

Quests of Doom 4

A Midnight Council of Quail

By Lance Hawvermale



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GAMES

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A Midnight Council of Quail

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A Midnight Council of Quail

A *Swords & Wizardry Complete* adventure for 4–6 characters of 3rd to 5th level where the characters explore a village to locate the lair of a monstrous murderer — but the villagers don't want the murderer to be discovered.

Like all *Quests of Doom* adventures, this one can be placed in any land you choose as fits the needs of your own campaign. However, in the **Lost Lands** campaign setting, *A Midnight Council of Quails* is set in the Helcynngae Peninsula that lies just to the south of Cerediun Province at the bottom edge of the Borderland Provinces. Located in the northernmost lands of the Kingdom of the Helcynn, the homeland of the people known as the Helderling, the village of Eorls Gedreas stands just south of Wortham Firth that separates the Helcynngae from the Scar-in-the-Sky Peaks and the Domain of Hawkmoon. To the south of Eorls Gedreas extends the rolling uplands known as Oescreheit Downs where the armies of the Helderling were finally and utterly defeated by the Foerdewaith in 2802 I.R., ushering in a new era of peace between the two peoples that has endured for seven centuries. The folk of Eorls Gedreas are primarily typical Helderling ceorls (“common folk”) but with a light mixture of immigrants from Helcynngae’s northern neighbors to add bit more diversity than is found in Helderling settlements farther south.

Adventure Background

The Archdruid Cadrryn is so old and mystical that his very presence often affects the natural world around him. Over the years, his close association with the region’s quail population has bestowed upon the birds a sentience uncommon to normal avians. With slightly advanced intelligence, the quail now act as local sentinels, reporting back to Cadrryn on all matters that transpire in his domain. But the druid has been away for more than a fortnight on business of the Druidic Order of Oescreheit, leaving the quail to decide on important events without his wise hand to guide them. When the birds learn that a sinister force has infiltrated the nearby village of Eorls Gedreas, where many of them roost upon the thatched rooftops, the quail convene to determine a way to fight back.

Eorls Gedreas has become the latest hunting ground for a wereboar who has assumed the duties of the village’s læce (pronounced “leech”, the Helderling word for a healer and apothecary) after killing and eating the former herbalist. The wereboar has struck up an alliance with a mad druid who has taken up residence in a lightless subterranean world below the village, where he slowly murders one kidnapped villager at a time as part of his twisted plan for revenge against an imagined crime.

Adventure Summary

The adventure most likely unfolds with the distraught quail contacting the characters and asking for help. At the quails’ request, the characters explore Eorls Gedreas but most of the residents stonewall them in their efforts.

The investigation leads either to the wereboar’s secret lift into the Under Realms or to the wilderness entrance of the Blind Burrows, depending on the characters’ actions.

The party can then journey into the Blind Burrows through one of these two access points and ultimately confront the mad druid Anwyl, putting an end to his machinations.

Beginning the Adventure

The quail conduct a council at midnight and resolve to find a suitable group of willing humanoids to take care of the problem that they themselves cannot. They spend the next several hours in flight, searching. Shortly before dawn, when the characters are traveling or camping in the wilderness, a covey of quail alight on branches and bushes around them. Read or paraphrase the following when the birds arrive:

A sudden flurry of wings startles you. About two dozen small birds drop from the sky and settle around your party, taking up posts on branches and stones. The birds are brown, with white and gray speckles, and they stare at you with obvious intent in their black eyes. They are not aggressive but clearly curious, unafraid to land within arm’s reach. Before you can do anything, one of the birds marches forward, cocks its head to one side, and speaks.

Though all of Cadrryn’s quail are imbued with an unnatural intelligence, one of them is also capable of speaking Common thanks to the archdruid’s magic. This quail is known as Pwyll. It tells the characters that it is an agent of the archdruid, and it rather seriously seeks their assistance. Pwyll informs the characters that the nearby village of Eorls Gedreas, where the quail keep their nests, has likely fallen under the influence of dark forces. The quail noticed that one of their favorite humans, a woman named Kalotte who used to feed them every morning, went missing five days ago, yet none of the other villagers seems concerned by her sudden disappearance. Further, the local swineherd has loosed his hogs from their pen, and now they eat freely from people’s gardens — though no one seems to care. Normally, the quail would report these observations to their master the archdruid. But as Cadrryn is away, they have sought out the characters for help. The characters can quiz the bird for more details, but Pwyll knows nothing else.

At this point, the characters have at least two options. They can choose to follow the flying quail to the village, a distance of a little over 6 miles. Or they can ignore the birds and continue with their current obligations, whatever they might be. If they opt to allow Pwyll to lead them to Eorls Gedreas, they cross a pleasant field of heather to a road that is little more than a pair of wagon tracks, angling through the moors. Birds serenade them as they go, and the trip seems as if it will be uneventful.

Ambush

The wereboar tries to dissuade strangers from visiting Eorls Gedreas. The best way to prevent unwanted guests is to kill them before they arrive. A pack of trained wolves hunts the plains on the outskirts of the village. Unless the characters are intentionally quiet when traveling that last mile, the **6 wolves** keep low and move through the tall grasses on their bellies, attempting to get as close as possible before launching their attack. If the characters are mounted, the wolves understand that chomping at a horse’s leg is the best way to topple a rider. The Referee should roll 1d6. On a roll of 1–2, the characters are surprised. If a monk or ranger travels with them, however, they are surprised only on a roll of 1. Refer to “Surprise” in the *Swords & Wizardry Complete Rules*.

Wolves (6): HD 2+2; HP 16, 14x2, 13, 11, 10; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d4+1); Move 18; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; Special: none.

A MIDNIGHT COUNCIL OF QUAIL

Eorls Gedreas

Established shortly after these lands were rid of monstrous denizens, the quaint community of Eorls Gedreas offers little for visitors. Locals here depend on agriculture to survive, and they consume what they grow, with just enough left over after the harvest to pay the local ealdorman, Cuthardt, his tax. The homes are made of mortared stones, covered in moss and green ivy, their rooftops constructed of thatch. The road that winds between them is dirt, well traveled by carts and livestock. The village is overrun with swine, as the wereboar doesn't want them harmed, so the flowers that once bloomed in tidy boxes along the road have been eaten, their rich soil dug up in the search for tasty grubs. Using his *ring of human control*, the wereboar has instructed the villagers to let the destructive swine do as they please.

The Wereboar's Scheme

The village's læce was murdered and eaten by a wereboar who partnered with the mad druid of the Blind Burrows, an old cavern complex that lies below the village. Shortly after the læce disappeared, the wereboar arrived at the village and introduced himself in human form as Odinel, a seller of herbs and arcana. Soon, he was accepted as the new læce of Eorls Gedreas. So far, he has kept his secret from the rest of the villagers; no one knows that he is a wereboar, and they certainly have no idea that he's been systematically enslaving them with his *ring of human control*, an exceptionally powerful version of that ring that permits him to control up to 20 subjects at once.

Odinel has allied with a deranged Daanite druid named Anwyl who has become corrupted by close contact with a toxic element (see "The Blind Burrows" for details). One by one, Anwyl intends to eradicate everyone in Eorls Gedreas. To this end, he has partnered with Odinel the wereboar-turned-healer. Using his *ring of human control*, the wereboar manipulates the village: He eats the most food, lives in the finest house, and generally behaves like a spoiled despot. Sadistic and cruel, he enjoys sending the occasional villager down into the Blind Burrows, where Anwyl tortures them to death. When the characters arrive, Odinel has extended his control over most of the village population, with a few notable exceptions. Each NPC description is followed with an "Infected" entry that notes whether that particular person is under the wereboar's sway.

The Wunderkind

One villager who has not yet fallen victim to Odinel's toxic influence is the orphan seamstress Elysant. Though only 14 years old, her skill with needle and thread borders on the legendary; she is far and away the most talented seamstress the characters have ever encountered. Though forced to work with the simple fabrics of a ceorl, Elysant creates dresses, bonnets, shawls, and cloaks that are multi-layered, complex, and wonderfully complementary to the body shape of her customers. The characters first learn of Elysant when they encounter villagers who wear clothing that is obviously not the usual attire of the Heldring common ceorls. Eventually, they meet the girl herself. Her skill with a needle is matched only by her thirst for justice.

The Investigation

The characters are likely to start asking about the strange events described by the quail. However, anyone noted as being "Infected" by the wereboar's *ring of human control* claims that nothing is wrong or that the characters received bad information. Each infected NPC uses a different tactic to discourage the characters from pursuing their inquiry. It should eventually become evident that a mass cover-up is in place. A few citizens are more helpful, however, so patient players will be rewarded with information.

The characters might ask about Kalotte, the woman who used to feed the quail before disappearing. Infected NPCs simply shrug and say that Kalotte liked to walk alone and was probably killed by wolves. Those not

infected by the wereboar's enchanted ring say that Kalotte was last seen wearing a vibrant red dress made by Elysant. No one saw her leave the village. She seems to have vanished. The characters learn Kalotte's true fate only if they visit area **14** in the Blind Burrows below the village.

While poking around in search of clues, the characters make two observations.

- Hogs and pigs roam freely, making a mess of things, but are left unattended.
- Many of the villagers wear clothes of expert design, despite the simple fabrics.

For every numbered location the characters visit, there is a 10% cumulative chance that Odinel orders his **wild boars** to attack the characters. Optionally, the Referee may have the boars launch their surprise attack whenever it is most appropriate, given the characters' actions.

Boars, Wild (3): HD 3+3; HP 24, 21, 20; AC 7[12]; **Atk** gore (3d4); **Move** 15; **Save** 14; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 4/120; **Special:** continue to attack for 2 rounds after reaching 0hp. (**Monstrosities** 48)

Arrival at the Village

Led by the quail, the characters enter Eorls Gedreas from the south.

The quail alight across the thatched rooftops and resume their careful observation of the surrounding homes, most of which are rather tumbledown and plain. These houses are made of fieldstones, stacked and held with gray mortar. Ivy covers many of them. In most ways, this seems to be a typical Heldring village, with quiet work going on in gardens and surrounding fields. In fact, the only two things that seem unusual are the fancy dresses worn by some of these peasant women and the unusual number of swine roaming freely between the houses.

The characters are free to explore Eorls Gedreas in any manner they choose.

A. Oilman

Infected: Yes.

The old widower **Folc** lives here, providing oil to his fellow villagers in exchange for basic living supplies. As an oilman, Folc produces oil from flax, castor seeds, and from fish he catches in nearby Wortham Firth. This essential substance keeps the lanterns burning in Eorls Gedreas, so Folc is held in high regard. He welcomes the characters, and invites them to play a few rounds of a board game called *halatafl*, as he is a lonely man and knows he shouldn't constantly pester the other villagers to play.

As he is under Odinel's influence, Folc can impart no helpful knowledge to the inquisitive characters, and in fact, he appears blissfully ignorant of any odd happenings in Eorls Gedreas. He seems concerned only with his oils and his card game. He grows irritated if faced with too many questions and suggests that the characters return to him when they are of the mind to play some serious *halatafl* without all of these silly notions in their heads.

B. Farrier and Stable

Infected: No.

Linhorn Tossobble, a halfling horseshoe maker, keeps a small paddock of horses and ponies here. Fancying himself something of a misunderstood romantic, Linhorn tends to over-pour the charm when he's in the presence of someone he finds physically attractive. Good-natured if a little self-centered, the halfling talks amicably with the characters and wonders aloud about all of the adventurous quests they've completed. If asked, Linhorn admits a "queer feeling" he's had lately when talking to his neighbors. They all seem unusually content, no longer complaining about the ealdorman's high taxes or the lack of recent rainfall for the crops. He suggests that the characters speak with Rowan the gong farmer (area **E**),

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who used to be Linhorn's drinking partner but now seems more concerned with sleeping — and that has Linhorn worried.

If the characters need fresh horses, tack, or shoes, Linhorn is happy to provide them at the usual rates, though he offers a discount to anyone he finds personally attractive.

C. Chandler and Apiary

Infected: Yes.

Every village needs a local candle-maker, and **Gaillart** and his family fill that vital role. They produce candles made of beeswax taken from the hives they maintain behind their home. They also trade in honey. Gaillart is happy to give the characters a free jar of his honey, and his wife insists on showing them her entire line of candles in different sizes and shapes. Though enchanted by the wereboar's magic ring, Gaillart remains good at heart, displaying a boyhood glee when talking about his beloved bees and explaining how they gather nectar, draw comb, and produce honey.

One of the wooden boxes that serves as a beehive performs double duty as Gaillart's secret stash. If the characters brave the thousands of bees building comb and storing honey in the box — getting stung dozens of times in the process — they find a small metal tube. The tube is sealed shut with propolis, a sticky substance that bees use as caulking. Inside the tube are a dozen bowls of Silver Harp tobacco, favored for its mildly euphoric experience and occasional hallucinations (see **LL8: Bard's Gate** by **Frog God Games** for details of Silver Harp tobacco).

D. "Crystal Lake"

A pale green skin of plant life mostly covers this small pond. Tall weeds with bright yellow tips grow up around the water's edge, and dragonflies almost six inches long skim the surface in search of food. Long-legged birds strut around the marshy perimeter, snapping up tiny frogs. The birds seem unconcerned by your presence, even when you draw near. Jutting up from the center of the pond is what appears to be the tip of a rusty spear.

The locals do not use this as a water source, as the taste is much too bitter. From its thick growths of algae and silt-filled waters. The villagers have always jokingly referred to the pond as "Crystal Lake". The quail have assured the birds who forage here that the characters are allies, so they have no intention of interrupting their meal to fly away in unwarranted fear.

The village children sometimes cast toy boats across the pond's surface, but they aren't allowed to play in the water due to the fact that giant frogs routinely nest here to birth their tadpoles. The frogs harm no one on dry land. However, the spear blade sticking out of the water might be sufficient to tempt the characters to wade in and study the situation. If they wisely ask one of the people of Eorls Gedreas about the weapon before swimming out there, they're told that the item is actually a pike, and its butt end is stuck in the mud at the bottom of the pool. A year ago, a man named Sephan decided to impale a giant frog and cook it for dinner. Instead, he ended up dead, and his body never floated to the surface. The villagers assume his remains are down there still.

Anyone venturing into the water to fetch the pike or to look for Sephan's body — perhaps thinking it a clue in their current quest — must deal with the **3 giant killer frogs** that occupy "Crystal Lake". Characters fighting while partially submerged suffer a -2 penalty on all attack rolls.

Frogs, Giant Killer (3): HD 1+4; HP 11, 10, 8; AC 7[12]; Atk 2 claws (1d2), bite (1d4+1); Move 3 (leap 15); Save 17; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; Special: leap. (**Monstrosities** 180)

If the characters somehow manage to see in the murky, muddy water, they discover a few human bones, but nothing else. The pike's wooden shaft is now almost spongelike from water absorption.

E. Gong Farmer

Infected: Yes.

Rowan tends the village latrine. A six-sided building near his small home is politely referred to as the "House of Easement," but is essentially a wooden shell over a cesspit. A channel in the bottom of the pit carries the liquid waste away from the village, but the solid waste (referred to as "gong") must be removed manually and carried away. This task falls to Rowan and his wife, **Cedany**. The couple usually conducts their work at night so as not to be seen trundling carts of human excrement through Eorls Gedreas en route to the gong mounds a quarter mile away. They euphemistically call their cargo "night soil."

Rowan usually sleeps during the day. He used to drink with the halfling Linhorn (area **B**), but gave that up ever since falling under the control of the wereboar. Within the House of Easement, on the far side of the gong pit, is a round, flat stone. Moving this stone reveals a tunnel to area **1** of the Blind Burrows. The stone weighs 50 lbs., and the villagers never bother it, as Rowan has told them that it covers the village's former cesspit before it was filled and a new one built on top of it. He does everything he can to prevent the characters from moving the stone aside and discovering the tunnel below.

F. Ropemaker

Infected: Yes.

Ropes of various thicknesses and tensile strengths are coiled neatly all around this small home. Lariats hang from hooks on either side of the door. The local ropemaker is a narrow-boned human male named **Tybalt**. His long, quick fingers have spent years weaving rope from hemp plants, and he's something of a sage of his craft. If the characters are interested, Tybalt can explain the differences in his lines. The standard 50-foot rope costs 1 gp and is half-inch thick, with a breaking strain of 500 lbs. Tybalt offers many others:

Hemp Rope

Diameter (in inches)	Cost per 50-foot	Load (in pounds)	Weight (in pounds)
1/16	5 cp	10	1/3
1/3	2 sp	50	2
1/4	7 sp	225	9
1/2	1 gp	500	20
1	5 gp	900	36
2	25 gp	3,550	42
3	50 gp	8,000	320

[END TABLE]

The thickest of Tybalt's ropes are designed for use by ships that sail upon the nearby firth, hence their extreme loads and overall weights; enterprising characters may likely find a use for such formidable hawsers.

Tybalt can't answer any questions the characters have about the recent occurrences in the village, simply because all he'll talk about are his ropes and why the characters should invest in a wide variety of different sizes, as they'll never know what a particular situation might require.

G. Elder

Infected: Yes.

Though known as **Sigemikus the Sorcerer** (a galdre, or "magician" in local terminology), this aging plowman earned the moniker not because of any magical prowess but rather due to his ability to amuse the village children with his sleight-of-hand. He is locally famous for making an acorn pass mystically from one overturned cup to another. If asked about the unusual events in Eorls Gedreas, Sigemikus deflects the question by offering to show the characters his parlor trick, of which he remains proud, even after all these years. Sigemikus has no vocation and does not work, as he is too infirm. He depends upon the largess of the other villagers for food and clothing.

H. Swine Pens

Infected: Yes.

Houdart the swineherd was the first put under the wereboar's magical influence. Odinel could not abide seeing the pigs held captive and put to slaughter, as he considers them something of his kin, and so now all four dozen of them are permitted to roam around Eorls Gedreas and feed on anything they like. No one is allowed to harm them. If questioned about these hogs-at-large, Houdart just shrugs and says he got tired of tending to them. "They're noisy, obnoxious beasts," he says. "Let someone else contend with them." If pressed, Houdart grows visibly uncomfortable, and it should become clear that he's not relating the entire story. But no matter how persistent the characters are in their interrogation, Houdart is unable to reveal everything, as the power of the wereboar's magic ring is too strong. Eventually, he says he needs to go see the læce for some medicine; only Odinel the læce can help. This might be enough to point the characters in the right direction, but not necessarily so. They can also find the entrance to the Blind Burrows by visiting Rowan the gong farmer (area E).

I. Family Farm

Infected: Yes.

Carefully tended crops of all sorts grow in different patches around this home. Standing in the middle of a barley field out back is a black-headed scarecrow mounted on a crucifix of wood and rope. Its shirt is stuffed with moldy straw. Its mouth is painted the color of blood.

Theom, his wife, and their 4 children work from dawn until sunset almost every day, raising the crops that they barter for other things they need to survive. All six family members have fallen prey to the wereboar's magic ring, so instead of replying to questions in a helpful way, they shrug and claim to be exactly what they are: simple farm-folk just trying to work hard every day and do right by the gods. Theom goes so far as to ask the characters if they wouldn't mind spending a few hours helping him remove weeds between the rows. The scarecrow, though somewhat threatening in appearance, is quite harmless.

If the characters are particularly friendly, Theom's children take a liking to them and follow them around the village, asking questions about their journeys and trying to touch their weapons.

J. Apothecary Shop

Infected: NA.

This is the finest home in Eorls Gedreas. The local healer has always been a vital part of the village's well-being, as the limited ministrations of the resident cleric aren't always sufficient for easing the daily discomforts of the villagers, from upset stomachs to broken hearts. Outside the læce's door are gift baskets: yellow squash, fresh bread, metal flatware, earthenware pots, and fresh flowers. The characters might assume these favors are in thanks for the aid that Odinel provides, but actually they are tributes he demands from those under his control. The wereboar is gluttonous by nature and consumes more than his share of food, so he depends on the villagers to provide for him from their own dwindling supplies.

The characters might come here after speaking with Elysant (area K), or they might simply visit randomly as part of their investigation. Either way, **Odinel** receives them as a professional but not as someone overly fond of guests. In human form, he stands 5-1/2 feet tall, with a very wide torso and considerable belly. His hair is thick and black, with coarse stubble covering his double chin. He wears an apron while working with his herbs and tonics, hard-soled black boots, and the *ring of human control* on the little finger of his left hand — the only finger not too chubby to accommodate a ring.

His house also serves as his herbals shop. The main living area has a bed to one side and racks of shelves on the other, with a small round table in between. The shelves contain poultices, salves, and tiny jarred remedies,



some more effective than others. This is the only room that guests are permitted to see. A thick blanket hangs like a curtain that conceals the other part of the house. Odinel does not bring attention to this room, and if asked what lies beyond the makeshift curtain, he says it's simply his overstock of such herbs as bloodroot, liverwort, and kingsfoil. In actuality, the floor of that room has been removed and a simple block-and-tackle system installed, enabling a platform to be lowered to area 18 of the Blind Burrows. There is an 80% chance that the lift is here in its upper position when the characters arrive. Odinel uses the lift to send victims down to the druid.

Odinel is a clever actor and does nothing to reveal his true nature. His goal is simply to get the characters to leave his shop. If pressed, he becomes gruff; his weakness is his short temper. If the characters force their way through the curtain or if the Referee deems that Odinel has reached a breaking point, he transforms to a human-boar hybrid and attacks.

Odinel (Lycanthrope, Wereboar): HD 5; HP 35; AC 4[15]; Atk bite (2d6) or +1 dagger (1d4+1); Move 12; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** lycanthropy (contract if wounded greater 50% hit point maximum), silver or +1 or better weapon to hit.

Equipment: +1 dagger, ring of human control, 5 gp, 12 sp.

The only way the characters will be able to conduct a complete search of the wereboar's home is to defeat him, at which point they're free to probe his collection of herbs and other items. After searching for 15 minutes, they discover the following:

- wooden ladle inlaid with silver (15 gp)
- catoblepas-skin pouch containing 14 gp and a freshwater pearl (25 gp)
- herbal ingredients such as lyre-leaf sage, skullcap, snakeroot, deadly nightshade, and others
- deed to a small keep called Colthran Hold
- spool of fine silkworm thread with the tensile strength of steel

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Finally, a loose floorboard — discovered on a successful search for secret doors — reveals a delicate glass bottle with a narrow neck and a stone stopper. This is a *thought bottle* (see **New Magic Items**).

K. Seamstress

Infected: No.

This is the home and shop of the most talented person in Eorls Gedreas, the sewing prodigy **Elysant**. Though she appears human, Elysant is changling, and like Linhorn the halfling (area **B**), she is not subject to the effects of the wereboar's *ring of human control*. Though only 14 years old, Elysant lives alone, an orphan quite capable of taking care of herself. Her ability to sew beautiful clothing is unsurpassed. Indeed, if the rulers of the kingdom were to learn of Elysant's skill, they would whisk her away to the castle and give her anything she fancied in return for making gorgeous gowns.

Elysant knows that folks have been acting a little strange lately. At first, she thought that someone had found a pouch of fey powder and had accidentally afflicted everyone with a fairy bliss charm; she'd heard such stories when she was younger. The only villagers still acting normal, at least in her estimation, are the halfling stable-keeper and the læce. Because she is concerned for her friends, she is willing to accompany the characters if they invite her, so as to make introductions.

The characters might wish to commission a custom garment from Elysant; they will find no finer in all the kingdom. The young seamstress mainly deals in barter, and she's quite willing to accept all manner of household items in exchange for a new outfit. Of course, if the characters offer gold, Elysant gladly obliges, as gold shillings are rare here in these humble environs.

L. Church

Infected: Yes.

The unmarried Deodatus serves as the pastor of Eorls Gedreas. **Friar Deodatus** is a missionary cleric of Ceres, the goddess of grain, or an agrarian deity of the Referee's own pantheon. The pastor is a skilled gardener and maintains a few rows of vegetables and wheat, which he dotes on like a proud father. He brews a somewhat weak ale in his spare time. Plainspoken and sincere, Friar Deodatus assures the characters that the village is quite safe and that their suspicions are baseless. He is willing to use his curative powers on anyone in need of aid, though he does so while raising his eyebrows in the direction of the poor box.

Deodatus (Clr3 of Ceres): **HP** 11; **AC** 9[10]; **Atk** mace (1d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 13; **AL** L; **Special:** +2 save versus paralyzation or poison, spells (2), turn undead.

Spells: 1st—*cure light wounds, purify food and drink*
Equipment: mace, wooden holy symbol of a wheat sheaf.

If the characters enter the cleric's home and search his belongings, they most likely are disappointed, as he possesses only the accoutrements of a country friar ... for the most part. Tucked away under some carefully folded woolen blankets is a ceremonial holy symbol in the disc shape of a millstone. It is made of gold and worth 50 gp, resting in a deeply polished wooden box that is engraved with the friar's name and the date of his ordination. At the Referee's option, anyone stealing this item is afflicted with a minor curse, as taking the sole treasure of a man of the cloth invokes the ire of the immortals.

M. Thatcher

Infected: Yes.

A young woman who dresses like a man maintains the roofs of the village homes. Her name is **Yuald**, and she wears her dead father's tool belt and carries on his occupation now that he's gone. With close-cropped hair and a no-nonsense attitude, Yuald is efficient and hardworking, hauling straw and reeds up ladders all day to keep out the rain. She works nearly every day. She tends to be a loner, and an observant one, and before falling under the effects of Odinel's magic, she would have been quick to

assist the characters in uncovering the trouble. Now, though, she shrugs off every meaningful question by saying she has work to do. However, if the characters are persistent, Yuald does admit that things are different now, though she doesn't know why, and that she dearly misses her friend Kalotte (the woman in the red dress who can be found in area **14** in the *Blind Burrows*).

The characters can gain a bit of Yuald's trust by offering to help her mend the village rooftops. To thatch a roof, the characters gather water reed from Yuald's supply and haul it up a ladder. The thatch is held to the roof supports with a spar of split hazelwood. Yuald hands the characters a spade-like tool called a legget that they'll use to tap the thatch into a uniform shape. The ends of any errant reeds are cropped with Yuald's shearing hook, and the roof is complete 2d4 hours later. If the characters lend a hand to this labor, Yuald sits down with them for a simple meal of rye bread, cheese, and the friar's ale. She is unable to speak out against Odinel, as she is under his control, but she does admit that Rowan the gong farmer (area **E**) has been in a very bad mood recently whenever Yuald visited the House of Easement.

N. Baker

Infected: Yes.

Inhelm, the baker, spends most of his days brooding about a son he lost in battle a decade ago, so his wife, **Milnyd**, conducts almost all of the baking while her husband slips further into a mire of self-pity. Inhelm is soft-spoken and distant, though not impolite. Characters visiting the interior of the bakery might become suspicious of a chained and locked metal trunk that rests in the corner. This contains the personal effects of Inhelm and Milnyd's deceased son and nothing else of value, but the couple changes the subject if the characters mention the box, perhaps stoking their curiosity to know what's inside.

O. The Puppet Show

Infected: No.

As you approach, you see a poorly built wooden merchant's stall converted into some kind of stage for a child's puppet show. Apparently, someone crouches down behind the stall, as two dolls re-enact a scene from a bedtime story. Though the dolls themselves are crudely made, their tiny costumes are beautiful and complex. One of the dolls is equipped with a miniature sword. Standing around and watching this puppet play are half-dozen children. When the sword-wielding doll takes a swing at his fellow mannequin, who ducks and retaliates with an equally small broom, the audience laughs.

Two young dwarves, **Zedford** and **Kasdri**, the only two of their race in the village, perform the play. Itinerant storytellers, the dwarf cousins ride shaggy ponies from one community to the next, performing their poetry and puppet plays in exchange for a few silver groats and the promise of a hot meal or two. As nonhumans, they are immune to the powers of Odinel's magic ring. They're finding their audience here in Eorls Gedreas to be complacent and rather uninspired but nonetheless happy to have a diversion from the drudgery of their lives.

Zedford and Kasdri (Dwarf Thf1): **HP** 3; **AC** 9[10]; **Atk** dagger (1d4); **Move** 9; **Save** 15; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 1/15; **Special:** backstab (x2), detect stonework, +4 save vs. magic, +2 save bonus vs. traps and magical devices, read languages, thieving skills.

Thieving Skills: Climb 85%, Tasks/Traps 25%, Hear 3 in 6, Hide 15%, Silent 25%, Locks 15%.

Equipment: dagger, various puppets, props, and musical instruments, 2d6 gp.

The dwarves were quite pleased to meet Elysant (area **K**), as the girl sewed the elaborate outfits worn by the puppets. This was a great bit of barter in the dwarves' eyes, and they're pleased to entertain the villagers for another day

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or so before packing up their show and moving on. The dwarves are chatty fellows and willing to speak at length to the characters, their favorite topics being theater arts, pastoral poetry, and pie. Zedford has a “strange feeling” about Eorls Gedreas, but Kasdri doesn’t allow him to elaborate without getting something in return. While Zedford likes to ramble about his personal suspicions, moral questions, and life goals, Kasdri keeps him focused on their primary agenda: making money. If the characters grease the wheels by offering whatever the Referee believes to be a sufficient payment, Kasdri magnanimously gestures for Zedford to spill what he knows. The characters learn that Rowan the gong farmer (area E) harassed Zedford for taking too long to do his business in the latrine. In fact, Rowan appeared quite anxious to have Zedford finish up and be on his way. “It was rather uncomfortable, really,” Zedford admits. “And more than a little embarrassing!”

The Blind Burrows

Years ago, the Under Realm race known as the derro accessed the sunlit land above by sailing flat-bottom rafts along an underground river until reaching a series of caves collectively known as the Doorway. By venturing through this “Doorway,” the derro could sneak into the painfully sunlit world, conduct their fell business, and return before dawn, laden with stolen goods, livestock, and, sometimes, abductees. They depended on the river to make this journey, as no dry tunnel connected their deep settlements to the surface. When a natural earthquake caused a collapse that drained half the river and filled the tunnel with tons of fallen rock, the derro lost access to the Doorway and all the rooms they had excavated to store their supplies. In the absence of any activity, bats soon took up residence in the cavern complex in a massive colony that continues to occupy these caves.

This derro-built, guano-filled place is now also the hidden home of a troubled druid named Anwyl. Formerly a member in good standing of the Druidic Order of Oescreheit, Anwyl was emotionally and mentally transformed by prolonged contact with a dangerous substance called *earthmurk*. A stone tainted by negative energy, *earthmurk* radiates an invisible field of negative energy that attacks the nervous system of any living creature in close proximity to it. Due to *earthmurk* poisoning, Anwyl is quite insane, gripped by extreme paranoia and a thirst for revenge against the people of his home village, Eorls Gedreas. He now lives in the darkness of the caves he has fittingly renamed the Blind Burrows. For full details on *earthmurk*, refer to **New Magic Items**.

Elevation

The Blind Burrows feature several different elevations, depicted on the map with contour marks and stone steps. Combat may occur with the various belligerents at multiple different elevation levels, which dictates the dynamic of the fight. As per “Terrain Features” in the *Swords & Wizardry Complete Rules*, anyone fighting from the advantage of higher ground does so at a bonus of +1 on attack rolls. Likewise, those with higher ground often enjoy some form of cover from those firing missiles or swinging melee weapons from lower elevations, penalizing those incoming attacks by -1.

Light

Home to an uncounted number of bats, the Blind Burrows are completely, utterly dark. The characters must bring alternate light sources. Darkvision is somewhat ineffective, as almost everything in the cave system is a uniform 55° F, providing little contrast for those attempting to make sense of shapes. The Referee should keep careful track of the radius of light provided by the characters’ torches, lanterns, and spells:

- Hooded lanterns shine light 30 feet in all directions.
- Bullseye lanterns exude a beam of light up to 60 feet long but only 10 feet wide.
- Torches shed light in a 30-foot radius, but they are the easiest for the bats to extinguish (see **Bat Swarm**).
- The *light* spell has a radius of 20 feet. *Continual light*, the best optional available, has a radius of 120 feet. Further complicating matters, Anwyl has created a permanent *darkness 15-foot radius* at area 13 using charges from his rapidly depleting *staff of the shoreline* (refer to **New Magic Items**).

If at any point the characters are without a light source, they can see absolutely nothing — not even their fingers waving in front of their faces. If this occurs, one of Anwyl’s **giant bats** attacks the sightless characters to exploit their weakness. All attack rolls made by the characters in total darkness suffer a -4 penalty to the roll. The bat, however, faces no such penalty.

Bat, Giant: HD 4; HP 26; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d10); Move 4 (fly 18); Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** 10% chance of disease.

Bat Swarm

Anwyl uses his magic to commune with the cave’s normal bats. He has convinced them to defend their shared home. Though standard bats are small and pose no serious threat to the characters, when swarming *en masse*, thousands of bats can prove troublesome, indeed. Anwyl has trained the swarming bats to attack light sources in order to put intruders at a serious disadvantage. Because each individual bat is harmless and easily destroyed, it has no statistics. However, things change when the bats join into a swarm. A small swarm consists of 100 to 1,000 bats (1d10 × 100). A **bat swarm** flies as a single entity, with a movement rate of 18, snuffing torches in 1d4 rounds and lanterns in 1d6 rounds. A swarm can be dispersed before ruining a light source if the Referee rules it takes sufficient damage from an area-affect spell such as *pyrotechnics* or other fire- or smoke-producing spell. Spells such as *obscuring mist* and similar effects can confuse the bats, and *shield* prevents them from getting close enough to ruin a light source. Optionally, the characters can simply retreat, running from the swarm so as to keep their fires burning.

Keyed Encounters

The characters have discovered one or perhaps both of the entrances to the Blind Burrows. The natural cavern was expanded and somewhat refined by derro explorers, but they were forced to abandon the area, leaving many of their supplies behind when an earth tremor collapsed the tunnel that connected the Burrows to the derro dwellings far below the surface.

1. Into the Blind

The characters enter here if they discovered the hidden tunnel in the House of Easement at area E in Eorls Gedreas.

A tunnel extends deep into the ground, varying between 15 feet wide and 5 feet wide it as leads northeast into the unknown. The ceiling is barely 7 feet high in most places. It appears as if a natural cave opening was hastily enlarged at some point in the distant past, with the rough signs of pickaxes and shovel blades still scarring the walls. Clearly, visitors are not wanted, as a mound of sticks and damp leaves is piled up to a height of 4 feet, blocking your path. Toadstools with bright orange caps have sprouted up from this moist compost. They form a pattern that is almost beautiful here in the semi-dark.

The toadstools might give the characters pause, but they are normal and harmless. A skilled herbalist might be able to harvest them as ingredients in a poultice or salve. Clearing the debris from the tunnel cannot be done quietly without the aid of magic, which rouses the guardian at area 2.

2. Sentry

Anwyl stationed a **giant badger** here to dissuade unwanted arrivals. Nearly as tall as a grown human, the badger spends a good portion of its day sleeping. It leaves its lair to hunt and forage when Rowan the gong farmer removes the stone from the tunnel entrance inside the House of Easement. Any noise at area 1, such as the shifting of the deadfall, has a

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magic-user spell *read languages* can also make sense of the inscriptions. Of course, any speaker of Undercommon automatically understands the runes, which read, “*Do not step here,*” with one word appearing on each stair. If more than 10 lbs. of pressure is placed on the fourth and highest step, which bears the word “*here,*” a rockfall trap is triggered, and 500 lbs. of rocks drop from the ceiling. However, the trap is old, and an audible *click* gives one second of warning before the ceiling collapses. Anyone on the steps is allowed a saving throw to leap back down to the base of the stairs and get clear just as the bone-crushing stones rain down. Those failing their saving throws take 6d6 points of damage and must be dug out by their companions.

The derro once used these chambers to raid the surface world, and they took measures to ensure they weren’t followed back to their lair. These stepping-stones are part of those defenses. The stone door was designed so anyone more than 5-1/2 feet tall needs to duck to enter. It is quite heavy and its hinges have worn out over time, requiring an Open Doors check to open.

4. The Decapitated Drow

Remember that the characters must provide their own light source to see anything in these otherwise black cavern rooms.

This cave is roughly 20 feet across and 30 feet north-to-south. A natural pillar in the middle of the room supports the ceiling. Stacked around the pillar are old crates, boxes, and other containers, many of them having long ago rotted away. The room appears to have once served as a storage area for dry goods. One of the boxes is made of glass. It is about 18 inches on a side, with a delicately hinged glass lid. Resting inside the box is a dark-skinned humanoid head severed at its neck. It appears to be the head of a male elf, with inky black skin and perfectly white hair. It looks to be some kind of grotesque trophy.

The derro stored foodstuffs here, but these provisions have degraded, as have many of their containers. But the derro also kept items here they acquired during their raids. If the characters spend at least 15 minutes sorting through the collection, they find the following items that vary in value and quality:

- lantern with red glass panes
- leather pouch with 10 pitons
- scroll of tax entries from the office of the ealdorman’s reeve
- ivory hair comb (5 gp)
- empty bottle labeled “Separation”
- *signal flag of clouds* (see **New Magic Items**)

If the characters approach the head in the glass box, the drow’s eyelids flash open, revealing amethyst-colored eyes. This is what remains of Nymatar Maeafin, whose head was cut off by the skum slaves of an aboleth. The deranged but powerful aboleth commanded sufficient magical power to keep Nymatar’s his head alive even after it was separated from his body. This was done as a special form of torture, as the dark elf had been caught trying to double-deal the aboleth in an Under Realms business arrangement. Eventually, the aboleth grew tired of its toy and sold it to a passing dark folk trader. It finally ended up with the derro, who delighted in tormenting the helpless drow. The derro are no friends of the drow and when they came upon the dark folk selling this macabre *objet d’art*, they couldn’t resist purchasing it.

Nymatar Maeafin’s head can speak but takes no other actions. He requires no food and no air. The drow is chaotic and quite evil, but he has also come to understand that he is entirely powerless. His only desire is to be made whole again, and if that is impossible, then he chooses to die. He’s lost track of how many years he’s suffered in this state; dozens, surely. He does everything he can to convince the characters that helping him will result in a great reward. He lies and says that his family in the deep city of Dusendraith will pay them handsomely for delivering him



75% chance of waking it. The badger rests on a ledge at the 10ft elevation, and it leaps down and charges if anyone draws near.

Badger, Giant: HD 3; HP 21; AC 4[15]; Atk 2 claws (1d3), bite (1d6); Move 6; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** none. (**Monstrosities** 28)

The badger is entirely fearless and attacks savagely. The Referee should note the width of the corridor, as the relatively tight confines might make for an interesting battle, as not everyone may be able to crowd in close and attack the angry animal simultaneously.

Rummaging through the badger’s nest requires the characters get up the 10-foot rise to the next elevation level. This can be accomplished easily enough, but it should serve as foreshadowing for the many changes in elevation they’ll face in the caverns to come. The nest is a surprisingly comfortable layer of leaves and grasses, though it smells strongly of animal fur. Lost among the bedding and discovered 50% of the time is a scratched *ring of poison resistance* that the badger spat out after chewing someone’s finger.

3. Runic Steps

The elevation changes here, rising on four stone steps to a door, also made of stone. The steps are wide and flat, obviously placed here many years ago. The steps have been deeply inscribed with runes. Each step bears a different runic word.

A thief’s ability to Read Normal Languages serves the party well here, as a thief has an 80% chance of deciphering the runes. The 1st-level

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to his home. He claims that House Mæafin is wealthy, which is true, and that the members of his house include several powerful wizards and priests capable of giving him a new body, which is also true. Of course, the dark elves would never honor any deal with surface-dwellers, and the characters would be hard pressed to escape Dusendraith alive. If they'd like to try, the Referee will need to compose an adventure worthy of such a quest. On the other hand, they might refuse Nymatar's deal, in which case he implores them to run a blade through his eye and end his misery. Either way, this encounter should prove to be a moral challenge for characters of certain alignments.

5. Descent

The floor angles sharply down at this point to a lower elevation level. There are no steps, just a 45° decline covered in loose rocks and shards of limestone. Sliding down is safe, but a character attempting to trot down or otherwise remain on his feet must make a dexterity check or tumble to area 8, taking 1d6 points of damage.

6. Tracker

This cave has a particularly low ceiling, no more than 5-1/2 feet at its highest point, which forces taller characters to stoop uncomfortably. Hairline cracks look like veins on the cavern walls. Tiny spiders occasionally emerge from these fissures. The floor is uneven, as short stalagmites and natural knobs have formed over the centuries from the dripping, calcite-rich water. On the northeast side of the cave is a series of flat stone steps leading down to a lower elevation at area 7. The room is geologically interesting but not inherently perilous.

A **slithering tracker** hides in this cave. Anwyl rid the Blind Burrows of all monsters; only mammals remain, a group that he has always considered his allies. However, in his purging, the druid understandably overlooked the almost invisible slithering tracker. When the characters arrive, the

tracker is concealed in a crack where the floor meets one of the walls. After the characters depart the chamber, the tracker follows, flowing along on the floor. It is spotted only 10% of the time. The tracker waits until one of the characters is alone — preferably sleeping or resting. If the slithering tracker comes upon an unmoving victim, it attacks, forcing a saving throw to avoid the paralysis caused by its glandular secretions. Anyone unlucky enough to be paralyzed is drained of all bodily fluids, losing 20% of his hits point per turn (10 minutes) until he is dead. The tracker does not attack anyone who is moving or fully alert, so the characters might end up exiting the Blind Burrows without ever knowing they were being stalked.

Slithering Tracker: HD 4; AC 5[14]; Atk none; Move 12; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** transparent (10% chance to spot), paralysis (save avoids).

7. Roost

The appearance of any light source in this area draws the attention of the **bat swarm** that roosts along the ceiling. Anwyl trained these bats to snuff out torches and lanterns. Refer to **Bat Swarm**, above, for details.

8. The Waterfall Brawl

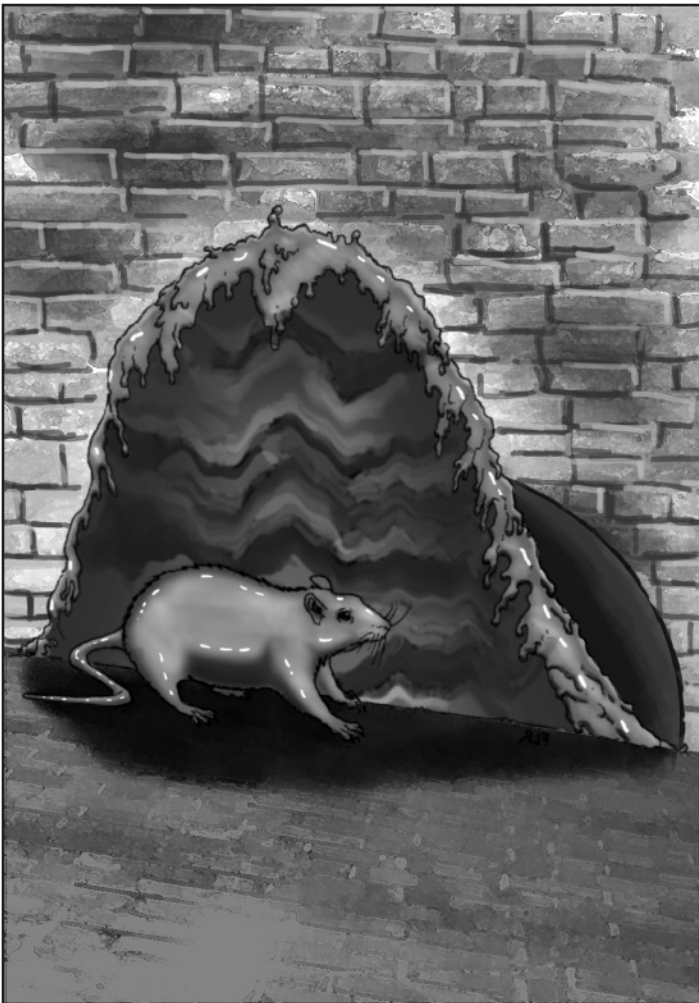
A large-scale battle takes place in this expansive, multi-leveled cavern. The Referee should consider drawing a reproduction of the map and noting each character's position and elevation. The use of miniature figures is helpful but not necessary, so long as everyone is clear as to where his character is positioned in relation to everyone else, and who has height advantage and cover.

The ceiling of this natural cavern rises high above your heads. Many different cliffs and slopes permit access to different elevations of the cave, and several tunnels lead away in various directions. The cavern's most impressive feature is a stream that flows from the northeast, emerging from a flooded tunnel and dropping off in a short waterfall to a channel below. Though these falls once fed an impressive underground river, much of that flow has now dried up. A dry riverbed extends to the northwest. The water continues to run southeast, but it is only about 5 feet wide. Rope bridges that connect the two halves of this impressive cavern cross the dry end and the stream.

Ten vampire bats patrol this area. If intruders are seen, one bat flies to 20 to alert Anwyl, and the others attack. The noise of battle draws the **kobolds** from 11, and they join the fray on the second round of combat. The kobolds do not advance very far into the cavern, preferring to stay back, claim the high ground or cover, and assail the characters with poison-tipped arrows. Normally, kobolds pose little threat to a party of adventurers, but given the topography of the cavern, the limited range of the characters' light source, and the kobolds' tactics, their arrows might prove troublesome. Further, once the bat notifies Anwyl, he uses the hidden arrow slits on the south wall of 21 to observe the fight and cast his *animal summoning* spells to bring more combatants to engage the characters (assuming the characters haven't already visited Anwyl's chambers and dealt with him personally).

The battle contains different groups that enter the conflict at different times:

- **Round 1:** The vampire bats attack, using flight and darkness to their advantage.
- **Round 2:** The kobolds from area 11 take up advantageous positions and fire arrows tainted with a sleep-inducing poison.
- **Round 3:** Anwyl uses *animal summoning I* for **6 wolf reinforcements**.
- **Round 4:** Anwyl casts *pyrotechnics* on a torch or lantern held by the characters.
- **Round 5:** Anwyl fires *magic missiles* using his magical staff.



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Keep in mind that the characters' light sources makes them a target for incoming missile fire, while the limits of their vision may prevent them from seeing their attackers.

Bats, Giant Vampire (10): HD 1; HP 8, 7x2, 6x3, 5x2, 4, 3; AC 8[11]; Atk bite (1d6); Move 4 (fly 18); Save 17; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** suck blood (automatic 1d6 damage each round after bite).

Kobolds (6): HD 1d4hp; HP 4, 3x3, 2x2; AC 7[12]; Atk shortbow x2 (1d6 plus poison); Move 6; Save 18; AL C; CL/XP A/15; **Special:** -1 to hit in sunlight, darkvision 60ft.

Equipment: shortbow, 10 arrows, poison (unconscious for 1d4+1 rounds, save avoids).

Wolves (6): HD 2+2; HP 17, 15x2, 14x3; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d4+1); Move 18; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** none.

During the battle, Anwyl does not reveal his position behind the hidden arrow slits. Instead, he prepares for their arrival in area 21. If the characters overcome the bats, kobolds, and wolves, they are free to explore the area, the most notable feature of which is certainly the waterfall and the half-dry stream.

The water plunges down from above in what is usually total darkness, with no one to witness the raw beauty of it tumbling down the black rocks and into a pool below. Reflected in your light, the water looks clear and cold. Once in the pool, the stream flows southeast and appears to be fairly deep. Obviously, it used to be much more robust, however, as a dry riverbed coming in from the northwest connects with the pool; no water has flowed from that direction in a long time, and a light lavender moss covers the smooth river stones.

Following the dry stream track to the northwest, the characters pass under the rope bridge and enter a narrow tunnel that soon begins to angle sharply downward. After about 75 feet, it terminates abruptly in a cave-in. Thousands of tons of rock block the path that once led to the derro settlement. The stones glow faintly with the natural orange bioluminescence of the moss. The real item of interest lies in the pool itself. If the characters intentionally study the pool, they see an oblong shape that reflects a bit of their light. This mysterious item rests 15 feet below the surface at the bottom of the pool. Further details are impossible to discern due to the falls that churn the water. If they want to know more, the characters have to get wet.

Though the characters are wise to be cautious, getting the object out of the pool is not in itself dangerous. Nothing accosts the diver during the item's retrieval. The object turns out to be an airtight, opaque glass capsule about 14 inches long and 6 inches wide. Its two halves screw together at their midpoint, and so the container is easily opened. As the characters are inspecting the capsule, a lovely, unclothed female figure gently emerges from the water, her long hair glistening around her shoulders. She is a **nixie** named Aglaope (ag-luh-OH-pee).

Aglaope (Nixie): HD 1; HP 6; AC 7[12]; Atk none; Move 6 (swimming 12); Save 18; AL N; CL/XP B/10; **Special:** charm (*charm person*, -2 save to resist).

Three items once owned by the nixie's former human paramour are inside the capsule: a silver dagger that floats, a *potion of healing*, and a *lung leaf* (see **New Magic Items** for details). Aglaope desires a new lover. She's always been fascinated by humans, so she chooses a male or female human from among the characters and breaks the surface near them, revealing herself in all of her beauty. Sea-colored eyes gaze upon her chosen one with a kindness that is unfeigned. Aglaope really is a kind and caring being, but she is lonely and is not above using magic to win a new partner. She introduces herself and speaks what sound to be words of greeting in her own language; actually, she is casting a *charm person*

spell that is so potent that it penalizes the target's saving throw by -2. If her chosen lover fails that saving throw, Aglaope asks him to put the *lung leaf* in his mouth so as to be able to breathe water. Once that's done, she invites him to jump in and follow her. Anyone trying to physically restrain the *charmed* victim must make a dexterity check to grab him before he dives into the pool and swims away with Aglaope, perhaps never to be seen again. If the target succeeds in his saving throw, the nixie is visibly disappointed and slips back into the water without another word.

The flooded tunnel that leads to the southeast runs for several miles to a subterranean lake. It is impossible to traverse the distance without the ability to breathe underwater.

9. Lookout Point

This ridge is at a higher elevation than other parts of area 8, so combatants atop this plateau hold an advantage in combat. A knotted rope hangs down on the north side of the ridge, enabling the kobolds from 11 to climb up and gain a firing platform for their toxic arrows. Ashes blacken this rope, making it difficult to see unless the characters search that specific area with a light source.

Atop the hill, the kobolds have placed two dozen arrows and three spare shortbows, as well as a stout, covered iron pot full of a sleep-inducing poison. There is enough of the liquid to coat up to 50 arrows, though the poison dries up and becomes ineffective if left on an arrowhead for more than 24 hours. Also here are two large, spherical stones, each weighing about 50 lbs. If the characters try to climb the hill, the kobolds shove a rock over the edge. A failed saving throw means that the climber is driven down into the ground, the stone on his chest, taking 2d6 points of damage.

10. Tripwire

The kobolds at area 11 use these stone steps cut by the derro to access the main cave of area 8 when waging battle against intruders. As a rudimentary warning against anyone sneaking up on them, they've rigged a simple twine trap: Anyone not searching the steps before ascending automatically snags the twine, which causes a small pile of rocks on the top step to topple down the stairs. The sound reveals the characters' presence.

11. Kobold Cave

Stone steps that lead up from a lower elevation access the cave. Formerly the meditation chamber of a derro savant, it now serves as home to 7 **kobolds**, most of which join the battle at 8. Only their elder remains behind, tending the Sacred Pail.

This cave is nearly circular, about 15 feet in diameter. Obviously, several beings live here, as half a dozen messy bedrolls occupy most of the floor space. The stench is bad but not unbearable. At the opposite side of the cavern, an aging kobold wearing a headdress of colored stones and fish bones sits cross-legged behind an overturned metal bucket. The kobold has one hand on the bucket, and it lifts the other up at you in an obvious warning to stop.

A single **kobold** poses no threat to the characters. This one is just daring enough to attempt a crude bluff, hoping to send the intruders running in the other direction. Assuming the characters don't simply charge across the room, the elderly kobold solemnly lifts the pail, revealing a multi-colored centipede about 14 inches long. The kobold doesn't take his eyes from the characters, but tries to remain brave. The centipede — a nasty and venomous-looking thing — scurries straight ahead, free of the confines of the bucket and running on countless legs directly at the doorway where the characters happen to be standing. This insect can easily be crushed beneath a boot, but the kobold hopes the intruders assume it's far more deadly and react in such a way that permits him the chance to escape. If he sees an opportunity, the kobold flees the room. Failing that, he fires a sleep-inducing arrow from his bow.

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Kobold: HD 1d4hp; HP 3; AC 7[12]; Atk shortbow x2 (1d6 plus poison); Move 6; Save 18; AL C; CL/XP A/15; **Special:** -1 to hit in sunlight, darkvision 60ft.

Equipment: shortbow, 10 arrows, poison (unconscious for 1d4+1 rounds, save avoids).

Searching the room thoroughly means overturning the bedrolls and poking around in the mess that is the kobold living space. The kobolds have collected numerous odd objects, knickknacks, and pretty stones that might cause the characters to waste time and magical resources in determining their properties and worth, but nothing of real value is here.

12. Death from Above

This elevated escarpment looks out across the impressive cavern that makes up area 8. Small shattered rocks and stone splinters litter the ground. The remains of a skeleton lie next to a metal shield with a large dent in the center of it, as if a heavy, pointed object struck it. If examined closely, the shield bears the symbol of the Hawkmoon deity Bylkalla, or a war-related deity from the Referee's own campaign.

While the characters are examining this area, the Referee should randomly determine which character a large stalactite that drops from the ceiling targets. This **piercer** is difficult to detect before it falls, as it blends in perfectly with other rock formations overhead.

Piercer: HD 3; HP 20; AC 3[16]; Atk drop and pierce (3d6); Move 1; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** drop.

13. Blind Run

A permanent sphere of *darkness 15ft radius* occupies most of this bulge in the tunnel. Resting on the floor within this blackened zone is a **large iron bear trap**, waiting to be sprung. A friend of animals, Anwyl rescued a black bear from this very trap and then placed the trap here as an intruder deterrent. Anyone exploring the magical *darkness* without probing the floor with a pole or similar item has a 50% chance of stepping directly on the trap, which causes the jaws to slam shut and inflict 2d6 points of damage. In addition, the injured victim must make a saving throw or be temporarily crippled, with his movement rate halved for the next 24 hours. A strength check is required to pull the jaws apart and free the victim.

Lying on the floor here are five smooth blue stones. These are the *stones of the blue crystal path*, as described in **New Magic Items**. Because of the permanent *darkness*, these rocks are very difficult to find accidentally, as blind characters will have no idea that a few pebbles beneath their boots are in any way extraordinary. The only way to notice the *stones* is if the characters somehow manage to dispel the unnatural gloom.

14. Mass Grave

As you enter this cave, the stench causes your eyes to water. You're standing at the top of a ridge that angles down about 10 feet to a pit of bodies. You realize that you're observing a mass grave. Tiny white worms wiggle through corpses in varying states of decay. There must be two dozen people here, a mix of races, all thrown away like so much garbage. You see a dead dwarf with his eyeballs eaten out, and a dead woman wearing a bright red dress. Feasting upon them are three rats the size of dogs. Hearing you enter, the rats leave off their horrible meal and race up the ridge, hissing at you as they close the gap.

When Anwyl tortures a villager to death, he deposits their ravaged body here to be feasted upon by a group of **3 giant rats**. Regardless of when the characters arrive at this room, they find these dog-sized rats gobbling up one of the recently discarded corpses.

Rats, Giant (3): HD 3; HP 21, 19, 18; AC 6[13]; Atk 2 claws (1d3), bite (1d3 plus disease); Move 12; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** disease (5% chance of contracting disease, save avoids).

Astute characters make the connection between the red dress in the mass grave and the woman named Kalotte from Eorls Gedreas. They now know the fate of the missing villager.

If the characters choose for whatever reason to dig through the heap of bodies, they find humanoid remains of multiple races in various states of decomposition. The excavation is so disgusting that a constitution check is required to keep from vomiting and quickly giving up the search. Determined characters who have the stomach for this kind of work are rewarded for their grisly determination; embedded in the maggot-infested mass and still loosely strapped to a pair of skeletal feet are the *fire spurs*. See **New Magic Items** for details.

15. Master Roost

The ceiling of this area is the primary roost of the Blind Burrows' bats. Tens of thousands of standard-sized bats are nesting here when the characters arrive. The appearance of any light source in this area draws their attention. Anwyl trained these bats to snuff out torches and lanterns. Refer to **Bat Swarm**, above, for details.

The floor is several inches thick with guano. Anyone traipsing around in this noxious mess must make a saving throw or contract a lung disease that affects the character in whatever way the Referee deems appropriate. Digging through the guano reveals a tiny tin box containing three beautiful gold nuggets; however, the rocks are merely pyrite and virtually worthless.

16. Troubled Waters

A stone bridge crosses the stream. There are no railings, just a flat slab of slippery rock spanning the water. A small overturned silver bell lies on the middle of the bridge. A wire extends from an eyelet on the top of the bell.

The bell is completely mundane. It belonged to one of Anwyl's victims, and dropped when the body was taken to the mass grave at area 14. Wary characters might assume the bell is part of some kind of elaborate trap, and the Referee should play upon those fears. There is no real danger here, other than the slippery bridge surface. Anyone moving at greater than walking speed must make a dexterity check or slide off the side and into the stream below, taking 1d6 points of damage.

17. Above and Below

A metal platform connected to a series of ropes and pulleys serves as a crude mechanical lift, able to raise and lower up to 500 lbs. from here to Odinel's apothecary shop at area J in Eorls Gedreas. A shaft in the ceiling rises more than 100 feet, connecting the wereboar's home with the Blind Burrows. A capstan must be cranked in order to operate the lift. Anwyl works the capstan when Odinel sends down another victim. There is an 80% chance that the lift is in its upper position; if the characters want to lower it, they'll need to spin the capstan. If they entered the Blind Burrows from the gong farmer's residence at area E in Eorls Gedreas, they might be surprised to find themselves in the læce's shop when they reach the top of this lift. If the wereboar is still alive, he attacks immediately, perhaps forcing the characters to make a surprise check.

18. Room of the Rock

A few stone steps lead down into the first of Anwyl's personal rooms.

The walls of this room are smoothly worked stone, having been cut and shaped by skilled craftsmen. Obviously a sitting area or parlor of some kind, it features two comfortable-looking chairs that face a tapestry featuring abstract patterns that hangs on the south wall. The tapestry's needlework is expertly rendered, similar to that which you saw in the village. Between the two chairs is a simple maple-wood table, on which sit a burning candle, a bottle of wine, a crystal goblet, and a small book.

The book is a non-magical alchemical treatise titled "*The Tincture of Aqua Fortis*." Anwyl recently has become fascinated by the arcane art of alchemy. Though he possesses no skills in that field, he has begun a correspondence with a potential mentor and started to purchase equipment.

Behind the tapestry is a brownish, dully glowing rock embedded in the wall. This is *earthmurk*. It shines an unhealthy light and makes the skin feel slightly itchy if anyone draws close to it. This chunk of *earthmurk* has completely corroded Anwyl's mind. Even casual contact with it can cause dreadful side effects. Refer to **New Magic Items** for details of what happens to the characters should they improperly handle the rock. It can be pulled out of the surrounding bedrock if the characters possess a pick or similar tool. The extraction requires 1d4 rounds to complete; the sound rings throughout the cavern complex.

The *earthmurk* exposure caused Anwyl to become mean-spirited, vindictive, and sociopathic. He believes that the residents of his former hometown of Eorls Gedreas are traitors to the cause — even if that cause has never been defined. The *earthmurk* has similar effects on the characters if they're not careful. Anwyl is now in Stage 6 of *earthmurk* poisoning.

19. The Druid's Repose

Anwyl has converted this former derro laboratory into his bedchamber.

Crates and baskets surround a narrow and uncomfortable-looking cot. At a glance, it seems as if several of these containers hold dry foodstuffs, but others remain sealed. Most of it is cluttered, and probably not easily inventoried. Light is provided by a fish-oil lantern that hangs by a chain over a writing desk. A greasy-smelling smoke winds up through natural cracks in the ceiling. A wooden mannequin draped in brown robes and wearing a hood stands in the corner.

The desk features two drawers. One of these contains a stack of parchment paper with 29 blank sheets, two inkpots, and four different quills. The other drawer holds a few scattered notes on alchemy and a personal letter from someone named Filkendikus, who is thanking Anwyl the druid for assisting in the acquisition of a substance called "blue vitriol."

Searching the entire room requires 3d6 rounds and uncovers the following items:

- Alchemy book titled *Collectanea Chemica* 60 lbs. of alchemical equipment, packed in straw-lined boxes
- an alien "book" containing plates stamped with raised bars of different lengths
- spear adorned with feathers
- spiked bandolier
- red silk cloak (10 gp)
- fur-insulated, elf-sized clothing
- steel horseman's boots
- crude, hand-drawn map to the tower home of the alchemist Filkendikus
- four rugs made from exotic animal pelts (8 gp each)
- horseman's lance
- keg of ale (nearly empty)
- 550-page tome titled *The Divergence of Belief: One Dwarf's Vision of Independent Reasoning as Told Through the Journeys of the Warrior-Poet Stavnyo Gildertrest; or The Unabridged Chronicles of Stavnyo and the Fifteen Golden Acolytes* oaken staff carved with the initials "AD"
- *rose of forgetfulness* (see **New Magic Items**)

The mannequin is made of wood, though its head is mostly concealed by the hood of the robe it wears. Moving this hood reveals a *magic mouth* that immediately begins screaming for help. It shouts for one full minute before finally quieting. The sound carries easily to all adjacent rooms. If Anwyl was not yet aware of the characters' presence, he is alerted now.

20. The Last Redoubt

Anwyl and his **pet bear** await the characters' arrival. The **druid** stands in the corner to one side of the door, so that when it's opened, he isn't immediately seen. The bear is trained to attack head-on as soon as an intruder appears. A single character standing in the doorway might end up facing the bear alone unless an ally can squeeze by him or unless the character retreats to 20. Anwyl is very much aware of the advantage provided by the cramped confines of the doorway. If the characters simply open the door without any particular sense of caution, the Referee should check for surprise to see if they're caught off-guard by the sudden appearance of a rampaging black bear.

Bear, Black: HD 4+1; HP 26; AC 7[12]; Atk 2 claws (1d3), bite (1d6); Move 9; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** hug (if both claws hit, 1d8 additional damage).

Meanwhile, the druid chooses the most opportune moment to strike, either with spells or by expending charges from the *staff of the shoreline*.

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He can also use his shape change ability to become a bear and angrily attack, or a sparrow and attempt to fly away. Anwyl is visibly ill, his skin discolored by *earthmurk* contact. He moves more slowly than he did before finding the rock. Aware of his own physical deterioration, he acts desperately and fights like a man with little left to lose. He assumes the characters are agents sent by his enemies in Eorls Gedreas.

Anwyl (Drd7): HP 22; AC 7[12]; Atk sickle-shaped sword (1d6); Move 9; Save 9; AL C; CL/XP 7/600; **Special:** immune to fey charms, shape change, spells (4/2/2/1), +2 save vs. fire.

Spells: 1st—*detect magic*, *detect snares and pits*, *faerie fire*, *locate animals*; 2nd—*heat metal*, *speak with animals*; 3rd—*neutralize poison*, *pyrotechnics*; 4th—*animal summoning I*.

Equipment: leather armor, *staff of the shoreline* (see **New Magic Items**), sickle-shaped sword, mistletoe, 12 gp.

There is a chance that events may unfold in such a way that Anwyl is captured alive, or that the characters come to understand his sickness and seek to contain him without killing him. Though unlikely, this turn of circumstances could lead to an interesting end to their quest, as they might be able to save the druid's life by applying *curse disease*. They are more than justified in killing him, but the Referee should be aware that things might conclude differently and be prepared to improvise such results.

If the characters are victorious in vanquishing Anwyl, they may examine the room more closely. Two arrow slits look out into area 8. A large mound of straw and leaves serves as the bear's bed. The entire east wall is covered in a crudely painted map of Eorls Gedreas. Names of villagers are scrawled there, along with epithets and lurid promises of revenge.

A chamber pot rests in the corner, partially filled with waste. Beside it is a small journal with sandalwood covers and a dried-up inkpot. Anwyl hasn't written in this book in several days, and most of its pages remain blank. But when he first discovered the *earthmurk*, he recorded his findings here. These are the writings of a sane man, a true neutral advocate of nature and the balanced Wheel of Life — at least at first. As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear to the reader that Anwyl is being negatively affected by the very object of his fascination. His words become misspelled; his penmanship turns haphazard. A scientific study of *earthmurk* soon transforms into a manifesto against all of the ailments that Anwyl feels the world has inflicted on him. It should be obvious that he rapidly descended into madness, and that the characters face a similar destiny if they linger too long in the *earthmurk*'s fell company.

Conclusion

Even if the characters eliminate Anwyl, there is a chance that Odel is still alive, having gone undetected during the characters' investigation of Eorls Gedreas. The wereboar has no intention of abandoning his easy life in the village, but neither is he inclined to face the characters in battle. Instead, he simply slips away while the characters are exploring the Blind Burrows, hiding out in the wilderness while he waits for them to leave the area.

As for the quail, they continue to monitor the situation. If the wereboar returns to Eorls Gedreas and attempts to reassert his dominance, the birds report to the archdruid as soon as they can, hoping he can fix what the characters could not. On the other hand, they might have dealt with the wereboar and liberated the village. In this case, the quail inform the archdruid of the assistance rendered by these strangers, in which case they earn his eternal friendship. He becomes an important contact with whom the characters can have dealings in the future.

Continuing the Adventure

The characters might have discovered the names of two mysterious locations. Area 20 contains a map to the tower home of the alchemist Filkendikus. The wereboar's herbal shop contains a land deed to the small keep of Colthyrstan Hold. These places may become the characters' next chosen destination, so the Referee can build upon those ideas and craft complete adventures around them.

Optionally, the Archdruid Cadrryn is pleased with the characters if they've successfully defended his domain in his absence. He calls upon them in the future with similar missions, dispatching his faithful quail to summon the heroes once again.

New Magic Items

A Midnight Council of Quail introduces several new magical items that the Referee should modify to suit the needs of each particular campaign.

Hazard

Earthmurk

This highly dangerous ore pulses with a brownish or slightly yellow glow and poisons living creatures that come within close proximity to it. *Earthmurk* poisoning takes place in stages, whenever a humanoid comes within 5 feet of it. Each new exposure, or a single exposure longer than 1d4+1 rounds, advances the poisoning to the next stage. In Stages 1 through 3, the victim notices nothing out of the ordinary and does not realize he is in trouble; the changes being wrought in his body at this stage are taking place at the cellular level. In Stage 4, the victim becomes visibly unwell, and his skin changes to an unhealthy yellow shade and his fingernails turn brown. Because of his frail state, all saving throws are made with a -2 penalty. At Stage 5, the victim can move no faster than

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75% of his normal movement rate or risk vomiting due to nausea. After reaching Stage 6, the victim slips into madness. The exact form of this insanity is up to the Referee's discretion, but it often takes the form of paranoid delusions and uncontrollable anger. Most victims linger in Stage 6 for months before finally collapsing. Hard knobs form on their skin as the *earthmurk* causes all fluids in the body to accumulate in the superficial tissues and dry into hardened abscesses. The victim dies of dehydration and other complications in 1d4+1 days.

In Stages 1 through 3, a *curse disease* spell eradicates *earthmurk* poisoning, but at Stages 4 through 6, the spell has a 20% cumulative chance of failing.

Hazard

Rose of Forgetfulness

This enchanted flower causes those who inhale its scent to make a saving throw or lose complete recollection of the past 24 hours. A successful save indicates either that there is no effect or, in the case of a spellcaster, the loss of 1d4 randomly determined spells. In order to inhale a sufficient amount of the scent, the victim must be less than 6 inches from the rose and be capable of smelling it.

Lesser Miscellaneous Magic Item

Fire Spurs

Fire spurs appear as a pair of ordinary horseman's spurs, albeit of exceptionally sturdy quality; they are thicker and heavier than mundane spurs, and their moving part — called the rowel — spins without sound or friction. *Fire spurs* are black in color, as if they had been lying for days among the coals of a smith's forge. The magic of the *fire spurs* functions only if both are worn. If this simple condition is met, the wearer may use any of the *spurs'* powers once per day.

When mounted, the wearer may spur his steed and call upon the enchantment of the *fire spurs* to send a surge of hot energy through the mount, enabling it to achieve an unnatural velocity. Blood pounding and inner fires burning, the mount increases its base movement by +25%. This enhanced speed lasts for a period of one hour, after which time the mount must rest for a time equal to the time it spent running at the increased rate.

When not mounted, the wearer may strike the rowel of one of the *fire spurs* against stone to produce a spark as per flint and steel. The wearer may "kick" the spark up to 5ft away. This may be used to light campfires or to set ablaze an oil-based trap.

The third and final power of the *spurs* is always active. As long as the wearer is outfitted with both *spurs*, he enjoys a +1 bonus on all saving throws against fire and fire-based attacks. Further, he may reduce any fire damage he sustains by 1 point for every Hit Die of the attack. In other words, he would subtract 6 points of damage from a 6-die *fireball*.

The *fire spurs* can never be damaged by flame, be it magical or otherwise. Legend holds that somewhere there exists a pair of obsidian rowels that — when they replace the rowels of the *fire spurs* — permit the wearer access to additional powers.

Lesser Miscellaneous Magic Item

Lung Leaf

Down in the depths of the Moonsilver Sea, its roots fixed to the silt-covered sea floor, lives a magical tree. For all intents and purposes, the tree appears as a normal tree — or so say the reclusive sea elves. According to maritime myth, the leaves of this tree grant *water breathing* to anyone who holds a *leaf* in his mouth.

The *lung leaves* are very rare. Since no one but the sea elves know the tree's exact location, most of the *leaves* come to the surface when fish swim through the branches and shake the *leaves* loose. The *leaves* then float to the surface, where they can be recognized easily. They are 1in long and a deep, rich blue in color; the veins in each *leaf* are bright silver. The

sea elves claim that no two *lung leaves* have quite the same arrangement of veins.

Holding a *leaf* in the mouth grants the user *water breathing* for a period of 1d4+1 hours. The user never knows exactly how much time the *lung leaf* is providing him; the Referee makes the roll in secret. After the air expires, the lung leaf must be soaked in salt water for a period of 1d4 days. Only then may it be used again.

Lesser Miscellaneous Magic Item

Signal Flag of Clouds

This flag is useful as a means of communication, especially in times of war. If the *signal flag* is held aloft at least 50 feet off the ground, it causes clouds to form in the sky directly overhead. Within the next 3d6 rounds, these clouds begin to shift, forming a slow-moving but obvious spiral. During normal daylight conditions, this cyclonic cloud movement can be seen up to 12 miles away. The *signal flag of clouds* is often used with others of its kind to relay warnings across incredible distances.

Lesser Miscellaneous Magic Item

Thought Bottle

This long-necked blue bottle is used to store and protect important memories and thoughts. To use the item, the character unstoppers it and concentrates on the thought or memory to be stored. He then speaks a command word, and the thought is copied from his mind and into the bottle. To retrieve the thought, anyone may uncork the bottle and speak the proper command word; the thought is then transferred to his or her mind. Thought bottles are sometimes used to protect sensitive information, so if the messenger bearing the item is caught, the thought cannot be known by those not possessing the proper phrase. The thought may remain in the container indefinitely, and it may be roughly 100 words in length.

Medium Miscellaneous Magic Item

Stones of the Blue Crystal Path

Planting these five stones in soil, mud, or sand causes a magic blue bridge to appear in any direction the user chooses. The bridge actually "grows" from the stones as if they were seeds, extending up to 200 feet horizontally, with only a slight, 10-foot elevation at its midpoint. The dazzling blue span may not be made to angle up or down, but always grows horizontally in a direction indicated by the user. The blue crystal path is only 3 feet wide, so anyone fighting on the bridge must make an immediate dexterity check if he misses with any melee attack, or he falls off the edge. The blue crystal path persists for only 1d4+4 rounds before instantly vanishing, at which time the stones reappear in the user's hands. They may be used once per month.

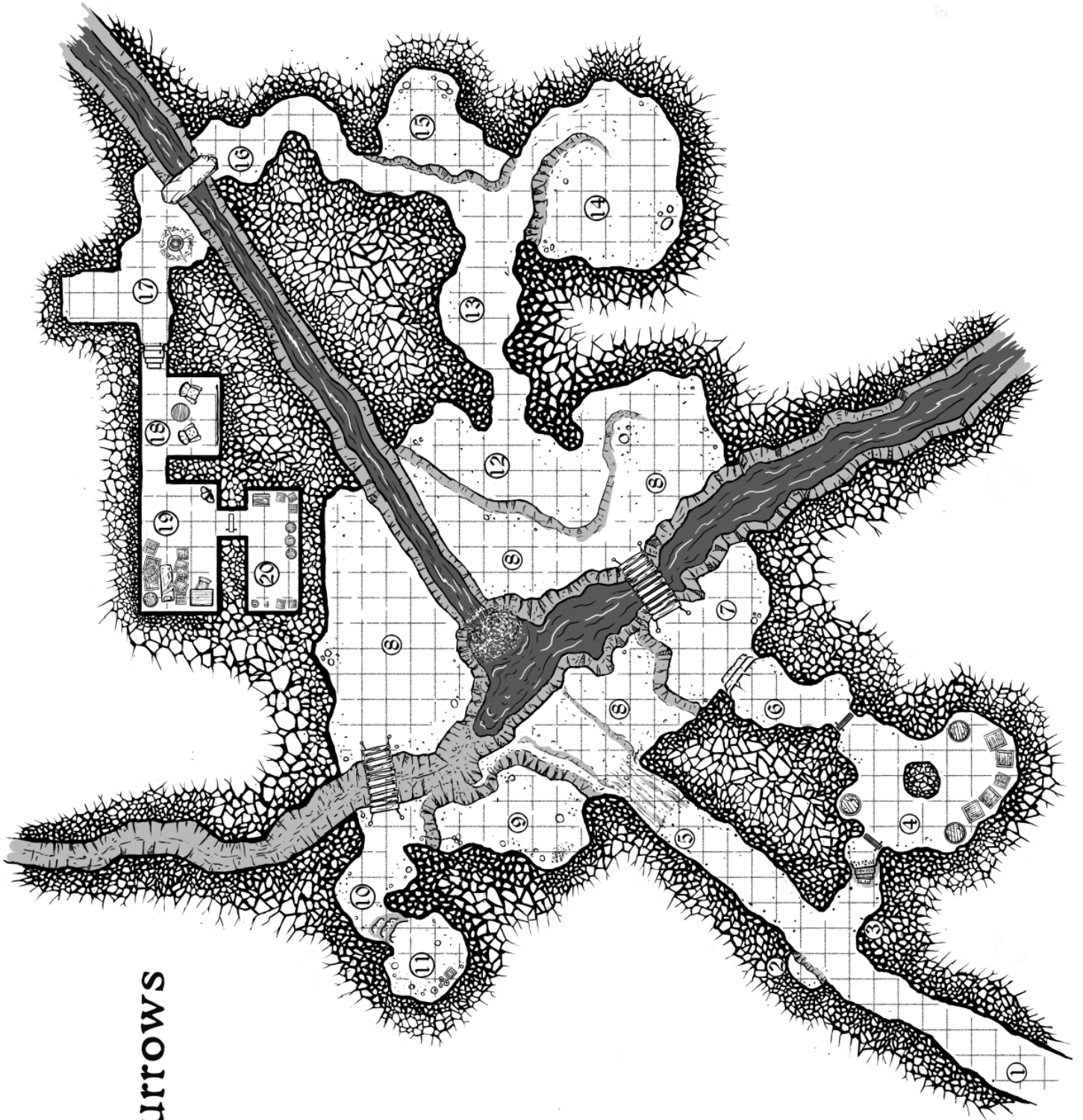
Magic Staff

Staff of the Shoreline

This staff has four specific functions, each requiring charges to activate:

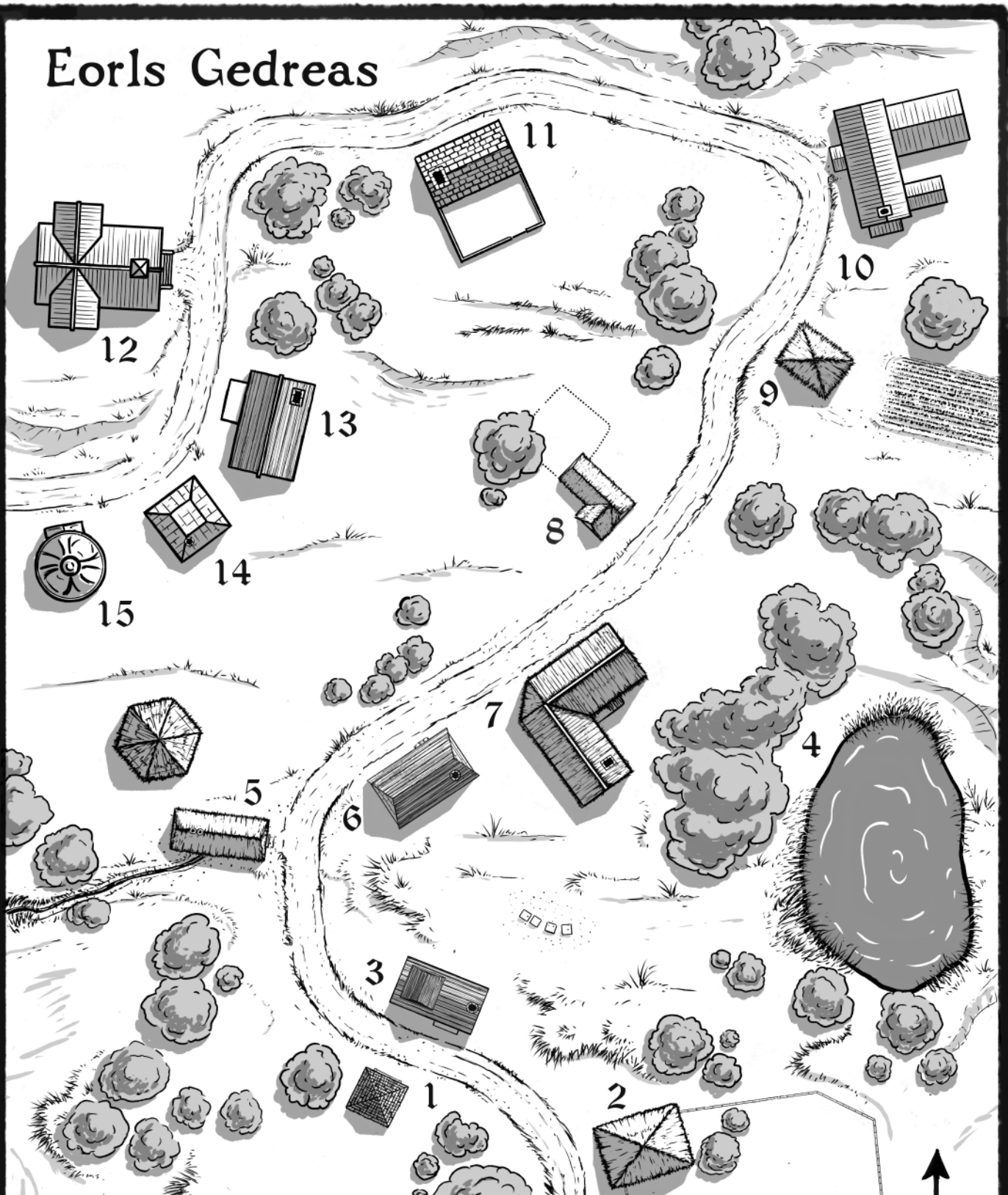
- *magic missile* (1 charge)
- *darkness 15ft radius* (2 charges)
- *insect plague* (3 charges)
- *permanency* (4 charges, renders many spell effects permanent, as per the Referee's discretion)

When obtained by the characters, the *staff of the shoreline* has 22 charges remaining.



Blind Burrows

Eorls Gedreas



- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Oilman | 6. Ropemaker | 11. Seamstress |
| 2. Farrier and Stable | 7. Elder | 12. Church |
| 3. Chandler and Apiary | 8. Swine Pens | 13. Thatcher |
| 4. Crystal Lake | 9. Family Farm | 14. Baker |
| 5. Gong Farmer | 10. Apothecary | 15. The Puppet Show |

A MIDNIGHT COUNCIL OF QUAIL

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Quests of Doom 4

A Midnight Council of Quail

A Midnight Council of Quail is an adventure for 4–6 characters of 3rd to 5th level where the characters explore a village to locate the lair of a monstrous murderer — but the villagers don't want the murderer to be discovered.



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