherein hours or days may pass in what feels like seconds. Roll on the adjacent table for a group of affected individuals. To unaffected observers, those gripped by the time-lapse appear drooling and paralysed, gazing wide-eyed at the concrescence. They can be moved by force, breaking the fascination.

1d6	Time Lapse
1	1 hour
2	4 hours
3	8 hours
4	12 hours
5	One day
6	Three days

Spiralstar Concrescence: HD 10 (45hp), AC 3, Att: none, Ml 12, Mv 0', Al C, XP 3,100. The concrescence is immune to damage from all non-magical sources, which is simply reflected by its super-dense surface. It cannot move of its own volition and has no specific forms of attack, however those who inflict damage upon it will encounter its defenses. Attacks which penetrate the concrescence (magical bladed weapons, for example) trigger the release of a spurt of strobing, black/white gel which annihilates any matter it comes into contact with—anyone within 10' must save versus breath weapons or suffer 3d6 damage and have a random body part permanently annihilated. Attacks which erode the concrescence on a structural level (magical fire, acid, or disintegration, for example) cause it to shrink in size proportional to the amount of damage inflicted—a rather odd sight. Even though the concrescence is mindless, psychic contact with it is possible, revealing an interior universe of spiral-star fractals. The revelation renders the psychic permanently insane.

The Marble Statues

The original pair of marble lovers depicted in the fountain are now animated and are engaged in a process of jubilation, fornication, and accelerated reproduction. There are always an equal number of male and female statues, each female giving birth (after an accelerated pregnancy of about thirty minutes) to twins—a girl and a boy. The baby statues grow to childhood after a single hour—joining the cavorting procession around the concrescence—and adulthood in the space of a day. As the statues do not die, their number increases exponentially, doubling each day (see *Happenings in the Gardens*).

The statues are non-hostile, but will defend themselves and the concrescence, if attacked.

Marble Lovers: HD 3, AC 3, Att: 1 × 1d6 (fists), MI 9, Mv 90' (30'), AI N, XP 65. Piercing and slashing weapons are not well suited to damage solid marble and inflict only a single point of damage.

The Fountain

The waters of the fountain still flow, but are now channeled by the abnormal dimensional qualities of the concrescence, forming a strobing array of fine jets, looping in mid-air away from the centre and then back into the basin. The basin is formed of a smooth, pink marble, 20' in diameter, edged with conch formations, and filled with violet hued waters undergoing fascinating and unnatural patterns of vibration.

Happenings in the Gardens

If the PCs arrive at this location on their first day in the area, they may encounter the original two statues, but arrival on subsequent days reveals an ever increasing throng: four statues on the second day, eight on the third, sixteen on the fourth, thirty-two on the fifth, sixty-four on the sixth, and finally one-hundred-and-twenty-eight statues on the seventh day. At this point, having gathered enough “offspring” to itself, the spiralstar concrescence issues a command to the statues, which proceed to lift it off the ground and carry it to the body of the star, located in the crater to the south.



C. Hall

A somewhat sombre entry hall, cheerlessly clean and sparsely furnished. From the eastern door, a curious cacophony of bestial bleating and human whimpers can be heard. From the door western door can be heard the crackling of flames and a strident debate involving a group of men. A choir of high-pitched singing descends from the landing at the top of the elegant stairway.

The front doors are locked and barred from the inside.

D. Study

A cosy study-cum-lounge, lined with bookshelves and arranged for the comfort of reading, smoking, contemplating the landscape, and entertaining guests (although such are seldom present).

The Bookshelves

The books here are somewhat antique and mostly on topics of mundane interest (novels, volumes of poetry, histories and geographies, philosophic treatises, and so forth). There are also a small number of tomes here of esoteric interest, worth 500gp to a magic-user.

The Fireplace

Anyone who examines the fireplace will notice that hearth is warm, despite there being no fire in the grate. The warmth emanates from the adjacent hearth in area H. Above the fireplace hangs a glass case containing “The Right Arm of the Brass Man” (labelled as such). The object has clearly been broken from a larger statue. It is worth 150gp, for its value as a curio.

E. Dining Room

A long hall, marble-floored, dominated by a great feasting table and possessed of elegant chairs in far too great a number for common use. Half of the table is taken up by a sprawl of maps and charts. The door to the kitchen is ajar: an unsettling mixture of demented baaing and terrified yelps can be heard.

The Maps

Focus primarily on the constellations of the visible heavens. A crumpled map of the local area is also present, with hastily drawn red crosses noting the approximate locations of the fall of the star and the three larger organs (the Oath House, Nob’s Spinney, and Bolton Bog).

Dresser

At one side of the dining room contains a fine set of silverware (1,000gp).

F. Kitchen

Checkerboard floor, white tiled walls. Descended into chaos as a great mass of amber extrusions has burst through the back door and windows, consuming the northern half of the room. In contact with the spiralstar extrusions, the furnishings have become animated and a mound of agglomerated meats runs amok, sausage-string tentacles flailing. Human whimperings can be heard from the pantry (area G), adjacent.

Animated Meats

The various meats present in the kitchen—strings of sausages, several smoked hams, two whole sheep heads, and half a pig's torso—have gathered together into one lumpish form which is careering wildly around the room with sausage-appendages flailing and heads baaing demonically. This monstrous construction is bent on doing in the manservant who has cloistered himself in the pantry (area G), slamming itself repeatedly against the partially closed door, with one of its sausage-appendages delving around the door.

Meat Monstrosity: HD 6 (24hp), AC 8, Att: 4 × 1d6 (sausage-strings) and 2 × 1d8 (bites), Ml 10, Mv 90' (30'), Al C, XP 570. Anyone successfully grabbed by one of the sausage-strings becomes entangled, suffering a -3 penalty to armour class and hit rolls. The victim may be freed if 4 hit points' damage is inflicted on the sausage-string (each has its own, separate hit point pool), but there is a 1 in 3 chance of such attacks damaging the victim instead.

Animated Furnishings

In contact with the spiralstar extrusions, the wood of the overturned benches has taken on the aspect of a miniature forest, wracked by an imaginary gale, while the smashed ceramics have formed themselves into the shape of human, antelope, and pike skulls, chasing each other and gnashing their teeth.

The Hearth

A branch of the spiralstar extrusions has crept across the floor, under the table in the centre, and ends in a cracked, blackened stump in front of the hearth.

The Back Door and the Kitchen Garden

The back door opens onto a kitchen garden with potted herbs and a vegetable plot. Cobbled paths lead from here to the rear gardens (area B). A large chunk of star-metal (worth 1,500gp, see p57) is crashed in the centre of the vegetable patch. **Roll on the weird encounter tables to see what is sniffing around.**

The Pantry Door

Beside the door to the pantry is a small key-hanger, housing the keys to: the front and back doors, the cellar (area P), and the store (area I).

G. Pantry

A cold room of marble shelves stacked with jars, bottles, and crates. The manservant, **Godfried Whelm** (see *Inhabitants of the Oath House*) lies prone here, taking refuge from the raging meat monstrosity in the kitchen.

Godfried Whelm

Godfried has been trapped here since shortly after the star-organ crashed into the house. He assumes the worst about the fate of his respected master: that the Laird was killed in the impact or the ensuing chaos. While trapped in the pantry, Godfried has conceived that the apocalypse has come.

He has not gone hungry while trapped here, being surrounded by food and drink. He spends the brief moments in which the monster recedes either shuddering and weeping or warily eyeing the silhouettes of the game carcasses hanging ominously above his head. The monster has managed to wrap Godfried's left leg fully in the grasp of one of its sausage-strings, rendering him largely unable to move.

Trapdoor

A trapdoor in the floor (unlocked) leads, via a ladder, to the cellar (area P).



H. Oath Hall

A hall of dark, polished wood. The walls are lined with grandiose, framed portraits. Carved, upholstered chairs are stacked along the east wall. Strands of spiralstar extrusion have broken through the windows. The Hearth-Laid, **Alhoyle Spinnewith** (see *Inhabitants of the Oath House*), stands close to the north wall, paralysed. A group of noblemen is gathered around the marble hearth in the south wall, debating stridently—these are the potraits of the deceased lairds, jumped down from their frames.

The Deceased Lairds

The portraits of the deceased lairds, come to life, are now gathered around the hearth, feeding the blaze with furniture. They are engaged in lively debate:

- ▶ The current hearth-laird is a weak fool and deserves to be kept paralysed.
- ▶ That they should, as a group, visit Drigbolton and demand that those lazy rustics come and live here in the Oath House as servants. It seems that they will not be willing to take no for an answer.

Strangers who enter the room will be treated with the utmost scorn and instructed to leave the lairds in peace. Those who are impudent enough to disobey will quickly enrage the lairds to violence. Appeals to authority and the lairds' noble beneficence may make them more cooperative.

Deceased Lairds (12): HD 2, AC 9, Att: 1 × 1d6 (brandished chair legs), Ml 10, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 50. Though they look human, the deceased Lairds are made from animated canvas and oil paint. When damaged, this becomes apparent—wounds show as rips in the canvas and blood drops of red paint. If killed, or 24 hours after leaving the vicinity of the spiralstar concrescence, the Lairds collapse into non-living, two-dimensional scraps of canvas.

Alhoyle Spinnewith

The current hearth-laird, **Alhoyle Spinnewith IV** (see *Inhabitants of the Oath House*), stands here, paralysed by a grasping branch of the spiralstar extrusion wrapped around his right arm. He had come to this room intending to return to the secret workshop (area O) via the store (area I) to consult his notes with the hope of determining whether any kind of “unsummoning” ritual is present (it is not). He has the keys to the store and the secret workshop in his left hand.

The Portraits

The portraits along the walls depict the previous lairds of the house, going back several centuries (the names and dates of lordship of the deceased masters of the house are noted beneath the paintings). The paintings along the western wall, tangled in spiralstar extrusions, depict only an elegant room—the subjects of these portraits have become animated and have leapt out of their frames.

I. Store

A dusty chamber filled with brooms, brushes, buckets, mops, ladders, feather dusters, polish, paint, stacks of wooden chairs, table boards, piles of old linen, etc. A large, clean, red carpet conceals a trapdoor and a ladder leading down to area O.

The door to the store and the trapdoor are both locked.

J. Hall

The upper landing is covered with crystalline extrusions from the spiralstar conrescence, giving life to the stone of the walls, which is now rippling and grinding. The shards of glass from the shattered windows have coalesced into sixteen mice which march along the landing, singing sea shanties in grating voices. To the north-east, the roof and walls are destroyed, leaving a gaping hole in the manor.

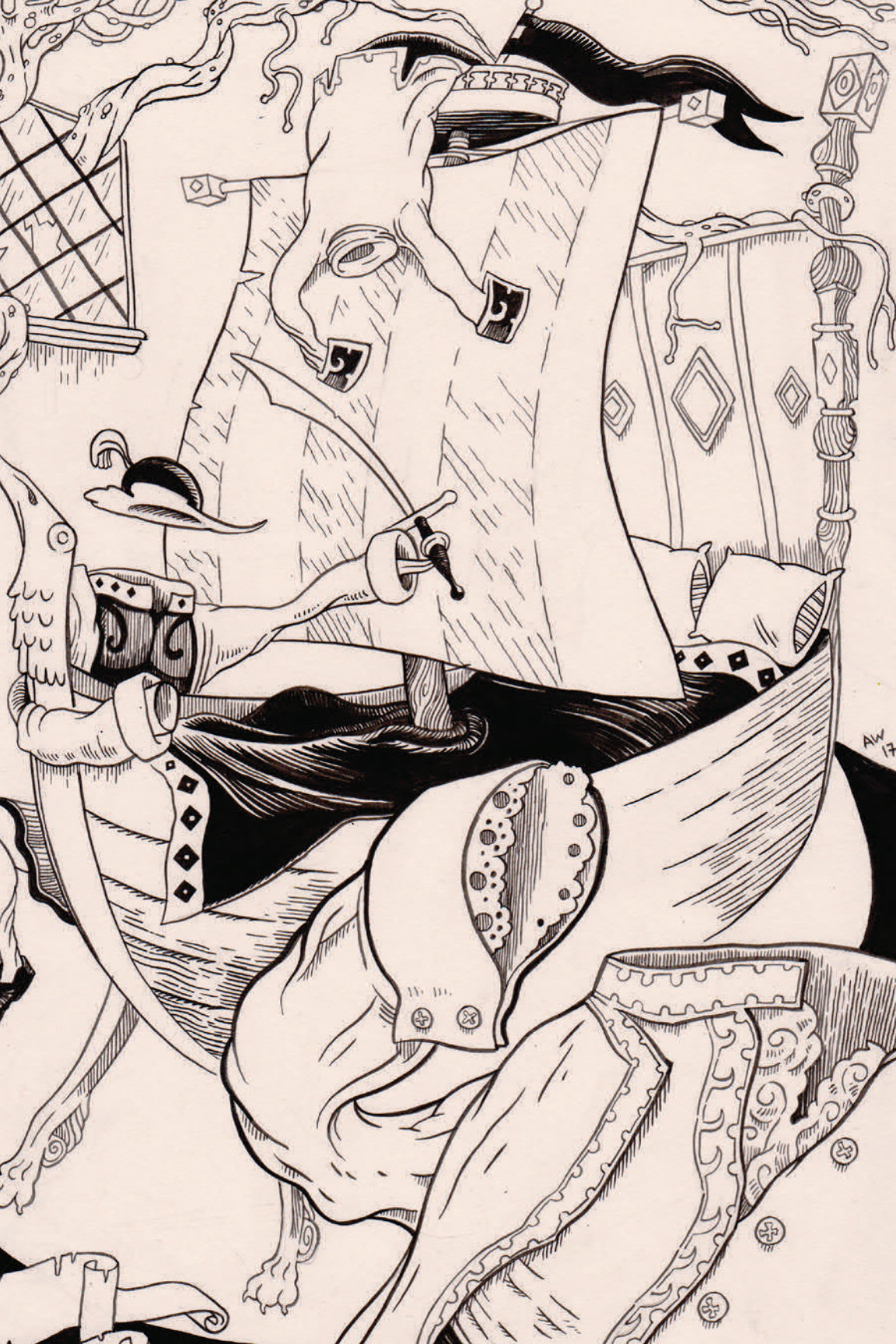
Two rooms to the north-east, including the manservant's quarters, were completely destroyed by the impact with the star-organ. The gaping hole which now exists in their place is criss-crossed with root-like spiralstar extrusions.

K. Master Bedroom

The hearth-laird's bedroom is in complete disarray, riddled with masses of spiralstar extrusions, which entirely block the southern door. The four-poster bed has transformed into the shape of a small sailing ship, standing in the centre of the room with sails fluttering in an imaginary breeze. Aboard and around it, the master's clothes, which have sprung out of the drawers and wardrobe, have taken on human-like posture, as if worn by invisible people, and are playing the roles of seamen.

Strangers will interrupt the nautical scene—the clothes pause for a moment before rushing towards the intruders, attempting to strip them of their clothing, which they intend to take hostage. Aside from stealing their clothing, the animated clothes have no interest in harming intruders, although they will use force if resisted.

Animated Clothes (8): HD 1+2, AC 8, Att: 1 × 1d4 (grappling or throttling), MI 10, Mv 120' (40'), AI N, XP 65. Grappled characters can break free by making a successful attack but take a -3 penalty to armour class and attack rolls. When a character is grappled by two of the sets of animated clothes, they are helpless, unable to attack or to resist being stripped. Bludgeoning is utterly ineffectual against the animated clothes. Fire inflicts double damage.



L. Library

The laird's private library, containing the bulk of his collection of books on esoteric matters. The shelves, desks, and bureaus also house a menagerie of taxidermically preserved animals and birds. The incursion of masses of amber spiralstar extrusions via the the windows and the door from the bedroom (area K) have caused both the books and the stuffed animals to come to life.

Taxidermied Animals

The stuffed animals (a weasel, an otter, three storks, two badgers, an impressively large bat, a red squirrel, and an eagle) have taken on the personas of learned professors, browsing the books in the library and discussing their contents in a cantankerous tone, while absent-mindedly swatting the buzzing word-insects out of the air.

If the PCs talk to the stuffed animals, they will find that they seem to know everything about them (names, histories, deepest secrets, etc) and will use this knowledge to ridicule them. The animals resent any distraction from their academic discussion and, if PCs enter the room or irritate them with conversation, they will attack by throwing books. Flattery of their supposed intellectual prowess may be enough to appease them.

Erudite Stuffed Animal (10): HD 1, AC 9, Att: 1 × 1d2 (thrown book) or 1 × 1d3 (claw / beak / bite), Ml 8, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 10.

Animated Books

The books along the western wall extend on vine-like stalks from the shelves, waving like anemones in the currents of the ocean, with their pages fanned open and fluttering. The words from the pages have taken flight and are buzzing around the room like insects.

Inanimate Books

The books in the shelves along the eastern wall, untouched by the amber extrusions, remain in their normal, inanimate state. A quick scan of the spines will reveal that they cover the following topics: astronomy, astrology, astrobiology (the study of heavenly life-forms), theology (focussed on the hierarchies of angels and the heavenly spheres), planar geometry, invocation, and stellar divination.

In total, they could be worth up to 5,000gp to a magic-user.

M. Star-Gazing Chamber

The stone walls and ceiling of this tower room are plastered with maps and charts of the cosmos. An elaborate, brass star-viewing apparatus dominates the room. Two wooden stools, a plush, frayed armchair, and a small ladder stand to one side.

Stellar Maps

The charts depict the constellations of stars, the procession of the zodiac, the movement of planets, and the paths of comets, asteroids, and meteors. The location of the star Wermuth has been circled in red on several charts.

Star-Viewing Apparatus

A brass device with an advanced telescope of semi-magical function. The apparatus is positioned so that its telescope can be thrust out of the upper window, when opened. To the untrained, use of the device is dangerous, potentially directing harmful cosmic energies into the viewer's eye at amplified intensities. A layperson untrained in the use of such machinery has a 1 in 6 chance, when viewing the night sky, of becoming accidentally blinded or driven insane (save vs spells or permanent, otherwise lasting 1d6 days). The device, if it were safely extracted from this room, may be worth up to 10,000gp, to the right buyer.

N. Guest Rooms

Simply but respectably furnished, the manservant, Godfried, maintains these rooms out of a sense of propriety. They are never used.

O. Secret Workshop

A large, sparsely furnished, vaulted cellar in which the laird stores his most precious objects and performs his most secretive work. A ladder in the north-east corner leads up to area I. A large desk and padded wooden chair are clustered at the far end. In the centre of the chamber stands a 6'-tall silver cage—the remnants of the ritual which summoned the star Wermuth. A long, dark green carpet, embroidered with hexagonal patterns in yellow, is spread along the centre of the floor.

The Summoning Ritual

The ritual required a hexagonal cage of silver filigree, bars wound with the intestines of nightingales, festooned with a hundred miniature stellar maps engraved on electrum discs, and trapped within its confines a mirror which reflects only darkness.

The Desk

Three wrought-iron braziers stand beside the desk. Dozens of candles (and the melted remains of hundreds more) are perched upon them.

Upon the desk are quill and ink and several stacks of books containing musings on the deep secrets of the cosmos, including:

☞ *The Black Book of Llareggub*, author unknown (value 2,500gp). A suppressed work describing, among many other demonic summonings, the ritual for bringing Wermuth to earth. The ritual is described in an elaborate yet elusive manner—nowhere stating what the exact effects of bringing a star to earth will be.

☞ *Encyclopaedia of Stellar Anatomy* by Calcidius the Stargazer (value 1,000gp). A six-volume work describing the physical makeup of stellar bodies, listing the various organs and anatomical systems. The books' contents are of somewhat dubious authenticity—the actual source of the information is not stated—but the descriptions and diagrams are enough to identify the three fragments of the star Wermuth which broke away on its descent to earth.

☞ An untitled book bound in plush red velvet. A silver spoon lays on the table alongside it. The book has 50 pages, the first 40 of which bear illustrations of butterflies. The quality and realism of the illustrations is remarkable. The book is magical—if a small object (less than 1' across) is touched to an empty page, it will be absorbed into the page and become an illustration. Touching an illustration with silver causes it to return to life.

☞ Two scrolls housed in a carved wooden jewellery box. One bears the spell *contact outer plane*, the other *continual light*.

☞ An unbound collection of several hundred parchment pages, gathered in a black leather portfolio, chronicling the life's work of the laird of Oath House—a rambling history of research and self-enlightenment, bringing together astronomy, astrology, and demonology in a way that is certainly blasphemous. Studying these notes, it is clear that Spinnewith mistook the ritual for the summoning of Wermuth as having metaphorical, not literal, effect.

P. Cellar

Casks of ale, wine, and brandy are stored here alongside crocks of fermenting cabbage, apples, and fish.

A search by one knowledgeable in wines may reveal six bottles of especially fine vintage, worth 25gp each.

4. Nob's Spinney

A small stretch of woodland to the north and west of Drigbolton. Near its north-eastern bowers, the star-fragment named (in the obscure lore of stellar anatomy) the *greater warp-dome* crashed. The briars have grown here in response to the warp-dome's presence, forming a dense shield around it and the large chunk of star-metal which has also fallen here.

The spinney is currently a holding of the hamlet of Drigbolton. The trees and undergrowth are conducive to game and the area now serves as a common hunting grounds.

The Bramble Shield

The curious briars and squat pines of the Spinney bend toward the warp-dome at an unnatural rate, looping green, new-grown tendrils in tight spirals across its crispy, invisible shell. The trees and plants here have been awakened by contact with the warp-dome's ambience and will use their quickened roots, branches, and tendrils to prevent any red-blooded creatures from getting within twenty-five yards of the fragment.

A large chunk of star-metal (worth 2,000gp, see p57) lies tangled amid the brambles.

Animated Brambles: HD 8 (30hp), AC 8, Att: 8×1d4 (scratching tendrils), Ml 12, Mv 0, Al N, XP 1,060. Fire inflicts double damage.

The Greater Warp-Dome

This effectuant is not visible without magical aid but may be identified by the tactile film of white noise that coats its unseen surface. Pulsations of pale, greenish-yellow light occasionally burble forth from its hidden interior, casting a queer illumination among the Spinney. Characters with the capacity or magic to perceive the invisible will register the warp-dome as a circular block of smooth, frozen flames about 20 yards wide that rises to about 5 yards at its center.

Greater Warp-Dome: HD 10 (40hp), AC 3, Att: none, Ml 12, Mv 60' (20' when activated, Al C, XP 3,100. The warp-dome is immune to damage from all sources except telekinetics—any spell that allows the caster to injure or otherwise tear apart objects with his mind will be effective against it. If destroyed, the thing will dissolve into a sulfuric vapour, causing 3d6 damage to any unfortunate enough to breathe it in.

Touching the Dome with Metal

Any contact with conductive metal will cause the surface of the warp-dome to squeal as though in pain. The sound rises to a deafening wail before the whole area is enveloped in an artificial silence (100-yard radius) that last 2d6 turns. Within this soundless, spherical area, gravity will temporarily give way, causing dust and detritus from the Spinney's floor to slowly rise into a dun-coloured cloud. Trees and plants will discover a new level of pliability and begin undulating their branches and tendrils in an unearthly pavane. Characters within the area of effect will find themselves unable to resist drifting upward through the pines—they have a 2-in-6 chance of grabbing hold of a branch to avoid losing touch with the ground entirely. Failing this, they will float above the Spinney's canopy like stray petals in a birdbath. These effects terminate as soon as the silence subsides. Characters with no handhold to a tree will take 2d12 points of damage from the sudden fall (the referee may allow a DEX check here for half damage). Characters with a handhold must check their DEX or take 1d12 points of damage.

Climbing Upon the Dome

Any attempt to walk or climb upon the warp-dome will rouse it from its reveries. It will rise in defiance of gravity and attempt to shake the characters off (possibly 1d12 damage from the fall here). Once free of all unwanted passengers, the warp-dome will begin floating toward the site of the crater (area 1), heedless of any obstacles in its path. It effortlessly cuts through trees and rocks alike, hovering just a few feet above the forest floor at a rate of 60' per turn. Any hillocks in its path will be tunneled and water crossing the warp-dome's way will permanently cease to flow in that space, creating odd hollows in ponds and streams.

Happenings at the Spinney

The presence of the warp-dome causes little disturbance to the earthly environment, aside from the quickened growth and curious tanglement of the brambles in which it crashed. The only other event which occurs in this area is as follows:

Third day, the warp-dome flies away: If not interfered with by adventurers, the warp-dome will be disturbed by an unwitting animal and begin floating of its own accord toward the crater, arriving in the dead of night.

5. Bolton Bog

Stagnant pools, tangled reed-beds, sluggish rivulets, and sodden pathways dominate this tract of seldom-trod land. Crumbled remains of walls, shells of old cottages, straggling stands of once-coppiced trees, and hints of old roadways all indicate that the area was once inhabited. Half-submerged in the slime of the bog, propped against the decrepit remnants of an old barn, lies an entity alien and brazen: a part of the fallen star, known technically as the *psychometric lobe*. Chunks of star-metal are scattered around the ruins.

The Psychometric Lobe

The lobe takes a form reminiscent of three semi-developed, gargantuan (15' tall) human foetuses, joined at the back, with arms and legs flailing ineffectually. Rippling in waves across the being's form are a wondrous array of colours, some mundane to earth and others of cosmic origin, never seen by mortal eyes. The eyes of the entity's three bulbous heads are dome-like and blind, covered with puffy, oozing skin. The three mouths—perfectly circular orifices which expand and contract apparently without muscle or joint—are at turns whimpering, wailing, babbling, and gurgling.

Psychometric Lobe: HD 10 (42hp), AC 5, Att: 3×1d10 (flailing limbs), Ml 10, Mv 10' (3'), Al C, XP 3,100. The lobe is immune to damage by non-magical weapons and, if targeted by harmful spells, has a 50% chance of reflecting them back upon the caster. Apart from the various unusual effects it has on its environment (see adjacent page), the lobe is essentially passive. It will defend itself if attacked, but does not deliberately harm those who approach it. Psychic contact with the lobe has a 50% chance of stilling its babbling for 1d6 minutes.

Chunks of Star-Metal

Amid the ruins of the old barn can be found five chunks of star-metal, worth 400gp each (see p57). There is a **50% chance of something sniffing around in the barn**. (Roll on the weird encounter tables.)

Happenings at the Bog

The lobe's presence here disrupts the normal order of things, causing a variety of effects and happenings, intensifying over time, as follows.

First day, babbling madness: The star-gibberish of the mouths, although it at first seems merely nonsensical and at times aggravating (depending on its volume), works its way into the hearts of those who hear it. After ten minutes, animals are compelled to join the cacophony—wailing, howling, mewling, neighing, and so forth, after their art, but all with lunatic vigour. After a like period, humans must save versus spells or be similarly affected, entering a state of holy madness akin to the glossolalia reported of saints. Magical curatives such as *bless* or *protection from evil* nullify the state, but it is otherwise permanent.

Second day, vagrant colours: During the hours of sunlight, the lobe's presence disrupts the collusion between living matter and colour. Any creature approaching within 60' of the lobe must save versus magic. Failure indicates that a colour is stripped away from the creature's body (or clothing / possessions, in the case of people). If multiple colours are present on the creature, the most vibrant is stripped. The disconnected colour gains a life of its own (see *Vagrant Colours*, overleaf) and is replaced on the "parent" creature by sheer black. Naturally, creatures which are already utterly colourless (i.e. black) are untouched by this effect. By the evening, 1d6 vagrant colours of random hue drift here.

Third day, colour projection: The lobe's pulsing colour variations intensify. At night, the shifting glow is now visible from a distance of half a mile away. At closer range, the lobe can be seen to emit periodic beams of pure colour, like searchlights going out into the night. These beams are, however, more than just normal light—their cosmic origin entails strange interactions with earthly matter, permanently colouring whatever they come into contact with. Characters coming within 60' of the lobe have a 1 in 6 chance of being hit by one of the light beams.

Additionally, by this point in time, 2d6 vagrant colours mill around the lobe.

Fourth day, enthrallment: The gibbering song of the lobe takes on a new character, rising in pitch and feverishness. This new song has an enthralling effect on animals within hearing, drawing them towards the lobe. Over the course of this day, an unlikely menagerie of insects, birds, and beasts gather to the lobe, buzzing, flying, and careening drunk-like around it.

The alien energies of the lobe have also come into contact with enough earth life now that it is surrounded at all times by a cloud of 3d6 vagrant colours.

Fifth day, the lobe is carried off: On the night of the fifth day, the lobe has gathered a sufficient throng of enthralled beasts to it that it is able to psychically command them to lift it out of the slime of the bog and carry it on their collective backs southwards to the crater where the main bulk of the star rests. By dawn, the lobe is reunited with Wermuth.

Vagrant Colours

Stripped colours have a 50% chance of turning on their progenitor and a 50% chance of drifting off on their own, getting lost in the surrounding area. The psychometric lobe also attracts a certain number to itself.

Vagrant Colours: HD 1, AC 5, Att: 1×special (envelope, effects depend on hue—see below), MI 9, Mv 90' (30'), AI N, XP 16. Vagrant colours are utterly mindless and tend to drift around the psychometric lobe and the surrounding area. They are non-hostile, but will defend themselves or the lobe, if threatened. Colours can be dissipated (damaged) by normal weapons but, unless the attack roll was a natural 20, they suffer only a single point of damage on a successful attack. Magic does normal damage.

Effects of Attacks by Hue

- ▶ **Red or Orange:** The character's brain begins to heat up. At first, only a barely perceptible, pleasant warmth is noticed. After 24 hours, the heat becomes definitely noticeable. After 48 hours, it starts becoming unpleasant. Each subsequent morning, the character suffers 2d6 damage from brain burn (a roll of less than their INT score on 1d20 reduces the damage to half).
- ▶ **Yellow:** 1d6 psychic damage. The character must save versus spells or involuntarily emit a telepathic projection of his or her deepest secret to all beings within 60'.
- ▶ **Green:** Two randomly selected ability scores are swapped, with corresponding physical and/or mental changes in the character.
- ▶ **Blue or Purple:** Two randomly selected body appendages swap places.
- ▶ **Pink:** 1d6 blistering heat damage. If not magically healed within a few hours, the blisters pop and reveal 1d3 small, pink eyes. The character is plagued by the feeling that these eyes are watching him or her.
- ▶ **White:** 1d6 searing damage. The character's bones emit a pulse of white light once a second, illuminating the flesh and internal organs.
- ▶ **Grey:** Chills cause 1d4 damage and a -1 penalty to attacks and AC in the subsequent round. The character must also save versus spells or lose the ability to sleep. If not remedied, in the long-term this condition will lead to insanity and eventually death.
- ▶ **Brown:** Body extremities turn to jelly. Subsequent hits jellify whole limbs and eventually the head.

All long-term effects of colour attacks can be negated with *dispel magic* (temporarily) or *remove curse* (permanently).



6. Shrine to St. Craven

On the largely abandoned road south out of Drigbolton, just past the worryingly decrepit stone bridge over Cuspin Creek, stands a lonely wayside shrine dedicated to the patron saint of infant martyrdom, incontinence, and idle hands. The graven image of the saint is now smeared with pink star-jelly and the wood-tiled roof bedecked with gaudy strips of rainbow-hued cloth.

Previously only visited upon feast days, the shrine has seen newfound popularity since the fall of Wermuth, due to its location on the route from the hamlet to the jelly-filled crater on the moor. In the daytime, there is a 3-in-6 chance of encountering **1d4 villagers** frenziedly worshipping at the shrine or making their way along the road to or from the crater.

7. The Pike Pond

A favoured haunt of the men of Drigbolton, this small lake is unusually rich with plump fish. Anyone with an ounce of skill as an angler can return home from the pond with a hearty catch. Its name reflects the fact that this abundance makes it a perfect home for predatory pike, which also swim here in great numbers.

The Spirit of Springtime

The men of Drigbolton are especially dedicated fishermen in the months of spring (3-in-6 chance of **1d4 anglers** present), when the wooded banks on the western side of the lake are haunted by a female spirit of amorous persuasion, whom they know only as Willow (though none know if this is her true name, and she claims no name for herself). Willow is a water nymph of sorts, her spirit bound to the gentle reeds and placid waters of the lake. She only manifests a form which may be seen by mortal eyes—that of a lithe, grey-haired, silver-eyed maid, tall as a knight and supple as a willow branch—in the springtime, when she requires the seed of human men to fertilise her brood. Local men are more than happy to aid her in this pursuit. The men, for obvious reasons, keep Willow's presence well-guarded from the ears of the womenfolk of the hamlet.

Fish from the Pond

What the men of Drigbolton do not, however, understand is that the bountiful fish of the lake are Willow's (and thus their own) offspring, spawned in the summer when she returns to her watery form. Anyone knowledgeable in matters of anatomy who happens to examine the insides of a fish caught in this lake will immediately realise that their internal biology is definitively non-piscine, indeed it is distinctly human.

8. Dobbin's Mere

A rough trail follows the eastern bank of Cuspin Creek north-east out of Drigbolton and, after roughly two miles, reaches the wide, shallow, reed-choked lake known to the locals as Dobbin's Mere. Close to the northern edge of the lake stands an antlered statue of great antiquity. This area is shunned by the folk of Drigbolton, who regard the lake as accursed.

Statue of the Antlered God

Between the influx of the two unnamed streams stands a curious stone statue of great antiquity, depicting a 10' tall, robed, man-like figure with the head and antlers of a stag, its left hand raised in a gesture of greeting or benediction and its right hand clutching a human skull. It is now submerged up to its knees in the bog, waist-high among swaying reeds. It is a relic of times long past, when a stag-headed god named Howawi was worshipped by the people of the bog. The folk of Drigbolton know something of the history of this statue (see *Talk of the Town*), although few have seen it directly. They associate it with the myth of the wolf-stag monster Crooked Dobbin, whence the mere's name comes.

Happenings at the Mere

The presence of an especially large chunk of star-metal, fallen into the mere, (worth 2,000gp, see p57) interacts with the latent psychic energies in this place, bringing about a series of unusual events, as follows.

First day, the statue moves: It appears to change posture slightly. If observed from different angles, its head always seems to be leaning towards the viewer.

Second day, the statue hovers: The statue by the mere rises out of the mud and floats above the surface of the water in the centre of the lake.

Third day, flickering lights: At night, the statue's antlers and eyes flicker with prismatic light.

Fourth day, the lake boils: 1d4 damage per round of immersion.

Fifth day, visions of the hunt: Beneath the roiling surface of the lake, eerie scenes of stags hunting wolves and wolves hunting stags can be seen.

Sixth day, call of the statue: Anyone gazing upon the statue of the stag-god feels its primal spirit calling out to them. Save versus magic or wade into the water to join it. The boiling water does 1d4 damage per round of immersion.

Seventh day, wolf-stags abroad: At night, the spirit of Howawi manifests in the form of 2d4 wolf-stags, which roam the bog and the surrounding moor, eyes, fangs, and antlers blazing with white fire.

Wolf-Stags: HD 3+1, AC 8, Att: 2×1d6 (bite / antler gore), Ml 10, Mv 120' (40'), Al C, XP 65.



9. Crossroads

At the site of an ill-looking tree, the Cart Way splits. One road heads uphill and to the east where a bone-white cliff face can be seen. The other continues downhill and southward, along the outer eaves of Dolmenwood. A grey milestone, dappled with old blood and birdshit, stands hip-high near the base of the tree, precisely beneath a rotting noose suspended from its thickest bough. The weathered etchings on the stone indicate that Drigbolton lies about two miles down the southern road.

If the players examine the area they'll find a field of shallow, unmarked graves about fifty feet north of the crossroads. Some have been partially unearthed and human bone fragments can be found in their vicinity. Others have half-sunk into the ground. None of the graves contain anything of value. None of them appear fresh.

10. Chalk Cliffs

The road here winds along a ridge of land, hugging the face of a tall line of chalk cliffs which loom above the moorlands to the south. The folk of the region have, over many centuries, carved notices, warnings, psalms, icons, shrines, and idols into the chalk.

Close to the western end of the cliffs, a narrow, unmarked cart track leaves the road and winds up into the hills above, passing along a cleft in the chalk. The path leads to the Oath House (area 3).

11. Clooney Caves

A wide incision in the side of a hill exposes a chalk-face in which a large cave is found. A fire pit at the cave's mouth indicates that it is sometimes used for shelter by travellers along the road. Three deep clefts at the rear of the cave lead into a network of winding caves. A toothless human skull, marked in red with a crucifix, has been placed at the mouth of each cleft.

These caves are feared by local people. The skulls are a warning against devilry. The veracity of the locals' belief in the imp-like "clooneys" which dwell here (see *Talk of the Town*, in area 1) is left for the referee to decide.

Random Happenings

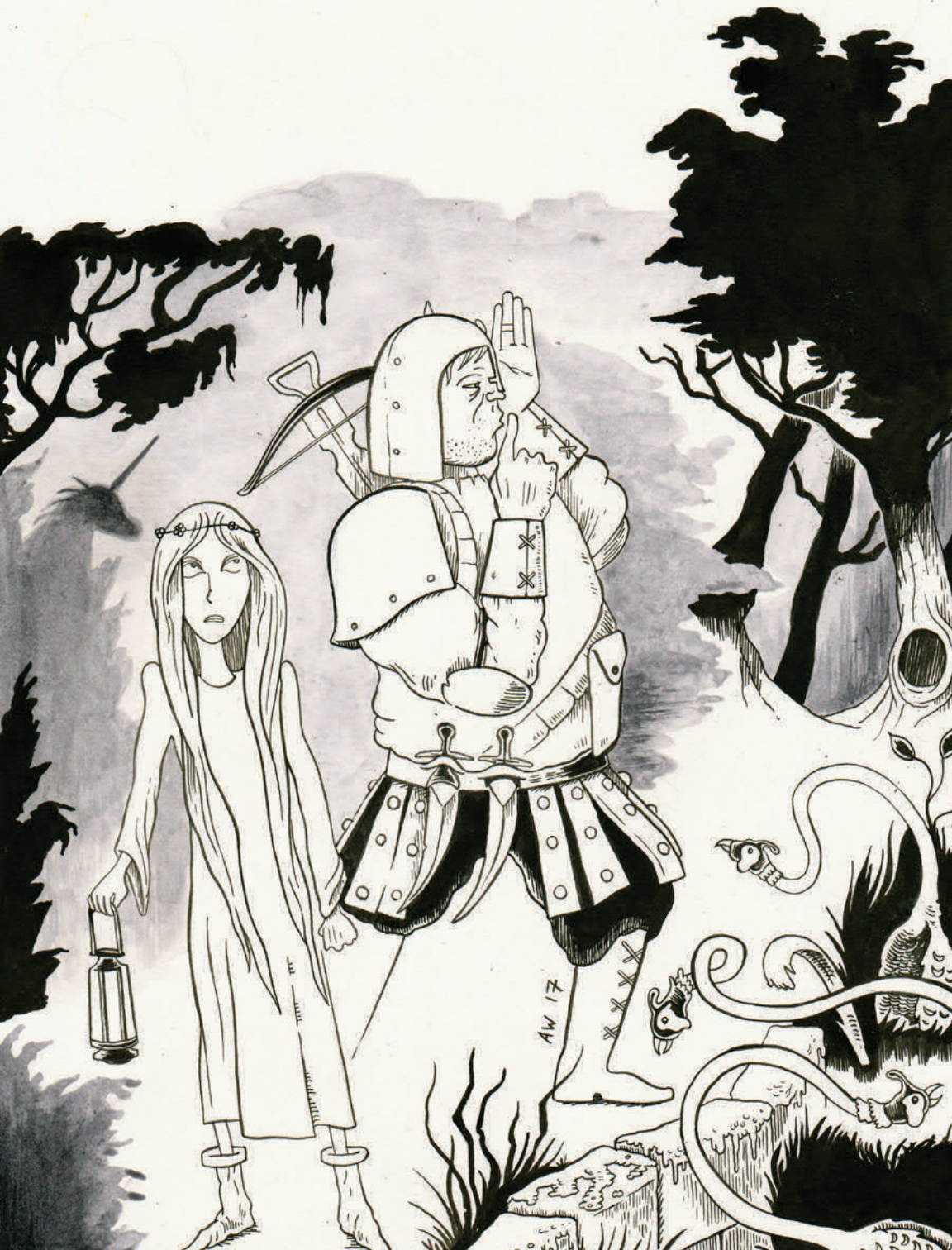
Every hour of roaming through the area (or as the referee wishes), roll 1d20 and 1d8 to determine whether an event of some kind occurs. Interpret the result of the d20 as follows (the d8 is also used in some circumstances):

- ▶ **1-8 = Encounter.** The d20 result indicates the entry on the encounter table. The d8 result determines which encounter table to consult: if it comes up greater than the number of days since the PCs' arrival, read the encounter details from the "mundane" chart (day or night). Otherwise, read from the "weird" chart. (Thus, as the PCs spend more days in the region, the likelihood of "weird" encounters increases.)
- ▶ **9-11 = Environmental effect.** The d8 determines the nature of the event.
- ▶ **12-15 = Star-metal cache.** The d8 determines the nature of the cache.
- ▶ **16+ = No event.**

Tables of encounters and star-metal caches are found on the following pages.

Environmental Effects

1. A thunderous cracking and booming is heard in the sky, despite the complete lack of any stormclouds.
2. A highly localised (100 yard radius) purple rain descends upon the area where the PCs are standing. It has the same bittersweet flavour as the star-jelly in the crater (see area 2).
3. The ground beneath the party trembles for 1d3 minutes. During these tremors, all ambulatory entities begin to blink back and forth, disappearing and reappearing in rapid succession.
4. For 1d2 minutes, the air behaves like water. Anything not attached to the ground will begin drifting freely. The effect ends abruptly, dropping characters out of the air (2d6 damage). Characters who successfully save vs spells take half damage from the sudden fall.
5. Warty black nodules the size of pumpkins erupt from the ground at random. When touched they emit a fragrance like offal in the sun.
6. The sky is filled with laughter. The apparent source is the sun or the moon.
7. A silvery mist rises from the earth in the PCs' vicinity. It takes on the form of capricious shadow-demons, who drift into the sky.
8. The air rapidly cools until it reaches freezing point (after 1d6 minutes). A pinkish hoar-frost coalesces on non-living objects (including clothing). The frost persists for ten minutes, before the temperature returns to normal.



Encounters: Mundane, Day

1. Human Pilgrims (1d6)—headed to the Shrine of St. Craven (area 6).

An underfed religious fanatic who will flee at the first signs of danger. He or she carries little of value—worry beads; a bronze medallion featuring the stern, bearded face of Craven the Incontinent; a bag of roasted tree-nuts.

HD 1, AC 9, Att: 1×1d4 (walking staff), Ml 6, Mv 120' (40'), Al L, XP 10.

2. Human Troubadour (1)—seeking the moss dwarf peddlers who duped him with an utterly ineffectual salve.

A member of a coterie of unemployed lutists who call themselves “the Violet Mist”. His leathers are studded and reveal a preponderance of wooly, auburn chest hair. His lute is of the finest quality and highly stylized. In courtly fashion, his face is heavily powdered and greased with garish colours. He carries no money but he does possess 1d6 partially consumed bottles of wine and spirits.

HD 1, AC 8, Att: 1×1d4 (cudger or dagger), Ml 7, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 10.

3. Moss Dwarf Peddlers (1d3)—drunken, lost and delirious.

A grotesque, mouldy manling (3 ft. tall) with a massive pack of goods strapped to his back. He can undersell the most generous of vendors when it comes to mundane goods (he carries locks, waterskins, knives, and blankets), but his magical salves are horribly overpriced: healing (150gp), sexual “enhancement” (75gp), fairy repellent (50gp). (All have a 2-in-6 chance of being ineffectual.) If supplied with tipple, he will be willing to negotiate.

HD 1, AC 8, Att: 1×1d6 (knobbly staff), Ml 8, Mv 60' (20') (90' (30') without goods), Al N, XP 10.

4. Drune (1) and Lackeys (1d6)—investigating goings on in the area.

Drune

A moody, cloaked member of the occult brotherhood, carrying a suspiciously gnarly staff and bearing a pentagram sigil upon his breast. The Drune are taking a very keen interest in the fall of the star and the resulting cosmic debris and seek to use any information, items, or entities for their own ends.

HD 5, AC 6 (charms), Att: 1×1d12 (staff of greenflame) or spells, Ml 9, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 500. Spells: *sleep, charm person, finger of death, hold person*.

Drune Lackey

A local man or woman under a Drune mind-bondage spell. An odd, snarling expression is on his or her face and a malicious glint in the eye.

HD 1, AC 7, Att: 1×1d6 (shortsword), Ml 8, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 10.

5. *Human Maiden (1) and Unicorn Huntsmen (1d4)*—following tracks.

Maiden

A slim girl of perhaps sixteen years, carrying an unlit lantern and wearing a crown of twined field flowers. She has nothing of value aside from her doe-skin boots. The maiden and her innocence are a lure for unicorns, who will be drawn to her like moths to a flame should they get a snort of her sweetness.

HD 1, AC 9, Att: none, Ml 6, Mv 120' (40'), Al L, XP 10.

Unicorn Huntsman

A man in leather harness who carries a crossbow, ammunition, and a short sword. He will consider any conversation a distraction from his purpose. If queried, the huntsman will claim to have slain no less than thirty-five unicorns and will flash the ivory rings of unicorn horn he wears on his left hand as proof.

HD 2, AC 7, Att: 1×1d6 (crossbow or shortsword), Ml 9, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 20.

6. *Human Soldiers (1d6)*—deserters fleeing battle.

A man or woman in armour bearing the sigil of Duke Brackenwold. He or she has fled a great battle that may still be happening even now some distance away. The soldier may (50%) attempt to confiscate a mount and/or provisions from the PCs in the name of his/her liege-lord.

HD 1, AC 7, Att: 1×1d8 (longsword or pike), Ml 7, Mv 120' (40'), Al L, XP 10.

7. *Human Friar (1)*—eating a meal by a tree.

A bone-thin man with a shaven head and a well-oiled and maintained beard of jet-black curls. He is on a dream-quest to locate the (possibly mythical) under-shrine of Saint Toade. It is clear from his disordered babble that he is hallucinating, possibly insane, and definitely under the influence of the gritty-looking beverage that can be seen in his satchel (the drug *celestial*, see *Wormskin 2*).

HD 1, AC 8, Att: 1×1d4 (walking staff), Ml 7, Mv 120' (40'), Al L, XP 10.

8. *Human Knight-Errants (1d3)*—searching for a group of deserters.

A petty noble in the service of Duke Brackenwold. He/she is in search of deserters who fled the scene of a great battle and has been given permission to execute them on sight for their cowardice and treachery. The knight-errant wears half-plate and carries a great spear and long sword. He/she rides a well-trained mount with all the barding and accoutrements of a horse who has been part of a dispute between lords.

HD 2, AC 4, Att: 1 × 1d8 (longsword) or 1 × 1d6 (spear), Ml 9, Mv 120' (40') (mounted, 90' (30') on foot), Al L, XP 20.

Encounters: Mundane, Night

1. Pack Dogs (1d6)—ill-looking.

A wild creature given to hunting at night in small groups. Larger than a fox, but smaller than a wolf.

HD 1, AC 9, Att: 1×1d4 (bite), Ml 7, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 10.

2. Black Bear (1)—caught in a trap.

A normal, adult male bear. This one has one of its hind legs caught in a vicious-looking trap. This trap is chained to an ancient larch. The bear considers anything approaching it a threat and will fight to the best of its ability.

HD 4, AC 9, Att: 2×1d4 (claws) + 1×1d8 (bite), Ml 8, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 80.

3. Stinging Glowfly Swarm (1)—flying erratically.

A swarm of tens-of-thousands of tiny, glowing insects. They use their natural illumination to mesmerize larger animals, flying in a ring-pattern, growing faster and brighter until the prey is entranced. The swarm will then alight on the creature's unflinching body, impale it with their jagged proboscises, and slurp away at the vital fluids. When the target regains its senses, it has been drained of 90% of its HP and is covered with painful blemishes that take 2d3 weeks to heal. In this time, it will not be the target of further glowfly assaults.

HD 4, AC n/a, Att: none, Ml 8, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 190. The swarm cannot be damaged by normal weapons. Fire deals 1 point of damage. Area effects such as *fireballs* deal full damage. The swarm can surround creatures in a 10' diameter area. Surrounded characters must save versus spells (with a +4 bonus) or become entranced for 1d6 hours.

4. Human Waif (1)—starving and lost.

A wretched maiden who has abandoned her home, possibly due to mistreatment by a jealous stepmother. She is very comely and unused to hardship. It is likely that someone wants her dead and will pay a goodly amount of coin for her. If taken in—regardless of how she is treated—the waif will attempt to make off in the night with any food or weapons she can steal.

HD 1, AC 9, Att: none, Ml 7, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 10.

5. Awakened Fox (1)—mocking any whom it encounters.

This creature's command of Woldish is impressive, though it seems to use this ability only to sling insults and sarcasm at humans it encounters. The fox will stick to just outside the range of the party's light sources and pretend to be a ghost until its true nature is ascertained.

HD 1, AC 3 (nimble), Att: 1×1d4 (bite), Ml 8, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 10.

6. *Human Anchorite (1)*—talking to the trees.

A dirty codger clothed in loose-fitting hides and skins, carrying a broken handaxe. He curses the air and shakes his balled fist at the trees, referring to them each individually by proper name and reciting lists of (one assumes) their crimes against him. The anchorite will not speak with any humans he encounters, at most telling a particular tree to tell the player characters to take a hike.

HD 1, AC 9, Att: 1×1d3 (tree branch), Ml 9, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 10.

7. *Drune (1) and Bramblings (2d4)*—collecting star-metal.

Drune

A moody, cloaked member of the occult brotherhood, carrying a suspiciously gnarly staff and bearing a pentagram sigil upon his breast. The Drune are taking a very keen interest in the fall of the star and the resulting cosmic debris and seek to use any information, items, or entities for their own ends.

HD 5, AC 6 (charms), Att: 1×1d12 (staff of greenflame) or spells, Ml 9, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 500. Spells: sleep, charm person, finger of death, hold person.

Brambling

Thickets of thorny wood, animated into humanoid form by Drune magic. A green fire flickers in their vaguely formed eye sockets.

HD 2+2, AC 6, Att: 2×1d6 (bramble claws), Ml 9, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 47. If both claw attacks hit, the victim is entangled in brambles and takes 1d8 automatic damage per round, until freed.

8. *Hairy Giants (1d3)*—copulating and/or gathering roots.

Somewhat taller than a full-grown bear standing on its hind legs, hairy giants are stupid brutes. Thick, wavy tresses cover their entire body with the exception of the repulsive, three-toed feet that resemble those of a bird. Their facial features cannot be seen without sweeping aside the long hairs that conceal them. More or less herbivorous, hairy giants spend much of their time rutting with others (or creatures of close enough resemblance). At other times, they gather roots, eggs, and honey. They do not speak, but communicates in a language of eerie whistles and sighs.

HD 8, AC 7, Att: 2×1d8 (fists), Ml 8, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 1,060. A character hit by both fists in a single round will be lifted up and tossed by the giant—either at another, nearby character (an attack roll required to hit, 2d6 damage to both) or simply at a convenient boulder or tree (2d6 damage).

Encounters: Weird, Day

1. Mental Squeal (1)— disembodied psychic phenomenon, lasts 1d6 rounds.

When perceived, it signifies that certain ectoplasmic boundaries have been breached—the mental squeal being the essential spillage which has seeped through an invisible fissure in the mental landscape.

HD 2, AC 8, Att: 1×1d4 (squeal, affects all psychics in a 30' radius), Ml 9, Mv 120' (40'), Al C, XP 47. The mental squeal is non-corporeal, but may be targeted by those who can see the invisible or border ethereal. It may be harmed only by magic or blessed silver. The squeal affects characters possessed of psychic sensitivity. Victims will be stunned and incapable of defending themselves. Non-sensitives may experience a slight ache around their temples.

2. Floating Films (1d3)—drifting with purpose.

At a distance, appears to be a bit of purplish cloth floating haphazardly on the breeze. On closer examination, the substance proves only semi-material and might be construed as violet bubbles woven into a scrap of gossamer. Within 5 yards of a normal creature, the film will suddenly slide through the air like a squid venting its ink and seek to wrap itself around its victim's face (see below).

HD 1, AC 8, Att: 1×mask, Ml 7, Mv 90' (30') (or faster, depending on weather conditions), Al C, XP 16. The film can only be harmed by magic or by acidic, fermented liquids, which inflict 1d6 damage. The film's masking attack affects a victim within 5 yards. No attack roll is required, but a save vs spells will prevent the attack. Creatures "masked" by the film will be immediately ejected from their physical vessel, floating helplessly in spirit-form as their bodies dash off into the woods. Unless the film is forcibly peeled from their heads, these soulless thralls will search the area for star-metal until overcome by exhaustion.

3. Moronic Phantoms (1d6)—eager to share.

This mentally deficient undead has been disturbed from its rest and now wanders the world in a state of total disorientation. It appears as a transparent face atop a shadowy trunk. The phantom's expressions change from moment to moment as different objects in its immediate environs capture its attention. If its focus should fall upon a living creature, it will attempt to regale it with nonsensical gibberish broken by fits of sobbing and indignant screeches. Once it has latched onto a sentient audience, it will be unlikely to leave that person's side until he or she should cross the doorstep of a church or shrine. No one other than the phantom's chosen listener is able to hear or see it. It is impossible to sleep while the thing remains attached.

HD 2, AC 9, Att: none, Ml 8, Mv 120' (40'), Al N, XP 29. The phantom can only be harmed by magic. It can be turned.

4. *Woodgrues (1d6)*—hooting and cavorting.

The woodgrue is a bat-faced goblin under four feet tall, fond of darkness and revelry. Its head and chest is covered in soft, downy fur, though the rest of its body resembles that of a little man or child. Fluent in the Woldish tongue and skilled with all manner of woodwind instruments, a woodgrue tends to be a frivolous creature who finds humour in the darkest of places and subject matters. Trouble seems to compel the woodgrue from its hidey hole to gather in groups for the purpose of feasting and dancing. “When the woodgrues are celebrating, there is cause for concern”, or so the saying goes. To encounter woodgrues at such antics during the daytime hours is alarming and contradictory—an omen that any local would interpret as frightful to the nth degree.

HD 1, AC 8, Att: 1×1d4 (club or throwing dagger), Ml 8, Mv 90' (30'), Al N, XP 10.

5. *Rotting Shadows (2d6)*—festering and roiling.

Shadows detached from decent law-abiding folk (or woodland creatures) now decomposing under some odd cosmic radiation. They like nothing better than to cloy at the heels of living creatures, sucking away their delicious life energy.

HD 1, AC 4, Att: 1×1d4 STR (cloying grasp), Ml 8, Mv 90' (30') (flying), Al C, XP 16. Rotting shadows may only be damaged by magic, silver, or fire.

6. *Roaming Roots (1d6)*—slithering across the ground.

A cluster of roots from a normal tree gone rogue, ripped up out of the ground in search of star-metal. It is not averse to strangling any red-blooded creatures which cross its path.

HD 1, AC 8, Att: 1×1d4 (entangle), Ml 9, Mv 90' (30'), Al C, XP 10.

7. *Flitter-Bobs (2d6)*—fleeing from a squealing psychic phenomenon.

A diminutive fairy-creature that resembles a man (1' tall) with a long, curled tail of fluffy wool. Its skin is (1d6: 1-blue, 2-brown, 3-green, 4-mauve, 5-pale yellow, 6-pitch black). 1-in-20 exhibit ram-like horns. Flitter-bobs are feared for their magical abilities, but their repertoire is limited to *sleep*, *charm person*, and *power word: kill*. Each fairy can cast one of these spells per day. Horned flitter-bobs can cast two and are likely to know another spell of the referee's choosing.

HD 1d4 hp, AC 6, Att: 1×spell, Ml 6, Mv 90' (30') (flying), Al C, XP 6.

8. *Vagrant Colours (1d6)*— see description in area 5.

Encounters: Weird, Night

1. Flying Gelatinous Insect Swarm (1)—drifting like a vapour.

A swarm of normal, flying insects—such as ants, bees, wasps, or flies—which have alighted and fed on the jelly surrounding the crashed core of the star. The star-stuff has caused the insects' bodies to swell and distend, spreading thin so as to be almost ethereal. Their eyes and antennae are become like human eyes and hands. Their mouth parts are become squealing proboscises dripping acid. Their lust after star-metal leads them to be blindly attracted to metals of any kind.

HD 6, AC 7, Att: 6×1d4 (acid proboscises), Ml 9, Mv 120' (40') (flying), Al C, XP 570. The swarm can make six attacks per round against individuals within a 20' radius area. Mundane weapons inflict half damage.

2. Snake-Necked Birds (1d3)—tasting the night air.

This creature could be of any variety of bird common to the region. The consumption of several pounds of star-jelly has caused the bird's neck to sprout from its breast like a vine (6+1d3 ft. long) and now undulates back and forth as though it is an entranced cobra. The creature flies above the treetops in long arcs, producing an intermittent, low shriek that will paralyze any creature for 1d3 rounds that fails a save vs spells.

HD 1, AC 8, Att: 1×1d4 (beak) or screech (see above), Ml 8, Mv 120' (40') (flying), Al C, XP 13.

3. Ambulatory Fungi (1d6)—scouring the ground.

A fly agaric, amethyst deceiver, or puffball, grown swollen and giant (4' tall) under the influence of the star Wermuth. The fungus moves around on a scrabbling, distended skirt of mycelia, scouring the earth with an unsettling, stop-motion rapidity. A thousand spindly antennae atop the fungus' crown bear a variety of otherworldly sensory apparatus: tiny eyes, fans for detecting ethereal wafts, psychic ears, and anti-matter mouths. These organs guide the fungus on a seemingly random path. It resents any disturbance.

HD 2+2, AC 7, Att: 1×1d4 (tearing mycelia) or spore puff, Ml 9, Mv 120' (40'), Al C, XP 47. The spore puff (may be released once per combat) affects all within 20', who must save versus poison or suffer 1d6 damage for five rounds.

4. Exploded Dogs (1d6)—gurgling and bleating.

This creature has consumed several pounds of star-jelly and has been subsequently metamorphosed. A seam along the dog's sternum has opened and an array of slick, liver-like pseudopods have spilled forth. The spine of the animal has been rotated, so that the creature's legs point skyward. The liver-pseudopods are instead now used for transportation. Organs resembling the lush antennae of moths burst from the dog's slack mouth and crane this way and that to sense odours carried on the breeze. Exploded dogs will not attack the party until threatened or otherwise obstructed from their artificial compulsion to search for bits of star-metal. [*Referee's Note: For added effect, consider allowing this bizarre doom to befall the party's favourite and most devoted hound and appreciate the resulting horror.*]

HD 1, AC 9, Att: 1×1d6 (bite), Ml 9, Mv 120' (40'), Al C, XP 10.

5. Eye-Bats (2d6)—staring quizzically.

This normal bat has consumed at least a pound of star-jelly and is now irrevocably transformed. After several hours of bloat and festering, its tiny eye-sockets have exploded into new, stalk-like organs. These members end in pearlescent orbs that the eye-bat can use to sense heat and coldness with precision and from a great distance.

HD 1d4 hp, AC 6, Att: none, Ml 7, Mv 120' (40') (flying), Al C, XP 5.

6. Roaming Roots (1d8)—twitching in staccato rhythm.

A cluster of roots from a normal tree gone rogue, ripped up out of the ground and waving in the starlight. It will spring on any red-blooded creatures which come near, going for the throat.

HD 1, AC 8, Att: 1×1d4 (strangle), Ml 9, Mv 90' (30'), Al C, XP 10.

7. Sleepwalkers (1d6)—moving like zombies.

A peasant from Drigbolton or one of the scattered farmsteads of the surrounding area, arisen in the hours of darkness after a nightcap of star-jelly eggnog. Like other jelly-eaters, the sleepwalker is under the subliminal control of the fallen star, causing him or her to wander the chill night air in a dressing gown, in search of star-metal. In combat, sleepwalkers are utterly defenceless. Any damage causes them to awake in bewilderment.

HD 1, AC 9, Att: none, Ml 9, Mv 90' (30'), Al N, XP 10.

8. Vagrant Colours (1d6)— see description in area 5.



Star-Metal Caches

Irregular chunks of a metallic substance akin to no earthly metal sloughed off from the surface of Wermuth as it plummeted to earth. The stuff is extremely dense and heavy (more so than gold or lead), deep black with a subtle lustre which changes hue when viewed from different angles, and reeks of sulfur.

Star-metal radiates a magical aura of mild intensity but alien to anything which most magic-users have previously encountered. The stuff has potent arcane properties, highly desirable to those who are savvy to its uses.

Each cache weighs 1d20 pounds and could be sold (to the right buyer) for 50gp per pound of weight.

As local creatures which have come into contact with the core of the star and have eaten of its gelatinous outer-shell are attracted to star-metal, there is a 50% chance of a star-struck creature sniffing around nearby, possessively (roll on the weird encounter tables).

1. A chunk of star-metal lying in a small impact crater, surrounded by scorched grass and iridescent oil.
2. Rolled in the sludge of a wayside ditch, the chunk of metal is surrounded by a bubbling, burping pool of mud.
3. Crashed through the roof of a ramshackle barn or shed, the hunk of metal lies festering and steaming inside. The owner of the building may be nearby, afraid to enter and unsure about how to proceed.
4. A hunk fallen amidst an animal enclosure (pigs, goats, sheep, cows, etc). The beasts surround it and are licking it and rolling their eyes as if moonstruck.
5. A small pool, now steaming and fizzing, conceals a chunk of the strange metal in the slime at its bottom.
6. A chunk of metal crashed into a large tree, partially charred by the impact. Smoke of unusual colours drifts from the scorched trunk. The metal is embedded in the trunk of the tree at a height of 1d6×10 feet.
7. Crashing into the remnants of an ancient, ruined building, the star-metal has roused the phantoms of the long-dead, whose gaunt, ethereal visages flit among the ruined stones.
8. A chunk of metal has fallen at the foot of an ominous obelisk or amid a ring of standing stones. Interacting with the energy of the minor ley line which the stones demarcate, the metal has become highly charged with arcane potency. It glows brightly and emits a subtle, keening drone. Removing the metal from the presence of the stone triggers a magical effect (roll 1d6): 1. *sleep*, 2. *summon monster* (an entity of 1d8 Hit Dice), 3. *confusion*, 4. *cloud-kill*, 5. *silence* (targeted on 1d6 individuals), 6. *reverse gravity*.

Further Adventures...

This is the first module in the *Dolmenwood Adventures* line and, as such, we cannot point you to a vast portfolio of sequels, prequels, and side-quests. However, it would be churlish, at this juncture, to not draw your esteemed attention towards the following things which (assuming you have enjoyed reading and/or playing this adventure) are highly likely to tickle your fancy.

Wormskin

A seasonal publication exploring the people, places, magic, and monsters of Dolmenwood. Over the whole course of the zine, the entirety of Dolmenwood will be described in great depth, including: hex descriptions, new monsters, encounter tables, PC races, new spells, guidelines and procedures for running forest adventures, plethoras of random generators, etc. The following sigil grants access to this fascinating parallel world:

rpgnow.com/browse.php?keywords=wormskin&manufacturers_id=5606

The Dolmenwood Referee's Map

Invaluable to the referee guiding forays into Dolmenwood, this high-resolution map shows the wood in glorious detail, including arcane secrets like the course of the major ley lines and the locations of things hidden from mortal sight:

rpgnow.com/product/179965/Dolmenwood-Map

The Dolmenwood Google+ Community

Those of right mind congregate here:

plus.google.com/communities/106047082723430348845

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www.goblinoidgames.com



SOMETHING FELL.

A sickly gloaming lit up the night like mock-daylight, just for a moment, and then the hills trembled.

Now, an alien entity lies brooding in a crater gouged out of the moor. Local folk are enraptured with the toothsome jelly exuded by this being, but are blind to the true nature of the events unfolding in their rustic little backwater.

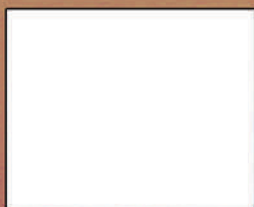
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The Weird That Befell Drigbolton is an investigative, event-based module for characters of 3rd to 5th level written by Gavin Norman and Greg Gorgonmilk and profusely illustrated by Andrew Walter with maps by Kelvin Green.

Set on the fringes of the monster-haunted forest, Dolmenwood, the hamlet of Drigbolton and the strange goings-on there can easily be placed in any weird fantasy campaign.

TWTBD is the first in a series of adventures that take place in this mysterious woodland realm. For more details, check out the **WORMSKIN** zine also available from Necrotic Gnome via RPGNow: bit.ly/2jNL4XC



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