

# The Cattle-clysm



The Cattle-clysm is a short adventure intended for low level characters. It can be played on its own or as part of an ongoing campaign for one night of fun. It can also be effortlessly integrated into *Heart of the Machine, Part I of the Lost Lexicon* adventure path, as one of the characters' missions during their time as Cogswheel Irregulars.

## INTRODUCTION

Read the following to the players:

*You and your fellow party members are agents of the Cogswheel Irregulars. You are mercenary adventurers, loosely affiliated with Urbana, Aden's infamous dictatorial technocracy. Urbana stands at the front lines of Aden's war against the Darkfall, the mysterious supernatural force that brought the world to near ruin one decade ago. Their military spends much of its time occupied with the ongoing war, and cannot spare time to deal with lesser threats and mundane crimes.*

*Fortunately for you, such problems still need fixing, and the people of Urbana are willing to pay to see them fixed. That's where the Cogswheel Irregulars come in. Though you may not necessarily hail from Urbana - or even feel any particular loyalty toward Lord Urbane and his cruel government - your path has brought you here. Perhaps you have come hoping to help the common man. Perhaps you simply need the money. Whatever your reasons, the Irregulars welcome anyone who is willing to help.*

*Today - your mission is simple. You have been dispatched to a small farm deep in the blasted wasteland of Urbana. Few farmers would dare dwell so far beyond Urbana's walled cities, but Urlav Grendle, the owner of the property, has managed to not only survive, but thrive - until now.*

### Credits

Written by: Rich Wulf

Editing: Shawn Carman & Mike Brodu

Interior Artwork: Dan Moenster

### For Kyoudai Games

Shawn Carman, Creative Department

Rich Wulf, Mechanical Design

Ryan Carman, Logistics & Development

Butch Carman, Chief Financial Officer

Mike Brodu, Graphic Design & Branding

Original Graphic Design: Robert Denton

*Farmer Grendle reports strange occurrences on his farm. Several of his cattle have been savagely mutilated and left to die. He believes this to be the prelude to a Darkfall attack, and begs the city for aid. As only livestock have died so far, the Shadow Army rates this as a fairly low priority mission - so they have passed this duty to the Irregulars.*

*It is your task to evaluate the happenings at Grendle's farm, determine who is behind it, and end the threat if possible.*

If the players ask about their compensation, just make up whatever amount you think sounds fair (perhaps 1,000 gold per player plus expenses). The Irregulars is a paying gig, after all, and despite the fact that they'll be paid after the adventure session is complete, some players just have to know what the reward is.

We join the adventure as the players arrive at Grendle's farm. However, if any of them wish to do any research or information gathering about the situation before leaving town, you can allow them to make the appropriate skill rolls - Knowledge (local) and the like - before the adventure begins in earnest. Here are a few facts you may want to toss out if they do well, or if you believe it's reasonable their characters would know such things. You may want to find reasons to hand out most of this information - "As an Urbanan soldier you've had your share of the wastelands," etc. to get everyone involved and make them feel like a part of the world.

- ❖ Due to frequent attacks by nocturnals and other minions of the Darkfall, it's rare for a farm to survive this far from any other settlements. By all reports, Grendle is doing quite well for himself and has made a small fortune selling high quality beef.
- ❖ Grendle is a goreaux, and was originally born in the capital city of Mekanus (though it was called Tarello at that point). He is a loyal citizen of Urbana, by all accounts, in good standing with Lord Urbane.
- ❖ Urlav Grendle once served as an engineer in Urbana's Shadow Army. He retired six years ago and used his savings to purchase this abandoned cattle ranch.
- ❖ Official policy in a situation like this is to determine if the Darkfall is involved, and if so, to inform the Shadow Army immediately so they can deal with it. Of course, the Darkfall takes many forms so the truth can be difficult to find until it's too late, and many Irregulars prefer to tackle such threats themselves hoping for increased rewards and prestige.
- ❖ Grendle is known for selling his beef for surprisingly reasonable rates, and offers discounts to the military. It could be surmised that his operating expenses must be very low.
- ❖ The area where Grendle Ranch now stands was abandoned following the Darkfall, and was apparently uninhabited from that time until the ranch was built. There are no recent accounts of Darkfall activity in the area.

## THE WHOLE STORY

This section is for the GM - players don't figure this stuff out just yet.

Grendle is a retired mechamage, though he has seen far too much fighting and avoids getting involved in such matters himself these days. All he wants is to settle down and be a rancher.

To save money on personnel, Grendle's cattle have been pulling double duty. He used his contacts with the Urbanan military to secure a supply of cheap manite implants, and has used them to augment his cattle. The goreaux uses his implants to control the cattle indirectly, using them not only as livestock but also as guardians (controlling them with his own mechamagic implants). They have proven more than adequate to defend against the occasional prowling nocturnal, and after he slaughters them for beef, he just installs the implants in new cattle.

While what Grendle is doing is not illegal, that's only because it's so bizarre no one has considered making laws for it yet. Fear of beef contaminated by the Wasting would ruin Grendle's reputation if the truth ever got out. To this end, he will attempt to hide his remaining augmented cattle from the players and hope they don't find out the truth. (Whether they do or not is really up to the players, and has no bearing on the success or failure of this adventure. It is, however, a fun opportunity for investigation and roleplaying.)

The culprits behind the mutilations are a small band of wandering naga. When their original home was destroyed by Urbanan expansion, these snakemen swore revenge against their technocratic conquerors. A few weeks ago, they came upon a cave not far from Grendle Ranch and discovered an ancient altar dedicated to one of their people's mysterious snake spirits. A voice spoke to them through this altar, promising to help them find vengeance upon the Urbanans if they gathered the foul technological tools of the nearby ranchers. They eagerly agreed, their zeal for revenge canceling all common sense, and began killing the cattle and stealing their manite implants. Though quite capable against wild nocturnals, the golemoid cows were no match for trained naga warriors.

What the naga do not realize is that they have been misled by Kortaka, a murderous trickster spirit of the Darkfall who is bound to the cavern where they now dwell. It has been using the manite implants to slowly build a new vessel for itself, so that it can escape the cave and wreak havoc on the countryside.

As the players arrive, its plan is just about complete...

## GRENDE RANCH

The players arrive to find Grendle Ranch, a small cattle farm nestled in the hills of Urbana. A single thin road leads to the settlement, well-tended and obviously of recent construction. The farm consists of a small house with attached servant quarters, a barn, and a stable large enough for several dozen cattle.

(Don't mention it unless someone asks, but there are no cattle visible. You may want to play this off at first, as surely Grendle would bring his cattle into the stables given the current situation. While this is the case, there's a little more to it.)

Grendle hurries forth to meet the party, accompanied by two of his farmhands. Both are rather nervous looking rapacians dressed in light armor. They constantly watch the hills for any signs of an attack.

Grendle puts on a good show of being calm and happy to see the player characters, but is also quite eager to get them onto the ranch proper, where they have a better chance to defend themselves if any nocturnals should suddenly attack.

The goreaux tells the party that the attacks have taken place over the last few weeks, with the earliest being twenty days ago. A dozen of his cattle have been brutally slaughtered, one or two at a time, and left to rot in the fields. One was found slaughtered just this morning and hasn't been disposed of yet. The goblin offers to show the players the corpse, if they wish. Neither of his guards are particularly skilled trackers, he tells them, but hopefully if the Irregulars live up to their reputation they should have no trouble finding the culprit.

If the party investigates they find, sure enough, a large bull has been brutally murdered at the edge of Grendle's pasture. Its legs and head have been severed, and are missing. There is blood everywhere.

Investigating the scene (with Perception) can reveal a few details. If the players get a good result (or specifically say they are looking for something related to the following), give them some of the following information:

- ❖ The bull appears to have been killed by large blades or swords.
- ❖ Some of the nearby grass is also badly burned, though the bull's remains are not. (For the GM: A result of the bull using its golemoid fire breath to defend itself.)

- ❖ There are no other cattle visible in the pasture, though the sounds of livestock are coming from the barn.
- ❖ The bull's limbs and head seem to have been removed very carefully, after it was killed.

If the player characters follow up on the barn, Grendle will attempt to dissuade them, assuring them that his other cattle are fine and there is nothing of interest there (a Sense Motive vs. his Bluff skill of +9 will reveal he is hiding something). If they are stubborn about it, he looks nervous but doesn't stop them, and they find his cattle, some of whom have been fitted with golemoid parts. Grendle tries to explain that he was only trying to save money and feed the armies of Urbana, and that his process is completely safe from the Wasting.

What the players decide to do to him is their own business - what Grendle is doing is not illegal (anyone with Knowledge (local) can determine this) but it is highly unethical and dangerous. If it is reported to the Shadow Army, he's likely to be punished. If it seems he's going to be reported, Grendle may try to casually bribe the players up to 1500 gold (total) to be quiet about it. He will, however, not attack them and will surrender if asked to do so (he still considers himself a loyal subject of Urbana and will not attack Irregulars).

Meanwhile, the cattle murders and missing golemoid parts are still a very real problem.

A Survival check vs. DC 15 can find tracks leading off to the south - a group of large, serpentine creatures apparently scaled the fence and attacked the cattle. Any character with the scent ability can also follow the trail quite easily as it's still somewhat fresh.

The trail leads to a small cave nestled in the hills to the south. If the players approach quietly, they may get the drop on the four serpentine naga guards protecting the entrance. If they are detected, the nagas leap immediately to the attack, denouncing the party as "vile technofetishists" and "Urban dogs." (They will single out any mechemages, golemoids, or steamwrights in particular, as they despise technology.)

Reasoning with the naga is not impossible, but would require any obvious technology users to remain out of sight. The naga are unfriendly, so it will require a DC 25 Diplomacy for them to not attack immediately (in which case they will demand the player characters leave their territory) and a 30 to seriously listen to the players. In the latter case, they will reveal that they came here fleeing Urbanan oppression and discovered the "Voice of the Snake Spirit," who has directed them to destroy the corrupted cattle of "the goblin spawn" (Grendle) and offer it to his glory. High priest Rezna is even now completing the ritual that will bind the discarded golemoid parts to their erstwhile deity. (While Aden has no official gods, naga often worship primitive - and very real - nature spirits. This one, unfortunately, is actually Kortaka, a nightmarish Darkfall entity looking for a body.)

Even with a good Diplomacy check, the naga are unlikely to leave peacefully or allow the players into the cave unless they are extremely creative and persuasive. They believe that Rezna's ritual is critical to their survival and vengeance against Urbana. (Not ruling out a possibility of resolving this without combat, but they'd have to be very imaginative.)

### Naga Cavern Guards (4)

**CR 2 each, CR 6 encounter**

**Level 2 Fighter, Level 1 Rogue \* Naga**

**NE Medium humanoid (reptilian)**

**Init +1; Perception +7**

#### **Defense**

**AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +1 Dex, +1 natural)**

**hp 26 (2d10 + 1d6 + 6)**

**Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +1**

#### **Offense**

**Speed** 30 ft., 20 ft. climb

**Melee** greatsword +6 (2d6+7) (+7 to hit for ruck)

**Ranged** light crossbow +3 (1d8)

**Special attacks** sneak attack +1d6

**Special defenses** bravery +1

#### **Statistics**

**Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8**

**Base Atk +2; CMB +5; CMD 16**

**Feats** Furious Focus, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus

**Skills** Knowledge (arcana) 3 (+8), Intimidate 3 (+6), Perception 3 (+9), Stealth 3 (+4)

**Languages** Naga, Western Common

**SQ** trapfinding

**Equipment** dagger, greatsword, chainmail, light crossbow, 10 bolts, thieves' tools, 256 gp (total, divided among them), one has a *potion of cure light wounds*

Deep within the cave, the naga cleric Rezna is chanting over a pile of stolen bovine golemoid parts, piled around a serpentine altar. He is attended by a single bodyguard (with stats identical to the guards above). They will immediately attack once the cavern is invaded, denouncing the party for interrupting their sacred ritual.

If they approach undetected, the player characters may witness an unusual scene. Rezna is frustrated and confused, as the ritual does not seem to be working as promised. When he complains about this, a sinister voice with no apparent source assures him that "Things are nearly complete. It should just be a bit longer..."

Unknown to Rezna, Kortaka cannot take physical form until there is a sacrifice. An intelligent creature must die within the cave. Kortaka is quite aware the player characters are coming - and he is hoping in the ensuing battle that one of them - or one of the naga - will die in his presence and allow him to possess the naga's offering of discarded manite.

### Rezna

**CR 6**

**Level 7 cleric \* naga**

**NE Medium humanoid (reptilian)**

**Init 0; Perception +16**

#### **Defense**

**AC 18, touch 9, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor, +1 natural)**

**hp 46 (7d8+14)**

**Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +10**

#### **Offense**

**Speed** 20 ft., 15 ft. climb

**Melee** masterwork large scythe +10 (2d6+4)

if he had time to cast spells: masterwork large scythe +15 (2d6+9)

**Ranged** Carraway crossbow +2 (1d8, +4 damage on first hit)

**Special defenses** liberation domain (*freedom of movement* for 4 rounds/day)

#### **Cleric Spells Prepared**

(can cast spontaneous inflict spells with non-domain spells)

**0-Level** - *detect magic, detect poison, guidance, light*

**1st Level** - *bleed\*, sanctuary, command (DC 14), divine favor\*, obscuring mist, remove fear (domain)*

**2nd Level** - *bull's strength\*, hold person (DC 15), remove paralysis (domain), shatter, silence*

**3rd Level** - *bestow curse, cure serious wounds, dispel magic, protection from energy (domain)\**

**4th Level - *summon monster IV, spell immunity (domain)*\***

\*if the combat outside is particularly noisy, Rezna casts these spells on himself in advance (keep track of the rounds so you know how many he can feasibly prepare) and will attempt to use *summon monster IV* to summon a hell hound. If combat is joined, he will forego the buffs but still attempt to summon the hell hound unless it is impractical to do so.

**Statistics**

**Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 8**

**Base Atk +5; CMB +8; CMD 18**

**Feats** Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (scythe), Power Attack

**Skills** Knowledge (arcana) 7 (+13), Perception (+16), Sense Motive 7 (+13), Spellcraft 7 (+11)

**Languages** Naga, Vanoran, Western Common

**SQ domains:** liberation, protection, channel energy 2d6 (DC 11), spontaneous casting (cures)

**Equipment** dagger, masterwork large scythe, serpentine amulet (holy symbol), Carraway crossbow, bolts (10), +1 *breast plate*



**Hell Hound**

**LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, fire, lawful)**

**Init +5; Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; **Perception +7**

**Defense**

**AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15** (+1 Dex, +5 natural)

**hp 30** (4d10+8)

**Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1**

**Immune** fire

**Weakness** vulnerability to cold

**Offense**

**Speed 40 ft.**

**Melee** bite +5 (1d8+1)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (10-ft. cone, once every 2d4 rounds, 2d6 fire damage, ref. half)

**Statistics**

**Str 13, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6**

**Base Atk +4; CMB +5; CMD 16** (20 vs. trip)

**Feats** Improved Initiative, Run

**Skills** Acrobatics +8 (+12 jump, +12 to jump with a running start), Perception +7, Stealth +13, Survival +7; Racial Modifiers +5 Stealth

**Languages** Infernal (can't speak)

**Special Abilities**

**Breath weapon** (10-ft. cone, once every 2d4 rounds, 2d6 fire damage, Ref. half) (DC 14)

**Darkvision (60 feet)** The Hellhound can see in the dark (black and white vision only).

**Immunity to Fire** The Hellhound is immune to fire damage.

**Run** The Hellhound runs 200 ft. and keeps Dex when running.

**Scent (Ex)** Detect opponents within 15+ feet by sense of smell.

**Vulnerability to Cold** The Hellhound is vulnerable (+50% damage) to Cold damage.

Rezna and his bodyguard fight to the death. Once the battle is complete, if anyone dies, an ominous rumbling begins to emanate from the serpentine altar and a shadowy presence appears in the room as Kortaka reveals itself.

“And now, the game is done for Rezna and his foolish friends,” the spirit hisses. “And thus the game begins for you. You have seen how the manipulations of the Darkfall can destroy mortals. NOW WITNESS ITS POWER!”

With that, the massive pile of discarded manite implants and cattle parts assembles itself into an enormous undead golemoid bull. The creature stands awkwardly and shudders, belching black smoke and moaning in agony as it regards the party through baleful red eyes.

Kortaka snickers as it possesses the metal bull. “I guess you could call this positively cattleclysmic.”



**Cattle-clysm**

**Wasted Abomination CR 8 - CE Huge undead**

**Init -1; Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception +1**

**Defense**

**AC 25, touch 7, flat-footed 20** (-1 Dex, -2 size, +18 natural)

**hp 66** (12d8+12)

**Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +9**

**Offense**

**Speed 30 ft.**

**Melee** gore +19 (2d10+18)

**Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft.**

**Statistics**

**Str 34, Dex 10, Con -, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 10**

**Base Atk +9; CMB +23; CMD 33** (37 vs. trip)

**Feats** Toughness

**Special Abilities**

The Cattle-clysm has **DR 5/slashing**

**Low-Light Vision** The Cattle-clysm sees twice as far as a human in low light, distinguishing color and detail.

**Darkvision (60 feet)** The Cattle-clysm can see in the dark (black and white vision only).

**Death Engine** The Cattle-clysm can activate a manite implant without using steam once per round.

**Manite Implants (6 Steam Points)**

**Blazing Thrusters (Su):** By spending a steam point as a free action, the golemoid can ignite small thrusters mounted on his back. These thrusters grant the golemoid 120 base movement for a single turn, and allow him to move in any direction (even straight up). If he does not end his turn on a solid surface, he will fall normally at the end of his turn. Any squares the golemoid passes through during this turn are filled with flaming accelerant for 1d4 rounds, igniting flammables and inflicting 2d8 fire damage (Reflex save for half damage) to any creature who enters or ends his turn in a flaming square.

**Steam Breath (Su):** The golemoid can spend a steam point to exhale boiling steam from his mouth in a 20 foot cone as a standard action. This steam inflicts 1d6 fire damage per level (maximum 4d6) with a reflex save for half damage.

**Manite Proximity Sensors (Su):** The golemoid may spend one steam point as a swift action to activate these powerful sensors, granting him blindsight to a range of 30 feet for a number of rounds equal to his class level.

While the Cattleclysm is very powerful, clever players may notice it's too large to get out of the cavern, which could give them an advantage. If defeated, Kortaka shrieks in frustration and vanishes into the depths of the cavern. The Darkfall trickster is a timeless and indestructible spirit (at least with the party's current capabilities) but it's also relatively powerless and unable to escape the cavern. If the players have a way to seal the cavern, they can make sure it doesn't cause trouble for a while. Failing that, they can report its presence to the Shadow Army and they'll be sure to take care of it, bringing the adventure to a conclusion.

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