

nLS5



the northlands series:
the long night of winter

NLS5: The Hidden Huscarl
by Casey W. Christofferson



**FROG GOD
GAMES**



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NLS5: The Hidden Huscarl

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The Long Night of Winter

NLS5: The Hidden Huscarl

By Casey Christofferson



The Hidden Huscarl is a *Swords & Wizardry* adventure for the Northlands Saga setting and is the fifth adventure in *The Long Night of Winter* adventure anthology. Like the other adventures in the anthology,

The Hidden Huscarl can be dropped into a Northlands Saga campaign by the Referee at any time or place that is convenient. Unlike the others, it is tied to a particular location, and a far location it is. *The Hidden Huscarl* takes in the far distant city of Bard's Gate and provides a sneak peek preview of the forthcoming *Bard's Gate Complete* due out from Frog God Games in 2016.

The Hidden Huscarl is designed for a party of characters of levels 5-7.

The Northlands Series: The Long Night of Winter



“Gather round, lads and lasses, and draw close to the hearth fire. Let the glowing coals warm your hands and a horn of mead warm your heart while the old men tell tales and sing songs of days long gone. Each winter the storms howl down from the Far North and bury our fields and halls in a thick blanket of white. They bring nights cold enough to shatter a man’s bones or freeze an aurochs’ blood in its veins, and all men huddle close to their fires in the darkness and wonder if this is finally the Fimbulwinter that will bring about the great battle of Ragnarök. Some say these harsh winters are the work of demons of the Ginnungagap sent to break the will of men in preparation for the coming End Days. Others say they are the gift of the Æsir to mold men and hone their strength as the fire tempers good steel in anticipation of those dark times.

“Me? This old skald thinks it is a time to gather close to comrades and loved ones and tell stories and lies, to swap boasts and jests, and to celebrate that the All-Father has given us one more night for the heartsblood to run hot. The morrow’s dawn is never promised us, and there are things other than the cold that stalk the long night of winter and can kill a strong man just as surely. So tilt the flagon to fill an old man’s drinking horn once again, for talk can be dry work, and lean in close to listen. I have a tale to tell you ...”

The *Northlands Series (NLS)* are standalone adventures set in the Northlands that allow the Referee to drop a one-shot game into that setting or as a short interlude into *The Northlands Saga Adventure Path* with minimal effort. They are not tied to a particular locale within the Northlands, though they may require a certain general type of terrain (e.g. mountains, forest, etc.), and they are not tied to a specific chronology. They can be played in any order, and all or none of them can be used as the Referee sees fit. They are presented from the standpoint of a fireside tale being told by an old skald to pass the long hours of a winter night, allowing the Referee to use them as short breaks from normal campaign play with different characters and without any long-term consequences, or they can be inserted into a normal campaign. The idea is to provide the Referee with the maximum flexibility for their use with a minimum of fuss.

So take them. Use them. Make them your own. The winter night is cold, and there are many hours to pass before the dawn ...

The Hidden Huscarl

The Hidden Huscarl is a short *Swords & Wizardry* adventure for character levels 5–7. It is different from the other adventures of this series in that it *does* take place in a particular location, and that location happens to be far from the Northlands. However, though the adventure takes place in the Southlander city of Bard's Gate, it does revolve around a visitation to that city by Northlanders, so the involvement of Northlanders is of utmost importance to its plot. It also serves as a bridge for your campaign between the lands and tales of *The Northlands Saga* and the upcoming release of *Bard's Gate Complete* by **Frog God Games**, as well as a preview of that book. The adventure presupposes that the events of *NSI: Vengeance of the Long Serpent* have already taken place. If this is not the case in your campaign, adjust the adventure so that Hallbjorn is still based in Halfstead rather than Nieuland accordingly.

Several locations in the city have a letter and number next to them. These are the map location indicators for anyone who wishes to make use of their copy of *Bard's Gate* by **Necromancer Games** while running this adventure, but that resource is not necessary for play. The forthcoming *Bard's Gate Complete* will make use of the same map location designators to preserve continuity between the two books.

Adventure Background

Not long ago the *Sea Bear*, a longship captained by Tjorvi Thurgurson, the nephew of the legendary jarl and explorer Hallbjorn Bolverkson, arrived in Bard's Gate. The *Sea Bear* came loaded with pelts of exotic great cats, otters, and beaver of prodigious size, as well as plumage of birds never seen before in the Southlands. Tjorvi claims that the items were gathered from the mythical Oestryn Islands, and has boasted that many more riches from the legendary isles would be brought for trade from his uncle's wealthy colony of Nieuland.

Tjorvi's great boasts soon caught the attention of many of the city's underworld interests, and he was approached by Duloth Armitage of the Wheelwright's Guild, who made a lucrative offer to Tjorvi for cartage rights of his Oestryn goods from the port of Freegate to Bard's Gate. The young Northlander, not recognizing Duloth for the powerful mover-behind-the-scenes that he was, brashly pushed the crime boss from the gunwale of the *Sea Bear* into the canal below, embarrassing him in front of many witnesses and minions. Incensed at the affront, Duloth swore his revenge and before the sun rose again on the following day, Tjorvi had gone missing from the deck of the *Sea Bear*.

No sooner had he disappeared than Rolnüt, Tjorvi's second in command, pounded down the doors of the Lord Mayors estate, demanding that the great Jarl Hallbjorn's nephew and huscarl be returned immediately lest the crew of the *Sea Bear* tear apart the city looking for their kinsman.

The Lord Mayor Cylyria fully understands the situation and has no desire to see an armed flotilla of northmen rage against the Free City. Rolnüt has given her 3 days to find Tjorvi, and his own men have fanned out across the city searching for their lord. Unfortunately, none of Cylyria's agents among the Greycloaks, nor any of the constable detectives, has been able to turn up any clues as to Tjorvi's location. It is believed that Tjorvi has been imprisoned in a magically shrouded location somewhere within the city, and time is running out.

In spite of Duloth's public threats against Tjorvi, he and his most well-known associates have airtight alibis, as they were involved in a lengthy dice game at the Blazing Bones that went well into the early morning hours and were observed by numerous independent witnesses. Meanwhile, most of the wheelwrights have gone to the mattresses, expecting raids from constables of their less legal operations.

Unknown to Cylyria, the Dominion Arcane, and other interested parties, agents operating under orders of Duloth indeed snatched Tjorvi. He was charmed right off his boat by Entrade, a vampire in service to Felicity

Bigh and the Underguild, who used first the roofs and then the sewers to haul the Northlander to Duloth's secret prison in the catacombs beneath the Old Temple District.

Adventure Summary

The party is brought in to investigate the disappearance of the Northlander captain and nephew of a powerful jarl. Their investigation takes them along the docks and through the seedy dives of Bard's Gate where they learn that the barbarian crossed one of the city's powerful crime lords and may have actually been abducted by powerful undead creatures. The leads they follow bring them into the city's underworld and eventually into the actual subterranean tunnels below the city where they find a hidden dungeon used by the crime lord Duloth Armitage to dispose of those who cross him. They find this dungeon occupied by undead creatures led by a vampire torturer who has been questioning and feeding on the missing Northlander to try to learn the location of the fabled islands from which he hails. Only by defeating the vampire and his minions and rescuing the Northlander can the characters forestall a war between the city of Bard's Gate and a horde of ravening viking invaders seeking the blood-price for their murdered leader.

Beginning the Adventure

There are several options for involving characters in the adventure. Each has its own ties to the city, its people, and the fame, fortune, and social or political sway the characters may earn for completing this quest.

Cylyria: If the characters are allied with the Greycloaks, it is quite possible that Cylyria or one of her immediate agents have hired the characters to investigate the disappearance. They have no real leads but assume that the characters with their resources and talents at infiltration may find a way to crack the case. If money is a motivating factor, the characters are assured appropriate compensation for locating the Northlander and returning him to his people. Assistance to Cylyria or the Fellowship of Note (aka Greycloaks) means deepening a relationship with powerful allies, whose ultimate purpose is the protection and strength of the noble Free City.

Constables' Investigators: If characters have associations with the constables through either employment or friendship, they may be brought in as special investigators. Their activities in the investigation are considered "off the books," meaning they don't have any special warrants or rights of arrest, but they also won't be charged with any crimes that can't be directly tied to them should things get "rough" during the investigation.

The Northlanders: If the players are using Northlander characters, then they can be among Tjorvi's crew. Rolnüt assigns them to investigate discreetly the affair while he and the other crewmembers provide some modicum of cover by making a show of their barbaric antics. The canny Rolnüt believes that a small group of Northlanders quietly going about their business will be ignored in the face of the ever-escalating tensions with the *Sea Bear's* crew.

The Rumor Mill: Characters have heard that Rolnüt Cold-Axe has offered 5000gp (in hacksilver) for the return of Hallbjorn Bolverkson's nephew and huscarl, Tjorvi Thurgurson. This high bounty would normally have every bounty hunter, tracker, and rogue in town beating the bushes for some trace of the abducted Northlander. Of course, since everyone in the underworld believes Duloth is involved in this particular abduction, nobody is really taking the bait as they don't want to end up in the same position as Tjorvi. The characters may take it upon themselves to try to gather the reward money and rescue Tjorvi from his captors.

Dominion Arcane: The Dominion Arcane is aware of the abduction, and they too are intrigued by the way in which Tjorvi was snatched.

THE NORTHLANDS SERIES: THE LONG NIGHT OF WINTER

Although the daily doings of the various and sundry masses of Bard's Gate are seldom of any concern to the wizards of the Dominion, there are members who are interested in the elusive treasures of the Oestryn Isles. If the characters are allied with the Dominion Arcane, their mentor may put them on the adventure path. The Dominion instructions are simple: Rescue Tjorvi and bring him to a Dominion safe house so that the secret location of the Oestryn Isles can be extracted from him. The characters are paid in 5000gp worth of magic items, spells, or training for their efforts.

Justin Greenwood: As the characters run across different rumors, especially those of the strong man with red eyes, they may be contacted out of the blue by **Justin Greenwood** (N male human Rgr9). Justin has heard similar stories as the characters of the abduction. Justin, although being the proprietor of a fletcher (Area N5), is a haunted and private person who rarely approaches strangers on his own and never in the dark of night. In this case, however, if the characters have at least heard the rumor of the "red-eyed stranger," he gets up the nerve to approach them.

Justin reveals that a deadly cult of vampires and their worshippers are within the city. He ties the vampire cult to everything from Orcus, city politics, the missing thieves guild (Gray Deacons), and the decline of the churches of Muir and Thyr, to his missing ex-fiancée Felicity Bigh. He claims that his old beloved is none other than the local leader of the vampiric cult that has followed him across the globe. Convoluted as his tale is, he is of the opinion that a vampire captured Tjorvi, and that he is hidden in a nest of vampires somewhere within the catacombs of the city. It is Justin's belief that this lair of vampires is located somewhere under the very temples of Law and Good, like a cancer eating away at the sensibilities of priests such as Bofred and Barahil.

Note: Justin approaches the characters only if they have learned of the "red-eyed man" who allegedly took Tjorvi away from the **Rumor Table** below.

Part One: The Investigation

Once the characters are drawn into the adventure, a number of avenues open for them to pursue as they begin their investigation. One option is to listen around the city and maybe ask a few discreet questions to try to hear the word on the street. Another is to follow the leads available or discovered in the course of investigating the disappearance.

Rumors

Rumors about the disappearance of the Northlander run rampant throughout the city. Once an hour, each character hears one of the rumors on the **Rumor Table**. Roll 1d12 to determine the rumor heard.

Rumor Table

1d12	Rumor
1	"What's to say another boat didn't pull up and haul him off down the river? That northern boy is probably in the Necromancer's Swamp by now." (False; see Sword of Air by Frog God Games for information on Necromancer's Swamp)
2-3	"The drunken fool fell off the docks and was swept down into Kamien's Loo, the whirlpool that often forms where the Docks District, Canal District, and Stoneheart River meet." (False)
4	"Likely the idiot ran afoul of the river folk, and they have fed him in pieces to the catfish." (False)
5-6	"Everybody knows Duloth has an in somehow with the Shadow Masks. I bet they snatched the Northlander up and fed him to the hogs out by Stables Row." (False)

1d12	Rumor
7	"Duloth probably hired Red Blades to take him out. They can't 'find him' because he's been dissolved in acid and flushed down the sewers." (False)
8-9	"If nobody saw him being dragged through the streets, then there is only one answer: He was taken below! That's what I think. These authorities and barbarians are all looking in the wrong place. At any rate, nothing happens on the docks without the Riverman's Guild knowing something about it." (True)
10	"Duloth's dice game and all those witnesses? What a scam. Wouldn't be too hard to figure out what really happened there except nobody is going to talk to a brownie*. Duloth never gets his hands dirty, but he always gets his revenge." (True)
11	"A Red Blade known for work as a kidnapper keeps a shop down in the Black Market. They say she knows the sewers and catacombs better than anybody. That's where I'd look for that barbarian lad" (True)
12	"Someone saw him get hauled off into the darkness. Simple as that. Whatever it was could pick up that big Northlander like he didn't weigh a thing ... like he was nothing but a child. That's all I know. It was fast, too, with glowing red eyes. Hey ... whatever, don't ask me, I heard it from somebody on the docks but you know how the river folk feel about the law. Same as they feel about Duloth: Not their business!" (True; hearing this rumor results in the party being approached by Justin Greenwood as described under Beginning the Adventure .)

*"Brownie" is a derogatory term for a constable in Bard's Gate, so called for their characteristic brown tabard.

Following Leads on the Docks

From the outset, there are very few leads to go on. Listed below are possible sources of information. Bribes can loosen the tongues of some of the more reluctant to talk.

The Crew of the Sea Bear

All that **Rolnüt** (N male human [Northlander] Ftr5) and the crew of the *Sea Bear* know is that their captain stepped to the docks that night to relieve himself after carousing and laughing over mead with his crew and some local flavor, and never returned. When he didn't return, they looked for him, but no trace of him was found on the ship or the docks. Tjorvi is a huge specimen of a man, so none could understand how he could have disappeared so completely.

Locals on the Docks

The docks are a likely first start for many searching for Tjorvi's whereabouts. Several open shops are along the docks near where the *Sea Bear* is berthed, as well as a number of locals wandering the area whom the characters may approach and question. The characters may interview proprietors of any of the local shops. Most denizens of the docks are tired of being asked, and refuse to talk to anyone with a Northlander in their group as they are wary of the huge men and surly shield maidens from the crew of the *Sea Bear*.

As the characters visit the various shops in the district, they find that none of the local shop owners has seen or heard anything unusual, and that all were closed for the night when the disappearance occurred. One of the shopkeepers mentions the fact that the Last Drop (Area D3), a dilapidated

grog shop out on the docks, has been closed since the time of the disappearance, and that is a bit unusual since old Chase who runs the place is usually open for business whenever he's sober.

Searching the Docks

A thorough search of the docks reveals little, though previous searchers overlooked one piece of physical evidence. Characters have a 1-in-6 chance of locating it, or 3-in-6 if the characters state that they are specifically looking in the vicinity of the Last Drop (Area D3) mentioned above. A successful check locates a cave bear claw wedged between two boards of the dock. Any Northlander character recognizes it as part of a totem necklace worn by Tjorvi. A non-Northlander recognizes it as a piece of Northlander jewelry.

The Last Drop

Chase (C male human bartender, 5hp; *luckstone*) is hiding in his shack. He has locked the door and hammered silver coins into the cracks around the edges of it and the shack's shutters, wedging them tight. Anyone carefully examining the door or shutters notices the glint of silver coins in the cracks. Chase lays low throughout the day and night, trying to make no sounds. The only thing that could give away his presence is a trapdoor hidden on the underside of the dock beneath the tiny pub that leads to Chase's fishing boat and his catfish lines. He uses this egress once a day to pull a fish out of the water, and anyone keeping an eye on the place for an extended period has a cumulative 10% chance to observe him leaving the bar via this exit.

If the characters are persistent, they may gain access to the Last Drop, where they can question Chase. Chase is wildly drunk and has been subsisting on pickled fish, pickled eggs, pickled pigs' feet, raw catfish, and booze for the last day and a half. His speech is slurred, and he appears to be a man in terror.

Chase reveals that on the morning of the disappearance, he was passed out in a hammock next to his shack and was awakened by a scratching sound of something dragging along the dock. When he looked outside, he saw a man of slim build hauling another man of huge build over his shoulder in much the same manner that a child might carry a kitten. The huge man was wrapped in furs — fur boots, fur tunic, and so on, and had long hair, a knotted beard and a necklace of claws that dragged across the docks as the smaller man carried him.

Chase didn't get a close look at the face of the smaller man, though he saw that the man's eyes glowed in the dark like a pair of hot coals. Chase assumed it was a demon or devil, or some other foul creature, and fled to his tavern where he closed up shop and has been hiding ever since.

If the characters ask which direction the smaller man was hauling the larger one, he points to the north, toward the skyline of the Temple District, but will say no more.

The Blazing Bones

It is possible that the characters have heard that Duloth and his cronies were involved in a high stakes game at the Blazing Bones. Characters may want to investigate the alibi by checking out the seedy gaming hall for themselves. **Tuvio** (C male human Thf5) and his folk refuse to share any information on the subject of Duloth and any Wheelwright associates he may have been with, other than to say that "they were here all night, and they don't like it when people go nosing about in their business."

As the characters leave, a gambler named "**Lucky**" **Ambrose Cork** (Neutral male human Thf5) approaches them. Lucky is angry with Duloth and his gang because they walked away from the table early in the morning without giving him a chance to win back his money. Not just that they walked on his money, but they "excused themselves" to visit the lavatory, and one by one headed toward the cellar of the Blazing Bones and never came back. Lucky was down 1200gp at the time and is furious. To most, getting away from Duloth with your money "or" your life is a good prospect, but Lucky is rather fearless. The money doesn't mean as much as his dignity, and he would let the characters keep the gold Duloth took off him if he could somehow help screw old Duloth over, which is why he is breaking the normal underworld code of silence.

Lucky knows that Duloth keeps a hidden prison somewhere in the catcombs beneath the Old Temple District. He isn't exactly sure where the prison is, but knows that Duloth has employed a poisoner and kidnapper from the Red Blades in the past who keeps a shop in the Black Market and that Tuvio has a hidden access to the Black Market in his basement.

The Blazing Bones Basement

Getting into the cellar isn't any easy affair as **Mung**, **Brudo**, and **Grooder** keep a pretty close eye on the place. The party will need some distraction to make it down into the cellar to investigate. Tuvio runs a legitimate business, so battling his henchmen would be unwise to say the least, as such an endeavor likely results in the city guards quickly being called to the scene. Characters stand a good chance of being arrested even if they are working for the constables. Give the characters an attempt at a distraction or a nonviolent means of incapacitating these henchmen, allowing any reasonable scheme to work so long as they don't attempt to murder anybody or steal from Tuvio (and get caught).

Mung, Brudo and Grooder (Half-Orcs): HD 3; HP 21, 18, 15; AC 7[12]; Atk club (1d6+1); Move 9; Save 14; AL C; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** -1 to hit in sunlight, darkvision 60ft.

Equipment: leather armor, club, 2d6 sp.

The cellar of the Blazing Bones is a fairly simple affair consisting of storage for old furniture, broken gaming tables, and a locked wine cellar featuring 100 bottles of 10gp wine, 20 bottles of 50gp wine, 10 bottles of 100gp wine, and 3 bottles of wine worth 1d4x100gp each. A trail of footprints in the dust seemingly ends in a blank wall. A secret door leads below the basement and into an access tunnel that eventually leads to the Black Market (see below).

The Black Market

Characters asking questions about Duloth's activities in the Black Market find that their queries fall on deaf ears at best and attract a gang of **3d6 violent, ill-tempered thugs** that are members of the Wheelwrights carrying axe handles in extremis. However, if characters have heard rumors of Red Blade involvement in the Northlander's disappearance, they find a more receptive audience. The regulars and enforcers of the Black Market hold no loyalties for the Red Blades and readily point fingers in the direction of Galera's Shop (see below).

Violent Thugs (3d6): HD 1; AC 6[13]; Atk club (1d4); Move 12; Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 1/15; **Special:** none.

Equipment: leather armor, club, 1d6sp, 3d6cp.

Galera's Shop

If the characters visit Galera's Shop in search of Duloth or his associates, they find that **Galera** is not open to a friendly interview. Questioning her about the whereabouts of any missing Northmen, Duloth, his gang, or her personal business dealings results in her asking the characters to leave. If the characters become threatening or bombastic, she amends her warning to them to leave before things "get ugly."

Galera (Asn9): HP 44; AC 4[15]; Atk +1 *short sword* (1d6+1 plus lethal poison), +1 *dagger* (1d4+1 plus lethal poison) or *dart* x3 (1d3); Move 12; Save 6 (+1, ring); AL C; CL/XP 10/1400; **Special:** backstab (x3), disguise, poison use, thieving skills.

Thieving Skills: Climb 91%, Tasks/Traps 45%, Hear 5 in 6, Hide 40%, Silent 50%, Locks 40%.

Equipment: +2 *leather armor*, *gauntlets of dexterity*, +1 *short sword*, +1 *dagger* (hidden under shirt), *ring of protection* +1, 5 *darts* (hidden in belt), 5 doses of *lethal poison*, *potion of invisibility* (hidden in sleeve), *potion of healing*, *pouch* with 28pp, 35gp and a *topaz* (100gp)

Tactics: If Galera feels threatened, she slips a *potion of invisibility* from a hidden pocket in her sleeve, and quickly drinks it and retreats out a back

door on her turn. She flees to her secret hideout in the sewers, setting traps behind her as she goes. Unless the characters stop her from fleeing, they will have to track her to her hideout if they wish to capture her. During this search to find Galera, characters must navigate three traps she placed to discourage such attempts.

Trap 1: Falling Block Trap

A heavy stone drops from the tunnel roof, smashing anyone in a 10ft square beneath it. Characters must make a saving throw to jump out of the way or take 6d6 points of damage.

Trap 2: Covered Green Slime Pit

The floor of the tunnel opens to reveal a 40ft-deep pit. Anyone in a 10ft line must make a saving throw or drop into the green slime at the bottom of the pit. Characters take 4d6 points of damage from the fall and must deal with the green slime.

Trap 3: Passage of Blades Trap

Slashing blades erupt from the walls of the passage, dealing 3d8+3 points of damage to all targets in a 20ft line. Characters can make a saving throw for half damage.

Development: The trail eventually ends at Galera's lair where the characters can confront her if they have been successful in trailing her. In actuality, Galera had nothing to do with the disappearance of the Northman. That said, Galera keeps a well-detailed map of the catacombs, sewers, and Underhill district of Bard's Gate in her hidden lair that should prove useful to the characters (see "Treasure" below). If Galera manages to escape and the characters fail to track her, she returns to find them in 1d3 days with another 2 Red Blade assassins intent on murdering them for their insult.

Red Blade Assassins (Asn5) (2): HP 25, 21; AC 7 [12]; Atk short sword (1d6 plus lethal poison) or dagger (1d4 plus lethal poison); Move 12; Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; Special: backstab (x2), disguise, poison use, thieving skills.

Thieving Skills: Climb 87%, Tasks/Traps 25%, Hear 4 in 6, Hide 20%, Silent 30%, Locks 20%.

Equipment: leather armor, short sword, dagger, 3 doses of wyvern poison

Treasure: In addition to Galera's own substantial funds consisting of 46pp, 412gp, a sapphire (500gp), a small diamond (500gp), a small ruby (350gp), and 2 opals (worth 300gp and 200gp), she also possesses extensive maps of the sewers and catacombs that could be used to assist in locating the missing Northlander. Indicated on her maps are the locations of the Black Market (see above), Duloth's secret prison (see Part Two), and the hidden underground entrances to the Blazing Bones (C2) and the Wheelwrights' Guild Hall (G10).

Under the Temples of Thyr and Muir

If the characters encountered Justin Greenwood, he leads them to a hidden entrance to the catacombs in the Old Temple District, and points out the general direction of the Temple of Thyr (OT2) and the Shrine of Muir (OT3). He offers to guard the passage from any members of the "vampire cult" that may come through this particular entrance while the characters are on their mission. If asked to join them, Justin defers, mentioning some "bad experiences underground" and that he prefers to stay out of tunnels. He provides them with 3 +4 arrows vs. vampires and 5 flasks of holy water before they depart, wishing them luck.

Once within the catacombs, if the characters travel in the indicated direction of the Temple of Thyr and Shrine of Muir, they find a worn pathway consistent with a well-traveled route leading from the direction of the Black Market that eventually ends at Duloth's secret prison (see Part Two).

Part Two: Duloth's Secret Prison

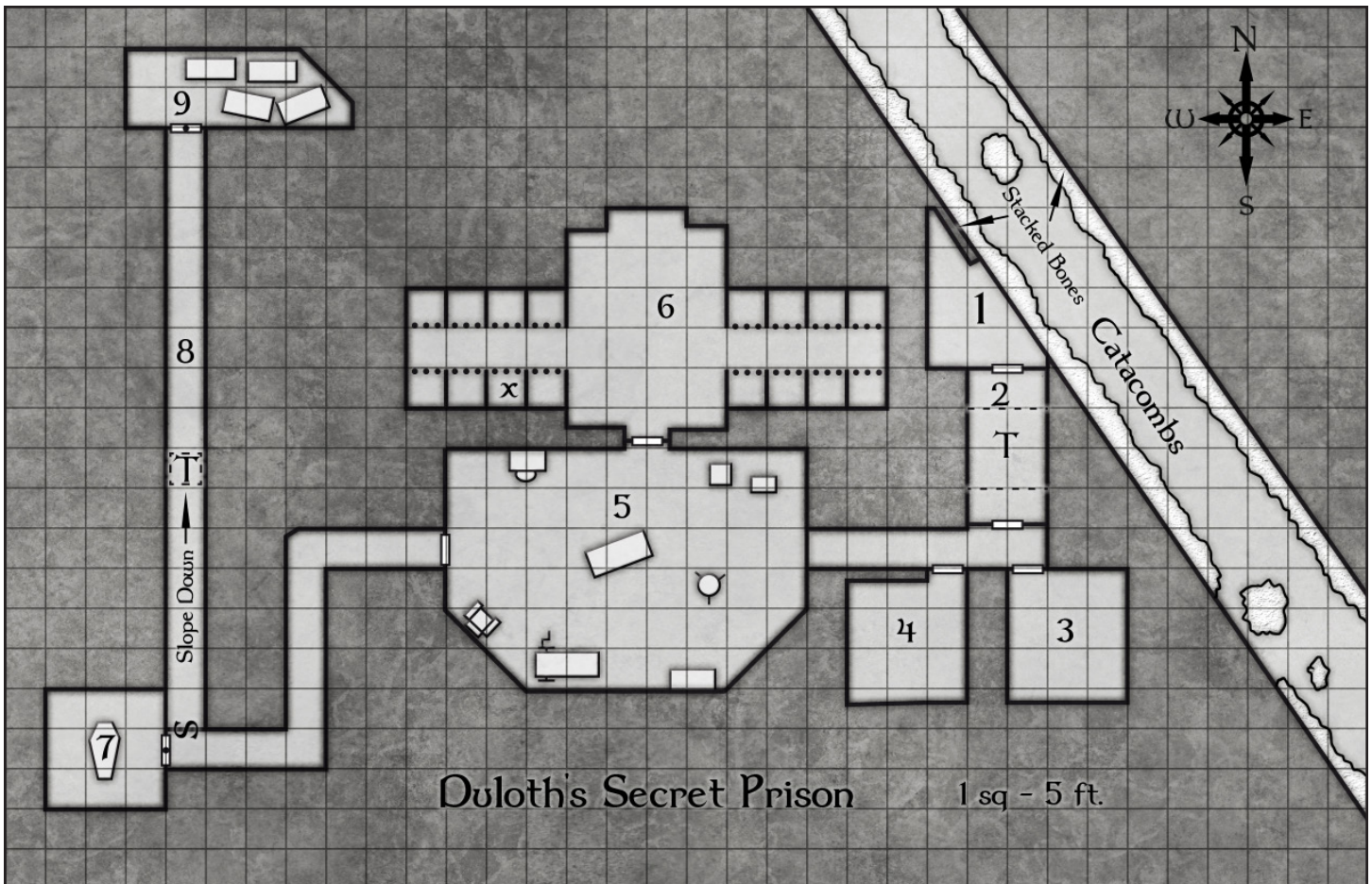
Hidden in the depths of the catacombs under the Old Temple District is Duloth's secret prison, a location he has established where he can stash and dispose of potentially valuable captives or simply enemies that he wishes to take his time in seeing to their fate. It can be located by following the worn trail found in the catacombs beneath the temples of Thyr and Muir, or by following the map located in Galera's hideout.

I. Catacomb Entrance

A wall of stacked bones from the old city hides the secret entrance to Duloth's secret prison. Enchanted with dark necromancy, the doorway needs a password to cross. If the secret password "Morentis" (an homage to Duloth's old boss) is spoken aloud, the stacked bones animate as an **ossuary golem** and draws aside to reveal the hidden doorway beyond. If anyone tries to remove the bones or otherwise gain passage beyond without first uttering the password, the golem animates and attacks.

Ossuary Golem: HD 12; HP 60; AC 6 [13]; Atk 4 slams (2d10 plus wounding); Move 15; Save 3; AL N; CL/XP 18/3800; Special: disassemble (instantly reassemble), immune to most spells, +1 or better weapon to hit, wounding (attacks bleed for 1hp damage until healed). (Tome of Horrors 4 112)





2. Hallway Trap

The wall of this hallway conceals a **trap**: a steel-and-concrete plate that smashes those who cross the ninth paver stone on the floor without first stepping twice in immediate succession on the eighth paver. If the trap is triggered, the spring-loaded plate strikes at anyone in a 10ft-square in front of the plate, dealing 10d6 points of damage (save to avoid).

3. Ghast Guard Post

Entrade uses **6 ghosts** as guards to patrol the inner hallways of the prison. Duloth's henchmen despise the foul creatures but wear a mask given them by Hrothol (**Area 4**) when they have business in the secret prison.

Ghosts (6): HD 4; HP 31, 29x2, 26, 25, 22; AC 4[15]; Atk 2 claws (1d3), bite (1d6); Move 15; Save 13; AL C; CL/XP 5/240;

Special: paralyzing touch (save avoids), stench (10ft, save or -2 to-hit penalty). (*Monstrosities* 189)

4. Hrothol's Chamber

This room is home to **Hrothol**, who served as Duloth's head torturer for years before being replaced by Entrade at the urging of the Underguild. Hrothol is not despondent, though, as he has learned much about the finer points of information extraction from the vampire as his understudy. Truth be told, Entrade doesn't mind giving the old man a turn at bloodletting. Hrothol was banished many years ago from the Rivermen's Guild for excessive cruelty to animals and members of his crews. He then spent years quietly picking off members of his old guild in staged accidents before coming to the attention of Duloth and being recruited for the considerable skills he had already developed.

Hrothol, Old Human Torturer (Thf6): HP 18; AC 5[14]; Atk whip (1d4) or dagger (1d4); Move 9; Save 8 (+2, ring); AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** backstab (x3), +2 save bonus vs. traps and

magical devices, read languages, thieving skills.

Thieving Skills: Climb 90%, Tasks/Traps 40%, Hear 4 in 6, Hide 55% (mask), Silent 45%, Locks 35%.

Equipment: +2 leather armor, whip, dagger, ring of protection +2, potion of invisibility, Hrothol's mask, manacles, 3 vials of acid, thieves' tools.

In addition to the mask he wears, Hrothol keeps a number of terrible masks in his quarters that he, Duloth, and any human guards wear whenever they are in the secret prison. These masks serve to hide their identities from the subject of their tortures, and the ghost guards have been ordered to not molest anyone wearing one of the masks. Hrothol always makes sure anyone invited to the prison is issued a mask for the duration of the visit. The masks are made by Nanda, who crafts masks for the Shadow Masks, and are true works of terror, even by her standards.

Hrothol's Mask: Hrothol is always encountered wearing his personal mask, which is composed of bits of flesh stitched together from the faces of his past victims around a ragged mouth hole and wide eye holes, but with the added embellishment of being covered in small steel studs and spikes. Once per day, the mask's wearer can appear to be anyone of the approximate shape and size within 60ft for 1 hour. The wearer gains a +1 bonus to hit and damage against the person he is mimicking. Any thief who wears the mask also appears shadowy, gaining a 20% bonus to Hide checks.

Duloth's Mask: This mask is made of leather harvested from the exotic terror birds called clubneks found on distant Ghue Island. It is covered with bright feathers with a long, brightly painted ceramic beak that smells faintly of embalming spices and gives the expression of a wholly alien bird, with polished "eyes" made of large black opals (1500gp each). The actual eye holes are hidden in the feathered throat. The mask does reduce the wearer's field of vision, resulting in a -1 penalty to hit but also gives a +1 bonus to saving throws against vision-based attacks. It is a truly exotic work of art worth 12,000gp as a whole. Duloth is the only person who ever dons this mask, and the inside of it is covered in a thin layer of sassone leaf residue contact poison that Duloth is always careful to wipe off before putting the mask on, and then reapplies before he leaves. Anyone



else who puts on the poisoned mask must make a saving throw or take 2d12 points of damage.

Guest Masks: Six of these masks are in Hrothol's quarters, ready to be handed out to visiting guests. They are identical demi-masks that cover the eyes and nose of the wearer, with a padded earhole to the side. These masks also function as a sort of leather helmet designed to protect the visitors from being bitten or having their ear ripped off by a feisty prisoner.

5. Torture Chamber

This large former mausoleum has been converted to a chamber of horrors. An iron maiden, rack, brazier with heated tongs, monk's chair, and various other implements of pain fill the room. A large table in the center of the room appears to be some sort of vivisection table as judged by the pools of dried blood which stain it and the floor below. In addition, a number of empty and broken vials of different colored glass are lying open in this crusted puddle. Strapped to the table is a massively muscled, bearded man, completely naked and covered in his own blood. A gasp of inhaled breath reveals that he still lives.

The missing **Tjorvi Thurgurson** is strapped to a table in the center of the chamber, defiant in the face of the horrific tortures that have befallen him. He is covered with blood in spite of the fact that no apparent wounds or marks are on his body. The many empty bottles once held curative potions that were plied upon the man after each torture session to keep him healthy and whole for the next round of questioning. As the characters enter the chamber, Tjorvi lashes against his bonds, his eyes bulging in his drawn, sweating face as he roars against the gag stuffed in his mouth. If a character removes his gag, he exclaims, "Look out, the devil is here!" Allow the characters 1 round to prepare themselves as a low mist seeping into the chamber from the western door coalesces into the form of the

vampire **Entrade** and 2 **vampire spawn** servitors as they leave their gaseous form. Entrade's walnut skin and shaved head — except for two long, dark braids extending from the scalp above either ear — reveal his heritage as one of the nomadic tribesmen of the plains north and east of Bard's Gate, and his leather breastplate of molded dragon scales completes the picture of exotic savagery.

Entrade, Vampire (8HD): HD 9; HP 66; AC 2[17]; Atk bite (1d10 plus level drain); Move 12 (fly 18); Save 6; AL C; CL/XP 12/2000; **Special:** only killed in coffin, regenerate (3hp/round), gaseous form, +1 or better magic weapons to hit, shapeshift, summon rats or wolves, charm gaze (save at -2 or as per *charm person*), drain 2 levels with hit.

Equipment: courtier's outfit, wand of mirror image (8 charges), platinum medallion set with carnelians (1280gp), 2 bloodstone earrings (150gp each)

Vampire Spawn (2): HD 7; HP 47, 41; AC 4[15]; Atk bite (2d8 plus level drain); Move 12; Save 9; AL C; CL/XP 9/1100; **Special:** darkvision 60 ft., regenerate (2hp/round), resists cold and electricity, vampire weaknesses. (*Tome of Horrors 4 228*)

Equipment: courtier's outfit, assorted rings and jewelry (worth 1d6x100gp)

Tjorvi Thurgurson, Northlander Huscarl (Ftr7): HP 52 (currently 6); AC 9[10]; Atk fist (1d2+2); Move 12; Save 8; AL N; CL/XP 7/600; **Special:** multiple attacks (7) vs. creatures with 1 or fewer HD, +2 to hit and damage strength bonus.

Equipment: none.

Development: Entrade has repeatedly tortured and drained Tjorvi, and Duloth has tortured the Northlander to learn the location of the Oestryn Islands. Tjorvi has been branded and scarred by both, and then force fed healing potions to keep him alive. Needless to say, Tjorvi is in a pitiful state of mind when the characters find him, and he has a 50% chance of

going berserk upon release from his bonds and attacking anyone within 5ft of him barehanded in an attempt to throttle them to death. He can be brought out of this rage by subduing him for at least 3 rounds.

Once recovered from his berserker rage, Tjorvi wishes only to return to his ship and depart this land of madmen and devils, possibly to return and gain his revenge on the ones who captured him. He is certain “the insulting fat man” was one of his torturers. As the “fat man” wore an ornate crow mask, he cannot prove this with absolute certainty, but in his heart he knows it to be true.

6. The Hopeless Cells

This wing houses the 16 dank, dark cells of Duloth’s secret prison. The cells are closed off with iron bars, and are roughly 5ft by 5ft with nothing within them save for a pile of filthy straw. No light sources are in this long, echoing chamber, further lending to the sense of despair and isolation they bring, which is magnified by the rustling sounds of the rats that scurry within the walls and corners. Each cell has a door of iron bars secured by a heavy lock. Currently, no other occupants are in Duloth’s dungeon, as any prisoners who are not dumped in pieces into the Stoneheart River are sold to the slavers in the Black Market, or sent as fodder to Duloth’s allies in the Underguild. Characters who cross Duloth and are captured by his agents may easily find themselves locked in one of these cells.

The cell marked with an “X” on the map has the name “Parvin” recently scratched into the brick wall near the floor. This is the name of a missing gambler who was last seen gaming at the tables of the Fortune’s Fool (T1) with Duloth, the wizard Irtep, and the bard Gynnen Valzoe (see the adventure *Irtep’s Dish* in *Quests of Doom* by Frog God Games for more information on the enigmatic Irtep and his assorted travails).

7. Entrade’s Chamber

The door to this room bears a *wizard lock* (9th-level caster) and requires the password “Odontres” to open. A gap under the door is sufficient to allow someone in gaseous form to pass underneath, though.

The room is bare save for an ornate casket made from rare ebony and mahogany woods chased in bronze filigree. The coffin is open, and its interior is lined with fine yellow silk packed heavily with putrid soil with writhing fat worms and beetles scurrying amid bits of bone, hair, deteriorated fabric, and other detritus. The smell it gives off is revolting.

The room formerly served as a guardroom and bunkhouse for the Wheelwrights’ guards once employed here, but now the chamber is the resting place for Entrade’s coffin. The casket itself is filled with soil taken from Entrade’s original grave in a charnel house. If Entrade was reduced to 0 hp in **Area 5**, then he rests here, buried within the foul dirt to regenerate before gathering allies to wreak vengeance on impertinent mortals who thought to do him harm.

Treasure: Entrade keeps a *bag of holding* stashed under a loose paver in one corner of this chamber. It is filled with more native dirt from his grave, 1000gp in a wooden chest, and a simple pine coffin for use in the event that he should have to travel quickly. The bronze fittings of the ornate coffin are worth 35gp if stripped from it, but the rare woods and silks are too far deteriorated for the coffin itself to bear any actual value.

8. Secret Corridor

The secret door opens onto an 80ft-long corridor that slopes downward to the north at a 30° angle. The corridor ends in an ironbound door. The hallway is **trapped** with a rolling barrel inset with razor-sharp blades that Entrade and his spawn installed shortly after taking on the duties of jailor and interrogators for Duloth.

The trap is triggered when a touch-plate is stepped on 35ft down the corridor. When that occurs, the 3ft-diameter barrel drops from a panel in the ceiling above the southern door and immediately begins careening down the corridor at a speed of 40ft. Roll for initiative as if the barrel was an attacking creature. Characters may attempt to outrun the barrel if they have sufficient speed and

beat the barrel’s initiative, though it undoubtedly catches up to them when they reach the locked door at the north end unless whoever arrives first is able to break through. The barrel does 6d6 points of damage to anyone it strikes. The barrel is 5ft long, so it cannot fit through the door frame and comes to a crashing halt at the north end of the hall. Likewise, a character could *fly* or climb an adjacent wall if he beats the barrel’s initiative and is able to attain a height of at least 8ft to allow the barrel to pass safely beneath. Finally, the individual could attempt to leap over the barrel by rolling below his dexterity score on 4d6, though a failed check results in double damage as he inevitable falls directly beneath its flashing razor blades. The trap makes a great deal of noise, so if triggered, it automatically alerts the occupants of **Area 9**.

9. Vampire Spawn Lair

This hidden chamber holds the coffins of Entrade’s vampire spawn. Four coffins are in this room. They are of generally of poor make, leaky, and filled with a handful of filth from the catacombs as the graveyard dirt of their birth. There are **2 vampire spawn** in this chamber who are resting in their coffins if surprised or are lurking on either side of the door with readied actions to attack if alerted by the trap in **Area 8**. Any vampire spawn reduced to 0 hp in **Area 5** will likewise be found in their coffins regenerating, though their entrance did not awake their resting compatriots. Any vampire spawn that escape final destruction at the hands of the characters become full-fledged vampires if Entrade is killed and soon begin hunting the characters across the city at night to take their vengeance.

Vampire Spawn (2): HD 7; HP 51, 43; AC 4[15]; Atk bite (2d8 plus level drain); Move 12; Save 9; AL C; CL/XP 9/1100; **Special:** darkvision 60 ft., regenerate (2hp/round), resists cold and electricity, vampire weaknesses. (*Tome of Horrors 4 228*)
Equipment: courtier’s outfit, assorted rings and jewelry (worth 1d6x100gp)

Concluding the Adventure

If the characters successfully free Tjorvi and return him safely to the *Sea Bear*, he rewards them with a +2 *warhammer that returns to hand*, 5000gp in hacksilver, and the undying friendship of Tjorvi and his uncle, Jarl Hallbjorn Bolverkson of Nieuland. Tjorvi and the *Sea Bear* leave Bard’s Gate, though with poor stories of the horrors that civilization has to offer.

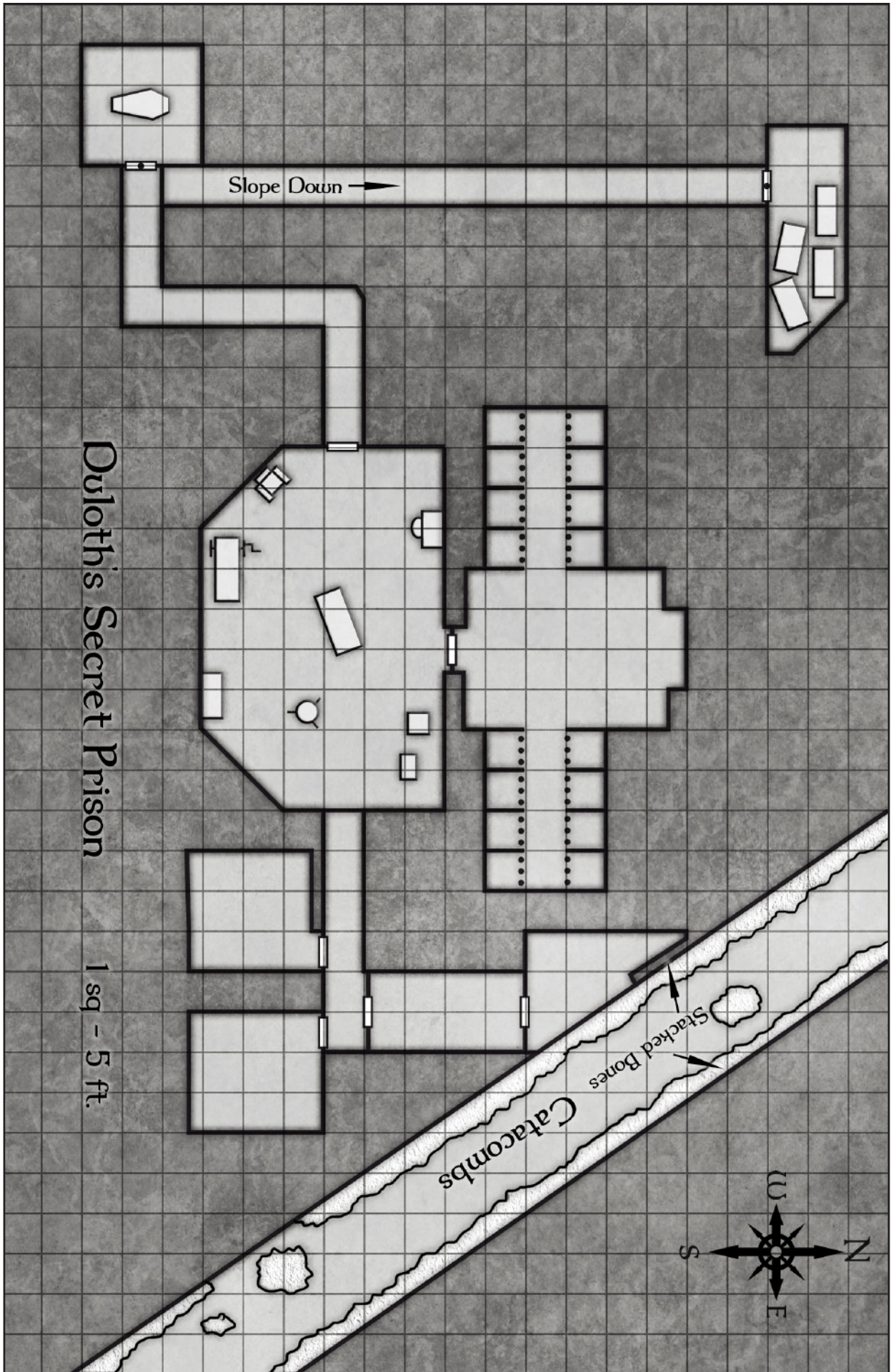
If Tjorvi is not rescued and is transformed into a vampire by Entrade, then a whole other level of hell erupts for the citizens of Bard’s Gate as Tjorvi goes on a rage-fueled feeding frenzy in the city after turning his own crew into spawn. The city becomes a fire-splashed warzone at night as hunting parties led by the Lyreguard and the paladins of the Shrine of Muir and Maiden’s Cross place the city under martial law.

Other than circumstantial evidence of Duloth’s associates (and possibly victims) having been at the secret prison, there is no solid evidence that ties the burgher of the Wheelwrights to the scene. An assault on his prison forces him to abandon this particular location and establish another elsewhere in the sewers or catacombs. When word of the party’s participation in the assault on his prison reaches Duloth’s ears, it brings the characters to the crime lord’s attention, and Duloth is likely to initiate all sorts of actions ranging from harassing any businesses or allies of the characters to hiring assassins to remove them before they can interfere with more of his plans.

Killing Entrade likewise alerts the vampires Felicity Bigh (N5) to the activities of the characters. She may begin hunting individual characters, attempting to turn them one at a time — as is her usual technique — leaving a final victim to anguish over the loss of his friends while sending these newly formed spawn to attack their one-time ally. However, if the party destroyed the vampires after being led to the catacombs by Justin Greenwood, they gain Justin as a trusted ally who may set them on the path of locating other vampires hidden in the city in order to pre-emptively strike at these night hunters.

Finally, if the party took on the mission for Cylyria, they are owed a favor by the high burgess that can be the equivalent of a “get out of jail free card” in the event that they have some troubles in the city, a free *raise dead* on a party member that is funded by the city, or even the assistance or access to the resources of the Greycloaks should they find themselves in such need.

DULOOTH'S SECRET PRISON - PLAYER'S MAP



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