



a measure of faith

The crusader citadel of Martyr's Point stands upon profane ground—a fathomless subterranean abyss with the godlike power to warp reality to the shape of what people believe and fear. Ordinarily dormant, it awakens when a dark collective belief empowers it, and sustains it with terror and bloodshed.

A Measure of Faith is about the dangers of belief. It is the story of a lie that becomes powerful because people believe it; an irrational belief that creates enough hysteria to spark a holy war and takes the physical shape of the fictitious boogeyman, Okka the Eater. In the end, the players must choose between feeding the people comfortable lies to keep them ignorant of dark truths they can't handle, or revealing the grim facts in hopes that the people will use their knowledge responsibly. The test is a measure of faith.

A Measure of Faith is an adventure for expert characters. The group completes this adventure by defeating the manifestation of the abyss and confronting the beliefs that empower it.

~CREDITS~

WRITING AND DESIGN: STEVE TOWNSHEND
DEVELOPMENT AND ART DIRECTOR: ROBERT J. SCHWALB
EDITING: KIM MOHAN
PROOFREADING: ADAM DOOCHIN
GRAPHIC DESIGN: HAL MANGOLD AND KARA HAMILTON
LAYOUT: KARA HAMILTON
ILLUSTRATIONS: ANDREY VASILCHENKO AND BRITT MARTIN

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SCHWALB ENTERTAINMENT, LLC



PO Box #12548
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

info@schwalbentertainment.com www.schwalbentertainment.com

shadow of the demon lord

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The crusaders discovered the abyss long ago while expanding the chambers beneath the citadel at Martyr's Point. As the first crusader citadel, Martyr's Point stood alone before the Desolation. The greatest fear of the defenders of the bastion was that undead would overcome them and would overwhelm the Empire.

The abyss awoke and indulged this belief by manifesting "ghosts" of the crusaders' friends and families from back home in the Empire. Those manifestations emerged from the depths to perpetuate the crusaders' fears, haunt the citadel, and slay its occupants. The abyss's evil claimed many lives before the crusaders got control of the situation: they learned that some of the ghosts were those of people not yet dead, but only *feared* dead.

The survivors sealed the passages around the chasm and created a secret order—the Circle of Six—to limit the abyss's power by burying all knowledge of it, and to keep a vigil against its rediscovery.

In recent years the secrecy surrounding the Circle of Six has bred suspicion and gossip. Rumors of a sinister cult operating in the crusaders' upper echelons are flying far and wide, stirring the collective imagination of a superstitious and fearful populace. Recent beastman incursions in the north have caused the people to recall old folktales of cannibal cults devoted to beastman demigods said to slumber beneath the earth.

In reaction to the growing concern about the Circle of Six, the Cult of the New God has sent a force of inquisitors to investigate Martyr's Point. While the Circle of Six hides the dangerous truth, the Inquisition strives to reveal it. In doing so, the inquisitors only make things worse: under torture, innocent crusaders confess to unholy cults, bestial fornication, and cannibalism—admitting to anything to trade agony for a swift death. On the heels of these false confessions, the people of Martyr's Point abandon their faith in the crusaders out of fear that what they confessed was true. Thanks to this influx of new energy, the abyss reawakens, manifesting the fear of the people in the form of an "Eater's Plague" that ravages the village of Martyr's Point. In the face of the resulting turmoil, the crusaders' Commander Caldwell abandons the citadel and flees into the Desolation with the Circle of Six, confirming the crusaders' guilt in the eyes of all.

Based on the characters' backgrounds and the campaign thus far, you can decide whether to start the adventure at Martyr's Point Citadel with the inquisitors, in the Desolation with the crusaders, or in the village with the commoners. The people at each location have different perspectives on the situation, and might steer the group toward different objectives. If the characters have no ties to the Cult of the New God, consider starting in the plague-stricken village, where Brother Gode can explain the adventure's backstory and the conflict between the crusaders and Inquisition.

THE LEGEND OF THE EATER

The belief that threatens Martyr's Point is the subject of an old horror story said to have taken place in these lands. Like the stories of the martyr Astrid, there are many versions and offshoots of the tale, none of which can be proven.

As the story goes, a race of humans rejected the gods long ago, and the gods transformed them into the first beastmen. In defiance, a titanic beastman called Okka, "the Eater of Man," declared itself a god and ravaged the world in an orgy of slaughter. Its aim was to render the gods powerless by devouring all their worshipers before consuming the gods themselves. To appease Okka the Eater, the kings of the world surrendered two hundred twenty-two holy priests as a sacrifice to Okka. Okka devoured them in a perverse banquet of human delicacies. Its appetite sated, Okka lay down in a cave beneath the earth. It is there he sleeps until his hunger rouses him again. When the earth shakes, people say that Okka is hungry; when pestilence and famine wither the land, they are attributed to "Okka's wind," the belches and flatulence that issue from the sleeping titan below.

The story is a myth. Does Okka the Eater truly lurk in the fathomless abyss beneath Martyr's Point? No one can say for sure, but it is unlikely that Okka ever existed. However, the abyss responds when the collective consciousness of a people fears it and wonders what lies in its depths, and it creates a reality to take advantage of their hysteria. Perhaps that reality is a hungry titan; perhaps a doorway to the void; perhaps a nascent god. Elaborate upon the legend at will; place it in the mouths of the villagers and the citadel's people; or connect it to the player characters' backgrounds.

QUANTIFYING BELIEF

This adventure uses Insanity as an abstract mechanic to gauge how deeply the characters become caught up in the hysteria at Martyr's Point. Even if the characters believe themselves to be rational, their presence at Martyr's Point makes them part of the collective consciousness affected by the abyss, and the powers in play insidiously work to alter their perceptions.

As the characters progress through this adventure, keep a tally of the Insanity they gain as a measure of how much their minds believe the reality catalyzed by the abyss. This total will come into play in the lost dungeons. If the characters lose Insanity, do not subtract it from the tally unless instructed otherwise.

MARTYR'S POINT CITADEL

Four bare curtain walls anchored by four stolid towers form the citadel's boundaries, angled like a sword's point toward the northern Desolation. Old cannons glower from the gray parapet. Behind the walls stand the garrison, the keep, the mess hall, and several outbuildings.

A single banner hangs above the gatehouse. It depicts the martyred champion Drusella the Wise as a pale woman with auburn hair, bearing a sword that points north. Patron saint of these lands, Drusella perished while leading a force of commoners against a horde of undead, holding off the monsters until the crusaders could arrive.

Normally, two hundred red-cloaked crusaders (half **patrollers**, half **veterans**) inhabit the citadel, but most of them are currently held captive in the keep or subject to torture in the dungeons. The Inquisition's forces (**100 mercenaries**) in the citadel wear symbols of the Cult of the New God on their armor. Five wear the black robes and skull masks that denote inquisitors. Three of the inquisitors use the statistics for **cultists**. Use the **high cultist** statistics for inquisitor Dranyer; for inquisitor Gull, use **acolyte of the New God**.

JAILBREAK!

As the characters arrive in the courtyard of the citadel, a pair of armed crusaders (2 **veterans**) emerge from the keep with bloody swords. They have slain two of the keep's guards and now charge in the direction of the gatehouse, trying to flee the citadel. A bloodied guard cries out, "Stop the cultists!"

If the characters fight the crusaders, the Inquisition might reward them (see "Gaining the Inquisition's Favor," below). If they do not help, the crusaders escape into the village, and Commander Caldwell might later reward the characters for not apprehending her men if they encounter her.

THE INQUISITION

Inquisitors Dranyer and Gull lead the investigation at Martyr's Point from within the dungeons, but they leave their posts to eat, sleep, conduct Inquisition business, and to meet visitors (including the characters) aboveground. Dranyer commands in a dry, emotionless monotone. Gangly, gray-haired, and dispassionate, Dranyer has secretly become an atheist, yet is dedicated to expanding the Inquisition's power. His subordinate, Gull, is an orphan raised in the Cult of the New God; she is young, fair-haired, and a passionate believer in the punishment of the wicked. In public, the inquisitors wear the skull-faced masks and black robes that are the hallmark of the Inquisition.

The inquisitors arrived intending to eradicate corruption from Martyr's Point and reveal the truths they discover.

They see signs of cult activity everywhere: in the plague decimating the village; in crusaders and Inquisition soldiers vanishing from the dungeons without a trace; in the faint screams heard late at night from within the walls.

GAINING THE INQUISITION'S FAVOR

The inquisitors want to know why people are vanishing from the dungeons; they suspect that crusaders hide using secret passages in the citadel and dungeons (this is not true) and that secret crusaders still hide in the village (this is true). They also want to recapture Commander Caldwell, but lack specialists of sufficient skill to pursue her into the Desolation. They offer the characters 10 gc for every crusader they capture and 4 gc for every crusader they slay.

THE DESOLATION

The Desolation sprawls to the north of Martyr's Point, a deathly landscape of sand dunes, badlands, boulder fields, and crags reaching into the distance and crawling with undead. Commander Caldwell leads the Circle of Six (five of whom are present, including Caldwell) into the perilous landscape of the Desolation in hopes of reaching the crusader citadel of Neverfall to request their fellows' aid against the depredations of the Inquisition.

The characters can find the Circle of Six (5 **veterans**) by following their trail a day's journey into the Desolation in the direction of Neverfall Citadel.

UNDEAD AMBUSH

The characters encounter the Circle of Six as the crusaders battle a mob of 7 **boneguards** attempting to surround their camp. The crusaders are engaged one to one, so the two remaining boneguards move to flank them. If the characters lend aid by defeating the two extra boneguards, the crusaders manage to bring down the rest. If the characters take no action, the boneguards overwhelm and slay 1d3 crusaders; two more will perish from wounds and exhaustion within 1d8 hours unless treated.

THE CIRCLE OF SIX

The Circle of Six comprises the crusaders entrusted by their forebears to ensure that the abyss beneath Martyr's Point remains forgotten, and thus powerless. One of their number, Brand, remains in the village.

Renee Caldwell is a veteran commander in her forties, a polarizing figure in the Cult of the New God due to her plain "frontier speech" and outspoken character. She believes the Inquisition pursues forbidden knowledge, their deeds manipulated by corrupt leadership in thrall to the Demon Lord.

Caldwell wants to contain the abyss and bury all knowledge of it, and she wants her people freed. Yet she is powerless while the Inquisition holds Martyr's Point.

GAINING THE CRUSADERS' FAVOR

If Caldwell trusts the characters and thinks they can help, she reluctantly tells them the truth about the abyss and gives them her silver ring, embossed with six stars. She tells them to find Brand in the village. As the last of the Six on the premises, Brand can reveal a secret way into the lost dungeons. She also offers the characters 10 gc for each crusader they save from torture in the dungeons (see area 3, Drusella's Crypt).

THE VILLAGE

Plague festers in the small village that surrounds Martyr's Point. To the east, the thatched roofs of shops and houses rise above charred wrecks on the village's south side—remnants of a recent blaze. To the north lies the graveyard, a short walk away from a shrine to the New God on the west side. A gloomy marketplace hugs the citadel wall near the village's central gate. An unsettling silence pervades, interrupted rarely by a raven's cry, a barking dog, a rattling cough, or the sound of muted grieving.

The villagers once revered Drusella the Wise and placed their trust in the crusaders. Fire, plague, and the hysteria surrounding the Inquisition's investigation have beaten them down, and mania over the (fictitious) Cult of the Eater overrides any faith they once possessed. They collectively believe that the end times have begun, that the plague presaged the imminent awakening of the Eater, and that Okka's alleged cult within the crusaders has in fact reawakened the monster.

EATER'S PLAGUE

Eater's Plague is a degenerative disease that affects creatures with a tenuous grip on reality, covering their bodies with boils and instilling an appetite for human flesh. Whenever a creature with 1 or more Insanity visits one of the village locations outlined below, that creature must get a success on an Intellect challenge roll with 2 boons or become diseased 1 hour later. In addition to the normal effects of disease, the creature gains a cannibalistic compulsion and therefore takes a cumulative -1d6 penalty to Health at the end of each day that it neglects to consume human flesh. When a diseased creature's Health drops to 0, it dies. At the GM's option, a human that gorges itself on human flesh does not die but is instead transformed into a **ghoul**.

OFFERING HOPE

The people are desperate for hope. Since the plague was brought on by their collective terror, the way to escape it is to stop strengthening the abyss with terror. Hope—or

positive belief—offers a temporary respite from the plague's effects, but the only sure way to cure it entirely is to destroy Okka, since the villagers believe that Okka is the source of the plague. A character who encounters a suffering villager and offers help, encouragement, or inspiration can make an Intellect challenge roll, with a success indicating that the character convinces the villager to take heart. When this occurs, the villager's outlook shifts away from fear and toward reason, weakening the abyss's grasp; remove 1 Insanity from the characters' tally (see **Quantifying Belief**, above). If the total of the roll is 20 or higher, the character affects an entire group of villagers, if others are present, and instead remove 1d3 Insanity from the tally. Characters who specifically mention Drusella the Wise make the roll with 1 boon. Grant Fortune to the first character to make such an attempt. The group can attempt to offer hope only once (a single roll) in each village location.

The characters cannot offset their own Insanity in this way; while they may believe that their efforts to help the people are having a positive impact, the characters are no less mad for the horrors they have witnessed.

VILLAGE LOCATIONS

The village surrounds and extends out from the citadel walls. As the characters travel between key areas in the village, you can roll a d20 to see what they encounter.

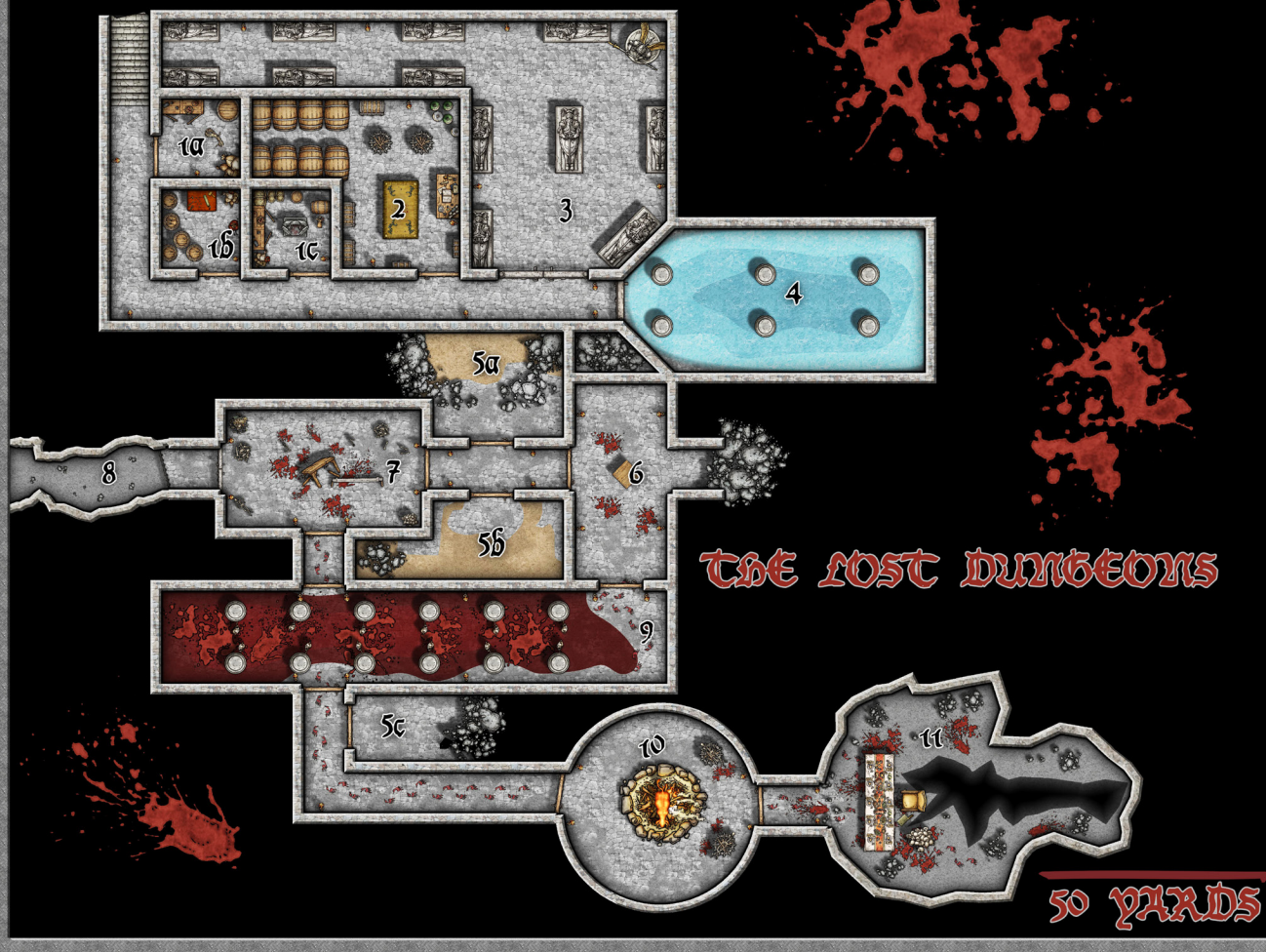
VILLAGE ENCOUNTERS

d20	Encounter
1-8	Empty streets
9-10	A group of 1d6 diseased villagers (as commoners)
11-12	Jot. A dreary clockwork hauls a corpse-laden cart through the streets, collecting the dead. Jot knows the name of every person that has perished in the village since it was founded.
13-14	A group of 1d3 Inquisition spies pretending to be plague doctors (as hired killers)
15-16	An Inquisition force of 1d3 mercenaries on patrol
17	A pair of crusaders (as patrollers) in disguise
18-19	A ghoul picking over the dead
20	A band of 1d6 fomors that have been drawn to Martyr's Point

Marketplace (Central): Upon a makeshift scaffold in this area, the corpses of three plague victims hang from their necks. Nearby are Bella and Ernst Tucker and their two remaining children, all of whom have the plague. The children are drunk on ale their parents have fed them. The Tuckers plan to suffocate their children and then hang themselves.

Shrine of the New God (West): Brother Gode, an acolyte of the New God, preaches the story of the *Legend of the Eater of Man* to a small crowd of worshipers in the shrine, warning of the doom that will transpire when Okka awakens. Siding with neither Inquisition nor crusaders,

MARTYR'S MORT DUNGEONS



Gode acts as the voice of the villagers seeking guidance as order breaks down. Besides using Gode to explain Okka's legend to the characters, the GM can use him to explain the conflict between the crusaders and the Inquisition. Gode doesn't care which side the characters choose as long as they help the villagers.

Graveyard (North): Kam the Gravedigger hunches in a partly dug mass grave beside a pile of corpses. Plague boils cover his body. Characters within 3 yards spot Kam slurping from an infant's corpse as if its belly were a bowl of soup—and must succeed at a Will challenge roll with 1 bane or gain 1d3 Insanity. The Eater's Plague has made Kam into a ghoul, but he doesn't attack unless someone interrupts his supper.

Thatched Houses/Shops (East): A flock of three plague doctors wearing eerie bird masks goes from door to door in this area. The beak of each mask contains a tiny bag of cloves, opium, poppy, and rose. The plague doctors (as hired killers) are spies for the Inquisition searching for crusader refugees hiding among the village's families. For a fee of 5 ss they offer to help cure the plague, and prescribe scented powders and tinctures, but they have no curative

abilities. They report suspicious activity in the village to Dranyer.

Charred Wrecks (South): A surly vagrant squats upon an overgrown cellar door beside the charred wreckage of a tavern. This is Brand, the former tavern keeper and covert crusader veteran of the Circle of Six. He guards the cellar that contains the entrance to the lost dungeons. Characters who succeed on a Perception challenge roll with 1 bane can tell that this vagrant has a warrior's build and acts with caution.

If the characters present him with Commander Caldwell's silver ring, he shows them the secret passage from his cellar to area 8 in the lost dungeons and gives them the gate key he carries.

If the characters don't have Caldwell's ring, they can still interact with Brand, but he rudely rebuffs attempts at conversation, growling at the characters to mind their own business. He wears no armor, and hides his sword in a pile of garbage. If the characters pick a fight with Brand and defeat him, they discover the key to the lost dungeons hanging around his neck. The key also fits the cellar door beneath him.

DUNGEONS

Martyr's Point's underground rooms consist of a cellar, a cistern, a crypt, a few dry storage areas, and a complex of "lost dungeons" sealed by the crusaders long ago. Torches illuminate all the dungeon rooms.

1a-c. Storage: Various well-used torture implements lie among the citadel's barrels and dry goods: choke pears, thumbscrews, tongue tearers, molten lead sprinklers, heretic's forks, cages of starving rats, and a grim iron maiden. Three torturers (3 **cultists**) and 1d3 helpless torture victims occupy each room. Inquisitor Gull (**acolyte of the New God**) usually occupies area 1a (16-in-20 chance). In total, the three storage rooms contain one or two of each item in the Personal Gear list (see **chapter 6** in *Shadow of the Demon Lord*).

2. Cellar: Casks of ale and wine line the walls near crates of barley, oats, and wheat. Two torturers (2 **cultists**) tend a rack and two breaking wheels mounted on posts. The rack and wheels are furnished with victims (3 total). The inquisitors carry clubs for breaking the limbs of those lashed to the wheels. A ledger and quill pen occupy a small table in the room; an iron key ring with the keys to lock or unlock areas 1-4 lies on the corner of the table. There is a 15-in-20 chance that Inquisitor Dranyer (**high cultist**) is in the cellar questioning the victims.

3. Drusella's Crypt: The crypt is locked but the door can be broken down on a successful Strength challenge roll with 1 bane (alerting the Inquisition in areas 1-2). Crusaders (5 **patrollers**) are bound here awaiting questioning. A statue of Drusella the Wise watches over the sarcophagi of twelve crusader heroes buried in the crypt. Most sarcophagi contain the crusaders' bones and rusty weapons, but the center one contains the ashes and sacred sword of Drusella the Wise. The bearer of Drusella's sword fights on for 5 rounds after being slain, ignoring all damage it takes during this time.

4. Cistern: Columned arches support the ceiling in this area. The cistern holds the citadel's water supply and is 3 yards deep. Creatures with 5 or more Insanity that enter this area perceive the blood cistern in area 9 reflected in the water. If such a creature immerses itself in the water, that creature and any creatures touching it are transported to area 9. Creatures that take this journey with less than 5 Insanity gain 1 insanity. The mad beastmen can travel between both cisterns at will.



TORTURE

Expert torturers, the Inquisition has turned the underground rooms of the citadel into torture chambers; the beastmen in the lost dungeons parody their methods to brutal extremes. Splashes of gore, viscera, and other signs of torture are evident in most areas. *Once per room* in which a character in the dungeons witnesses acts of torture (rooms 1a-c, 2, 6, 7, and 10) that character must succeed at a Will challenge roll or gain 1 Insanity. However, any characters who choose to participate in torture gain 1 Corruption instead of Insanity.

THE LOST DUNGEONS

The crusaders constructed these rooms but sealed them long ago, leaving only a secret passage (area 8) for access, guarded by the Circle of Six. The present horrors here are manifestations of the abyss in area 11.

The beastmen torture their victims into renouncing the New God and then (in area 10) change them into beastmen—just as beastmen were first transformed after they renounced the gods. When a victim resists, the beastmen torture it to death, butcher it, and serve it to Okka the Eater; given the opportunity, they do this to the characters. The "humans" described in these rooms—and their gory remains—are crusaders and Inquisition soldiers who were kidnapped by beastmen and brought here via the cisterns.

5a-c. Unfinished Rooms: These rooms of hewn rock and debris were partly completed before the crusaders abandoned them. If the characters search through the rubble, once per room on a successful Perception challenge roll they find crusader mementos worth 3d6 ss; on a roll of 20 or higher, they find an enchanted object.

6. Chamber of Exquisite Woe: Crude etchings in the walls depict beasts violating terrified humans in a thousand unspeakable ways. In the center of the chamber, 6 **fomors** hold the ends of ropes that suspend a bound, naked human over a pyramid-shaped post a yard wide, glistening with a stream of blood and feces. The beastmen gradually lower the human so that the post will impale it.

7. Saw Room: A human hangs upside down from a crude wooden frame 3 yards high, legs splayed apart by ropes attached to opposite corners of the frame. The room contains 10 **fomors**, two of which are shoving a long saw slowly back and forth, bisecting the human's body at the crotch, while the others look on. The thrashing victim gurgles under the flow of its own blood and viscera. Dismembered body parts lay on the floor, sorted neatly into piles.

8. Secret Passage: This natural passageway leads to the cellar beneath the charred wreck of the village tavern. A locked and barred iron gate blocks the route to and from area 7. The gate was designed to keep the spawn of the abyss sealed inside the dungeons, but it can be broken down on a successful Strength challenge roll with 4 banes. Brand's key unlocks this gate.

9. Blood Cistern: A dozen human skulls impaled on iron spikes stare from the columns that support the arches of this room. Their faces, a **ghastly chorus**, float upon a viscous quagmire of blood and entrails 1 yard deep. Beastmen and creatures with 10 Insanity can submerge themselves in the blood to travel to area 4, along with any creature touching them; creatures with less than 5 Insanity gain 1 Insanity in the process.

10. The Brazen Bull: A burnished brass bull 2 yards tall stands in the center of this vaulted room, flanked by two breaking wheels mounted on posts. A fire blazes beneath the bull, tended by 3 **wargs** wearing the robes and masks of inquisitors in profane mummery. Nearby, a **fomor** gnaws a haunch of human, ripped from one of the two living crusaders lashed to the breaking wheels.

The beastmen place any prisoner who renounces the gods under torture inside the brass bull. They cook the creature until its screams become the ululations of a beast. When they open the bull, a new beastman is born. Except for Okka, all the beastmen in the lost dungeons were once Inquisition soldiers or crusaders who renounced their god in this manner. Some still retain traces of their humanity, such as human eyes or hands.

11. The Eater's Banquet: Where the crusaders' construction ends, a lightless abyss of inscrutable depth spans a natural cavern. Carved beast totems leer from the cave walls, and gory bones scatter the ground in front of a banquet table overburdened with platters of human meats prepared as steaks, sausages, livers, and bacon. A monstrous horned beastman wearing a mask and rough garments of human-skin leather devours the delicacies served to it by a single **fomor**. It washes them down with blood drunk from a chalice fashioned from the top of a human skull.

The horned monster is the incarnation of Okka the Eater. Okka's size and abilities depend on the level of belief the characters have in Okka based on their experiences in the adventure. What is the sum total of the Insanity *all* the characters have gained during *A Measure of Faith*?

OKKA'S INCARNATION

Insanity	Incarnation
3 or less	Warg
4-14	Minotaur
15-20	Horned ogre
20 or more	Huge demon

AFTERMATH AND REWARDS

If the characters defeat Okka, the plague subsides and silence settles over the lost dungeons. If they survived, Caldwell and the Circle of Six return with a force of 100 heavily armed crusaders from Neverfall to eject the Inquisition from the citadel. Yet the horrors of the preceding events linger in the people's memory to become legends fertile for resurgence unless the characters disperse them by offering alternative beliefs or explanations. How do the characters explain what happened?

The crusaders' Circle of Six knows that the general populace cannot handle dangerous secrets; thus, in the past, the crusaders have persuaded the people to put their faith in hopeful symbols like Astrid and Drusella the Wise. The Circle holds that the tragedy at Martyr's Point proves the danger of forbidden knowledge being set loose. If the characters support the crusaders, they receive 25 gc and a security contact (Commander Caldwell, if she survives); see **Contacts** in chapter 9 of *Shadow of the Demon Lord*.

The Inquisition knows that truth must be revealed so people can fight evil with awareness and achieve victory by faith. They hold that stubbornness, secrecy, and ignorance caused the tragedy at Martyr's Point. If the characters support the Inquisition, the faction rewards them with 25 gc and an influence contact within the organization (Dranyer or Gull, if they survive).

If the characters supported the villagers more than either faction, they do not receive a monetary reward, but they gain a loyal commoner they helped, who joins them as a major secondary character. Roll a starting character to accompany the party on their adventures.

