

EB5



The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

EB5: Children of the Harvest



Swords
& Wizardry

Bill Webb



FROG GOD
GAMES

The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

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The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

CB5: Children of the Harvest

By Bill Webb



“...You’ve just entered the wrong side of town...”

The Children of the Harvest is a *Swords & Wizardry* adventure for a party of four to six 7th- to 8th-level characters. It serves as a companion adventure to Richard’s Pett’s *The Blight* and takes place in that twisted city as revealed in the campaign setting published by **Frog God Games**.

Introduction

The Blight is a dark place, and this is a dark tale. Children disappear all the time, especially those of the poor. The Harvester of Cribbs, one of the city's strange local gods*, is blamed for many of these disappearances. Typically, these disappearances are random, isolated instances, and in many cases, the Harvester has nothing to do with it. This time, however, 36 children have disappeared from their homes on a single night, and many of them were not from houses of the poor. Not even the jaded folk of the City-State of Castorhage will stand for this (especially not a prominent Justice and a guild leader who have each lost a child in this most recent incident). Now is the time for a call to action.

This adventure is, at its heart, a race against time and a rescue mission. The biggest problem is that those who need to be rescued do not (in their current state) desire to be rescued. In fact, the children in question are possessed by evil spirits loyal to an ancient deity known as Chernobog and attack their benefactors without mercy. Liberal application of incapacitating spells will be required to prevent the children's deaths until the final area within the evil temple-caverns is reached. Significant difficulties arise should the characters decide to slay rather than incapacitate the children.

* See *The Blight: Richard Pett's Crooked City* by **Frog God Games** for details.

Warning!

This adventure contains mature themes that may not be suitable for some readers or players. Our purpose at **Frog God Games** is not to make tasteless or offensive products. But we do intend to make thrilling adventures in the style of old-school game play that test the players' stalwartness and bring difficult and layered nuances to their game. Simulating and navigating the struggles of real life (and/or their fantasy equivalent) with exceptional powers and skills as characters while freeing players of the prospect of actual consequences is one of the great draws of roleplaying games, and we always strive to create that experience in our products.

Adventure Background

The presence of Between is a strange conundrum to those in the know among the elite academics and magical practitioners of Castorhage. What is it? Where is it? Why is it only accessed in the vicinity of Castorhage? Does it even exist elsewhere? What has caused such a curse to come to dwell upon an already so ill-starred community, or is its presence the reason for the foul luck? Such is a matter for the great scholars to ponder and theorize over. But whatever the reason, its presence and the unique forms of trouble it brings cannot be denied by those who live beneath its accursed shadow.

Whether it predates the existence of Between or is somehow connected to its presence, the legend of a primordial evil also shares space with the twisted land beyond the mirrors of Castorhage. Lost to the knowledge of modern civilization is the myth of a dark power hailing from the beginning of time who brought great evil to the young world of Boros until stopped by another primordial power. Some tales say this goddess was the evil's mother, or perhaps grandmother, or only a concerned maternal deity who did not wish to see Creation damaged by its corruption. Whatever the case, the legends agree that this angry Goddess defeated the evil and condemned it to a prison where its corrupting influence would be contained and

unable to affect the world in any major way. She did this, according to the tale, by sinking the evil in a primordial swamp from which it could not free itself. Why she imprisoned it rather than just destroying it outright, the legends do not presume to say.

Such is the myth today as those who even have such knowledge recall it. But there are some few who know even more of the matter, and those few include a Daanite *ddewin* (magician) from distant Ynys Cymragh and a foul lurking presence located within Castorhage itself — the god known as the Harvester of Cribbs.

A Daanite *ddewin*, one Maregeth by name, found himself cast out from his *chylch* for secretly paying reverence to the forbidden god Crom Cruach, Dark Crom or Old Bloody Head. He made his obeisance to the Black God under the name Crom Dubh the Crippled God, as had been tried by some dark practitioners millennia before, but eventually the doings of Maregeth were discovered by his fellow *ddewiniaid* and he was lucky to make it across the Strait of Daan with his life. Maregeth wandered the mainland of Akados for 10 years seeking greater knowledge and power. In his studies of Crom Cruach/Crom Dubh, Maregeth had gained some inkling of a deeper truth in the history of the bloody god. He was convinced that if he could only dig further, he would receive some revelation that would raise him above the close-minded pettiness of his peers and show him the true path to power.

It was in this pursuit that Maregeth came at last to Castorhage and settled into the blighted city with its vast reservoir of corrupt and forbidden knowledge to focus on pursuing his studies. There among the oldest of grimoires in the shops of the most shadowed alleys, he discovered a name: Chernobog. He also encountered something else, something far darker and more powerful than himself; he encountered the Harvester of Cribbs.

Even Maregeth is unsure how he surmounted his initial encounter with the god of the city. He has the vaguest recollection of invoking Chernobog's name and that somehow his own experience and knowledge of Crom Cruach became known to the Harvester. However it was achieved, the Harvester took notice and became interested, which undoubtedly saved the wizard's life and brought his search for Crom Cruach into a new phase.

With his own reserve of ancient knowledge carried from far Ynys Cymragh and the Harvester's godlike faculties and intimate understanding of the Blight, Maregeth came to understand that Chernobog and Crom Cruach were one and the same. The deity of the Old Way referred to as Old Bloody Head was somehow a whitewashed form of the much older and more vile being called Chernobog. Chernobog's existence had been largely erased from the memory of mortals, living on only in its much later incarnation of Crom Cruach, a feat that could only be achieved by a being of even greater power than one such as Chernobog, a being such as a primordial Goddess. Crom Cruach was Chernobog, and Chernobog was the ancient evil imprisoned at the beginning of time by the forgotten Goddess. And the Harvester knew where that primordial evil had been imprisoned ... in a swamp on what was once a remote island. A swamp that now lay just beyond the southern bounds of the foul city known commonly as the Blight.

Pooling their knowledge — the Harvester's understanding of the environs of Castorhage and Maregeth's lore of Chernobog/Crom Cruach — the living god and outcast *ddewin* reached an accord. The Harvester of Cribbs longed to ascend beyond his petty godhood and achieve the true ranks of divinity, and Maregeth sought to free Chernobog and renew his power in the world now called Lloegyr, the Lost Lands. They believe that if Chernobog could be released from his eons-long imprisonment in the fens south of Toiltown known as the Sheep's Coe, then the primordial deity will once again take his place of prominence and power over the world, ushering a new age of darkness and elevating the Harvester as a true god alongside it. That is the theory anyway, as put forth by an embittered, power-mad dark sorcerer and a godling best known for wearing a jester's outfit and abducting children. The veracity of their theory remains to be seen, but the consequences of its implementation are all too real for the folk of the Blight.



Maregeth believes that the souls of the innocent, if sacrificed in sufficient number, will bring about Chernobog's release. Using a taboo ritual learned among the ancient lore of Crom Cruach and powered by the semi-divinity of the Harvester, Maregeth has been corrupting children (the closest thing to "innocent" to be found in Castorhage) and causing them to transform into larvae. He is then destroying these corrupted souls in sacrifice to Chernobog to revive him in his prison and bring about his return to the mortal world.

The Harvester of Cribs has absconded with children from the slums and tenements of East Ending to fuel this ritual and has caused the creation of a new island in the Sheep's Coe, which Maregeth calls Bryn Duach, the Black Hill. The creation of this island and the temple complex excavated within it has attracted some of the more deviant and nihilistic minds of Castorhage to form a mad cult following dedicated to the newly rediscovered Chernobog. Now as the ritual reaches its crescendo and the stars come into alignment, the time has come for the final phase of the ritual requiring a mass sacrifice of three dozen souls. To this end, in one night the Harvester makes his rounds in the city and makes off with 36 children. Not as selective as he has been with past kidnappings, the Harvester's most recent abductions have attracted the attention of some of the powerful in the city and finally brought scrutiny down upon the activities of the new swamp cult. Adventurers have been sought, and rewards offered. For the first time, the plans of the god and the demagogue are in danger of discovery.

Adventure Summary

The characters are hired to look into the recent disappearances of 36 children. Magical investigation into the matter has determined that the children have but 36 hours to live before all are forever lost. The party is able to track the perpetrator to the fens south of the city known as Sheep's Coe and there, in the depths of the swamp, discover that a new hill has recently been raised from the surrounding waters. Within this hill are tunnels and caverns inhabited by a rising cult of Chernobog, as well as monstrous evidence that this ancient evil is once again threatening the world.

Confronting the cult, the characters must best the wizard Maregeth and destroy his malignant magical cauldron in order to disrupt the ritual

calling Chernobog back from his imprisonment. Eventually, the party discovers the great stone block that serves as the keystone to the prison created by the Goddess and there must face the wrath of the Harvester of Cribs himself, as the strange god personally manifests to stop them from thwarting his plans for ascension as a true god.

Beginning the Adventure

The adventure begins early one morning as tragedy grips the city. During the night, 36 children disappeared from their beds while sleeping in their homes. In truth, more than 36 children disappear most every night among the slums and alleys of Castorhage, but this night is different because two of the children are of the upper class — one, the great nephew of one of the city's Justices, and the other, the adopted daughter of an influential guild factor. The fact that the other 34 children disappeared at all was learned only as a byproduct of the initial investigation into the disappearance of the children from the two prominent families.

How the adventure begins depends upon the characters' background and reputation within the city. If they're visitors to Castorhage, then they're likely to be rounded up along with numerous other suspects and given fairly rough treatment in the early stages of the investigation until it is determined that the culprit is no human agency, at which point the tone changes to pleas of aid from individuals of obvious skill and expertise. If the characters are not new to the city and have established themselves with the authorities or created reputations as competent problem solvers, then their introduction into the events of the adventure are sure to be much smoother and more civil. In either case, the adventure truly begins as the aggrieved families bring them in to consult and make them privy to the results of the investigation so far.

Chapter One: The Harvester

Once the characters are involved in the investigation, they are quickly brought up to speed on the information so far. The principal sources of the investigation are the disappearances of Zacari Woodcock, age 7, whose father is a minor streetclerk but also the nephew of Justice Burr, Lord Protector of the City, and the disappearance of Emelia Waldersham, age 9, youngest daughter of Marvis Waldersham, a high-ranking official of the Consortium of Tar, Bitumen, and Potash Calefactors. When both children disappeared last night from their upscale rooftop townhomes in the Sedgetown section of Toiltown (area TT6 in *The Blight: Richard Pett's Crooked City*), the two neighbors both raised the hue and cry with the Watch. Though not well acquainted with one another, the two families quickly ascertained the similar nature of the children's disappearances. Assuming a connection, they pooled their resources — Normal Woodcock, his influential uncle, and Marvis Waldersham, the connections of his wealthy guild. Together they retained the services of a specialist in child abductions and ransom negotiations. His discoveries led the families to believe they would require someone with a greater assortment of abilities, which leads to the introduction of the player characters to the adventure.

The Investigation So Far

The characters are initially brought to the townhouses of the Woodcock and Waldersham families in Sedgetown. Both are affluent and secure dwellings, and the Constables of the Watch and the hired private specialist thoroughly searched them. Both disappearances occurred sometime around 2 hours prime* during the previous night. Both children had been put to bed by their respective nannies between the hours of 8 and 9 non**. Both had seemed somewhat fidgety and were checked between 1 and 2 hours prime, and had been found sleeping but fitfully. When checked again after 2 prime, both were gone from their beds. Their rooms' doors and windows were intact with locks still engaged, and there were no signs of entry into the house. There were likewise no signs of violence in their rooms. In the case of young Zacari Woodcock, only the presence of a single leather slipper with the pattern of a lion beaded upon it remained, still warm from being worn when he was first discovered missing. If the characters think to ask, Normal Woodcock allows them to hang onto the slipper as evidence. He states that the Watch's tracking dogs have already used it to gain Zack's scent, but lost it at the edge of the city.

If the children's parents hadn't been folks of means, the Watch likely would have just chalked it up as runaways, but the families were insistent and a quick message from Justice Burr put the entire parish precinct on notice. Clues have been sparse, and the Watch currently has no suspects. One important clue was discovered at each crime scene, however. Hidden in the blankets of each child's bed was found a small stone statuette, approximately 12 inches in height. In both cases, the families have sworn that nothing like that has even been in their homes before. The statuettes are currently being held at the parish Watch Station.

The abduction specialist in question, one **Salubrius MacKenzie** (N male human MU5, 17hp), is introduced to the characters immediately by the concerned families. He appears the part of the sophisticated metropolitan, but characters can easily pick up a current of fear beneath his debonair façade. If questioned, he reveals that he made a cursory inspection of the crime scenes and then began rituals to divine what had occurred. Almost immediately, he learned that the Woodcock and Waldersham children were not the only two to disappear in the dark



THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

Once the characters have a chance to look around the homes of the missing children (no further clues can be discovered there), interview the families and nannies (to no avail), and talk to Salubrius MacKenzie, parents Normal Woodcock and Marvis Waldersham beg the characters to take the case. They each offer a 3000gp reward for the return of their child alive and guarantee the full cooperation of the Office of the Watch and any resources they can muster. Assuming the characters take the case, little else is to be gained at the victims' homes. They can either cast their own spells to see what they can learn, proceed to the parish Watch Station to find out about the other victims, or head directly to the fens.

If the characters use magic (such as *commune*), they learn nothing more than what Salubrius MacKenzie knew, though if they didn't question him about his hidden terror, they can learn of the source of his misgivings as detailed above. A visit to the Watch Station is covered in the next section. Heading to the marsh is detailed in **Chapter 2**.

If the characters are unfamiliar with the "gods" of Castorhage in general and the Harvester of Cribs specifically, they can learn some details before the adventure begins. Roll 1d20 and give the characters all the information below or at the target number.

1d20	Information
6	The Harvester of Cribs, commonly referred to simply as "The Harvester," is one of the "Gods of Castorhage."
9	The "Gods of Castorhage" actually live in the city. They are not generally true gods or divine <i>per se</i> , but rather living legends, although despite the arguments of the scholars of the Seminary and BookTown, people refer to them as gods. They are creatures of myth, of great power, and though they seldom reveal themselves to folk, they still wield incredible authority, influence, and fear over the Blight and its inhabitants.
12	The Harvester is terrible to look upon. He — if indeed he is a "he" or any gender for that matter — is about the size of a goblin or kobold, and wears a vaguely ludicrous clown's outfit. He carries a short wand, which he talks to ... and which talks back; mounted on the end of the wand is the head of a baby — a living, talking baby with a twisted grin and evil mind. It is said that the wand is what suggests to the Harvester his most depraved ideas and schemes.
13	The Harvester collects children. Though impossible to determine how many child disappearances in the city can be attributed to the Harvester — literally dozens occur each week — the best estimates of scholars who study such things are that the Harvester generally never collects more than one or two at a time and then only a few times a month at most.
15	Only a very few have any idea of what becomes of the children taken by the Harvester. All that is known is that they are never seen again. However, a few more dedicated (or deviant) researchers have gained some inkling: He takes some of the children away to a special place in Between in a nightmare land of fairytales and monsters. The others he eats, for he gets so hungry these days ...
18	The Harvester has never taken children in large numbers before. These disappearances are wholly unlike him and, if not for the evidence of divination magic pointing to him, his involvement in the current disappearances would be considered unlikely. The fact that he has deviated from his normal method seems to bode ill for the city.

* "Two hours prime" is 2 hours after midnight, or 2:00 AM, in **Lost Lands'** reckoning.

** Eight and 9 non are 8 and 9 hours past noon, respectively, or 8:00 PM and 9:00 PM.



hours of the previous night. In fact, a total of 36 children were taken from locations all around Toiltown but primarily from East Ending. They came from all social strata, principally typical urban laborer families from the city slums, with some homeless street dwellers and the two affluent children as well. MacKenzie was not able to determine the reason for the rash of near-simultaneous kidnappings, but was able to discern that they were all related and, even though scattered throughout a large portion of the city's poorest section, were somehow performed by the same perpetrator.

Most distressingly, the divinations revealed to him that the children were being lost at the rate of one per hour. The kidnappings occurred approximately 8 hours ago, and already 8 of the children were "gone." He doesn't know exactly what is meant by "gone" other than that whatever has happened to them, they are no longer recoverable. So far, neither Emelia nor Zacari are among those who are "gone," but there is no way of knowing which child will be next. In any case, time is of the essence before any more of the children are consigned to this unknown fate. The only additional information that his divinations provided was that the children were all taken somewhere in the fens south of Toiltown known as the Sheep's Coe for their reputation of disease and pestilence. That is an area beyond his expertise, and MacKenzie refuses to enter the fens. The Watch launched a halfhearted search of the trackless mire based on the diviner's hunch, but the chances of them discovering anything are between slim and none.

If MacKenzie is questioned about hiding something or the reason for his fear, he admits that the omens he read seem to indicate that the source of the disappearances was none other than one of the dreaded gods of the city, the Harvester of Cribs. If the characters press further, Salubrius becomes visibly shaken and admits that there is something more. Though the Harvester is behind the disappearance of all these children (the number of which is quite outside its normal practices), the divinations hint that even the dread god is not the true genesis of the plot. Salubrius cannot say — and honestly doesn't want to know — but he fears something else is behind the Harvester's sudden increase in activity ... something much worse. He is unable to provide any further information.

Sedgetown Watch Station

At the Sedgetown Watch Station, the characters find that **Parish Watch Commander Proctor Simp** (L male human Ftr3) is an obsequious bureaucrat who sweats profusely and frequently mops his ruddy brow with a soiled handkerchief. He received a missive this morning personally signed by Justice Burr and can already imagine the noose tightening around his neck if the Justice's great nephew isn't recovered safely. He gladly allows the characters to review the entire case file compiled so far, as little as it is. He also confirmed through parish commanders in other districts throughout Toiltown that 34 other children are missing, as predicted by MacKenzie. All were boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 9, each of whom disappeared at approximately the same time as the Woodcock and Waldersham children. There were no additional witnesses or clues. The Watch interviewed as many family members as possible this morning, and confirmed that the missing children were fussy and agitated around bedtime, as if bothered by something, though none of the parents ever identified a source. Likewise, statuettes similar to those discovered at the Sedgetown crime scenes were found in the blankets of each missing child. All 36 of the statuettes have been recovered and stored at the Sedgetown Watch Station if they characters wish to examine them.

No other clues or commonalities could be found among the various missing children. If the characters wish, they could travel to the different crime scenes and interview the different families, but doing so would take several hours, and time is of the essence based on what MacKenzie learned with his spells. The only other items of evidence the Watch possess are the statuettes found at each scene. Beyond that, the constables can direct the characters to the area of their search at the edge of Sheep's Coe south of the city.

Graven Images of Stone

At each of the disappearance sites, a single clue was found. In all cases, this clue was a small, crude statuette tangled in the blankets of the missing child. The Watch recovered all 36 of these statuettes and secured them in the Sedgetown station's evidence locker. In some cases, the statuettes were recovered from pawnshops or petty thieves after they were taken for their material value. The characters can have a look at them if they wish.

The 36 statuettes are all humanoid in shape and roughly 12in in height, and weigh about 15 lbs. The characters immediately note that though they are similar in design, they are actually each a unique sculpt. Each depicts a slightly different, crudely carved stylistic bearded human in archaic warrior garb. Each has its arms crossed in front of it and bears one or more spiral symbols on its body. The spirals are located at different points on each statuette and appear to have no pattern to their locations. All of the statuettes are created from a common type of local limestone and are all fairly recent work.

The statuettes are idols associated with an ancient and obscure deity called Crom Cruach. The deity was associated with the religion of the Old Way, and once subject to widespread veneration by the primitive inhabitants throughout Akados before the coming of the Hyperboeans. Now, it is largely constrained to the worship of the Daanites on the distant island of Ynys Cymragh. Crom Cruach was a cruel god of sacrifice who promised his followers wealth and prosperity in return for blood sacrifices. Outlawed by the druids of the Daanites, worship of Crom Cruach has largely died out among even that people, other than a resurgence under the auspices of an alleged hero-god called Crom Dubh that was subsequently suppressed several centuries ago. As far as modern religious scholarship is concerned, the forbidden worship of Crom Cruach died out generations ago with stone idols like those found here to exist only in infrequent troves of ancient treasures unearthed across the length and breadth of Akados.

A more obscure connection also exists between the Old Way deity Crom Cruach and an even more ancient power called Chernobog lost to the knowledge of mortals before even the earliest written records of humanity.



Exactly who or what Chernobog was is unclear, but legend states that he was banished or imprisoned by some other deity referred to only as the Goddess. It is believed that Crom Cruach was a later incarnation of the worship of that older lost deity. Chernobog was imprisoned in some primordial swamp, sunk within a perfect block of stone.

If the characters work with the Watch and take on the case, Parish Watch Commander Simp offers them an additional reward of 100gp for each child returned unharmed, as well as an additional 5000gp if the perpetrator or perpetrators are brought to justice, on top of those rewards offered by the Woodcock and Waldersham families.

Chernobog (Lost)

The Black God, Crom Cruach, Dark Crom, Crooked Crom, Crippled Crom, Old Bloody Head, Crom Dubh, God of Blood Sacrifice

Alignment: Chaos

Symbol: A spiral, usually a tattoo

Garb: Bloodstained robes, furs, or hides with hair and beard styled into horns with dried blood

Favored Weapon: Club

Form of Worship and Holidays: Blood sacrifices at solstices and equinoxes, at planting and at harvest, before and after hunts, at births and deaths, and on occasions when intercession is beseeched.

Typical Worshipers: Neolithic tribes (mostly extinct), some Daanite outlaws, occasional murderers and madmen

Chernobog is a primordial evil as old as the world of Lloegyr itself. It is unknown if he was one of the original progeny of the hateful primeval god known as The Father or if he simply existed concurrently with him — or even before perhaps. Whereas the bloody hands of The Father promoted the strength of the tribe and its leaders, the endless thirst of Chernobog existed for its own sake. A god of blood sacrifices, only the truly desperate or the truly crazed would call upon his favor, because it always came at the price of a brutal sacrifice. The more important the request, the dearer the source of the sacrifice required. Ancient cave paintings among the hills of Irkaina depict chieftains giving up their own children and wives to the hands of the blood-soaked altar in exchange for some great boon, and always depict a shadowy horned figure gazing down from above with its mouth open as if to feed.

Sacrifices to Chernobog were not only frequent and personal, but also spectacularly cruel. No jagged stone across the throat or

strangler's cord for the Black God's victims: Sacrifices to Chernobog were always killed by a blow to the head by a club or heavy stone and often required more than one strike to finish the still-conscious victim. This often resulted in not only a hideous display of anguish and thrashing, but also an inevitable spilling of blood and brain matter as the calvaria was finally compromised. So repugnant was the worship of Chernobog that tribes known to consort with the deity frequently faced genocidal attacks from their neighbors, though the god's interventions sometimes turned the tables on these and turned them merely into sources of more sacrifices for his blood-spattered altar stones. Eventually his machinations became too injurious to the survival of the early human tribes, and the god himself came under attack by the now largely forgotten primeval deity known as The Goddess. According to obscure myths, she was unable to outright destroy Chernobog, but was able to overcome him and imprison him for all eternity in a perfectly formed stone. Scholars debate exactly what that means, and the tales also differ as to whether this stone was then secreted into the heart of a mountain or sunk in a bottomless swamp. In any case, knowledge and worship of the god was largely forgotten for millennia.

Pockets of reverence emerged for the god under the new name of Crom Cruach during the time that the Ancient Folk occupied much of Akados. However, his bloody ways hadn't changed, and his worship was again largely suppressed by other tribes before being wholly wiped out with the ascension of the Hyperboreans. The ancient knowledge of the god proved tenacious and returned centuries later among the Daanite followers of the Old Way on the island of Ynys Cymragh in the form of a despotic tyrant-king calling himself Crom Dubh. An alliance of clans eventually brought down this bloodthirsty slaughterer of entire villages, but the outlawed worship of Old Bloody Head lingers on in some remote areas of the island with the name Crom Dubh now ascribed to the god himself.

Chapter Two: The Reaping

The investigation by the Watch and the hired investigators has brought their search to the edge of the fens south of Toiltown. Part of the overall swampland known as the Lych Fens that embraces the city's southern boundary and best known for its historic use in the disposal of mortal remains (usually surreptitiously), this particular region is known as Sheep's Coe.

In times past, it has been less boggy than other areas of the fen and was considered good grazing land for the massive flocks of sheep that are necessary to feed and clothe a city the size of Castorhage. However, some particular quality of the soil, the swamp waters themselves, or the all-too-frequent deposits of cadavers caused an unusually high incidence of a rotting disease that afflicts sheep and their woolen coats known among shepherds as coath (or "coe" for short). As a result of the ever-increasing frequency of this pestilence, the flocks were moved farther and farther afield until they reached their current folds and grazing lands many miles away from the city on other parts of the Isle of Lymossus. Fierce storms off the Fetid Sea in recent years have caused flooding that has yet to fully drain away, reducing the former grazing lands to tussocks of bog plants growing amid brackish pools of water that make overland travel virtually impossible.

Water depth within the pools and channels is 1d6+4ft, and their bottoms are covered in several feet of muck that is considered a shallow bog for any water breathers that attempt to travel along the bottom. Visibility in the water is less than 1ft, providing total concealment to anything in the

water against anything that is not a species native to the muddy channels. These creatures have all adapted means of navigation other than sight and can get around without impediment.

The fens are rife with wildlife and dangerous creatures alike, but for purposes of this adventure and the time constraints it has imposed, consider that most of the dangerous fauna has fled the area due to all the recent activity. If you prefer more combats, though, feel free to insert any encounters appropriate to a swampy setting that you wish.

The Kidnapper's Trail

The Watch's search centers on a stretch of land bordering the waters of the fen. Here, a fresh trail of many child-sized footprints was found leading from the edge of the city directly to the water's edge where searchers found signs of the beaching of a large skiff. It doesn't take the most experienced Watch inspectors to deduce that the kidnapped children were loaded onto the skiff and floated out into the swamp to disappear among its many miles of trackless waterways, pools, and plant growth. The investigation has stalled here, and MacKenzie's divinations have provided no further insight. The investigation lies in the hands of the characters now.

Even if they try, characters won't get any high-level magical assistance tracking the children from resources within the city for such a low-profile crime. Even the great nephew of a Justice doesn't warrant that sort of expenditure — perhaps a Grand Justice, but certainly not a simple Justice. But the characters possibly have access to divination spells such as *commune*, *contact other plane*, *speak with animals*, and *speak with plants*. Creative players can make use of these spells in multiple ways, but most boil down to one of two main options: seeking information about which way a boatload of children went or seeking information on likely places within the fens that a boatload of children could be taken. Divination spells will not provide any further information on the kidnappers themselves or the fates of the children, however. Likewise, creative use of magic such as *fly* or summoning spells, or abilities that allow flight or shapechange, could be used to perform aerial reconnaissance to find their quarry.

Spells such as *locate object* (for the missing slipper of Zacari Woodcock's pair, for instance) will not work until they are within spell range of the children's location. In addition, any abilities or spells attempting to contact the children themselves will not work because of the current mental state of the children. They simply will not respond to such contact attempts.

Finally, no mundane means of tracking is possible since the children were transported by water. A random search of the swamp by boat has only a cumulative 5% chance per hour of locating the island where the children were taken. The Watch have not proceeded more than a half mile into the fens by boat in their own halfhearted search (they have heard rumors of the Harvester's involvement and are in no mood to actually confront the quasi-deity), so they can provide no real guidance for the characters' search. Nor will they accompany the characters into the swamp. The best they can do is provide a large skiff that the characters can use to pole along the swamp channels in search of the children. They otherwise wait at the swamp's edge for the party's return. If they characters are gone for more than 36 hours, they give up their search and return to their Watch Stations. They have been informed of the rate at which the children are being lost as determined by MacKenzie's divinations and have no wish to prolong their risk of crossing the Harvester any longer than they have to.



Bryn Duach

The kidnapped children have been taken to an island approximately 3 miles into the fens through a maze of weed-choked, tree-wrapped, muddy channels. Though close to the city, the island is not expected as a location because it has actually only been recently raised from the waters of the swamp by the ritual of Maregeth and his followers. As a result, it does not appear on any of the scant maps that exist of the fens and is unknown to any potential local guides. The characters are truly on their own in discovering the whereabouts of this place. However, once the island has been spotted or learned of through magic, its likelihood of being where the children were taken becomes immediately obvious. There just isn't any place else nearby that could serve as a destination nearly as well as the large and strangely out-of-place island.

The island itself is little more than a large, mud-covered hill emerging suddenly from the swamp waters ahead as the last screening growths of foliage are cleared. Its oozing, mud-covered slopes are punctuated by countless bits of rotten debris and look more like the muck at the bottom of a swamp rather than a landmass rising from a swamp. And indeed, the hill only recently emerged from the depths of the swamp itself. By what process this recent rising occurred is not immediately evident, though a faint aura of transmutation magic still lingers over the whole of the island.

Upon arriving at the island, the characters immediately spot a skiff pulled up on its muddy beach with a multitude of child-sized footprints, and a lion-shaped print, leading into a copse of cypress trees growing at the base of the hill. The hill itself rises to a height of no more than 100ft above the waterline. The island's dimensions cover roughly 700ft by 900ft total, with the slopes of the hill taking up most of the space.

Climbing the hill is muddy and exhausting work, though not particularly dangerous, as there are no cliffs or falling hazards. At its top can be found only bugs, swamp foliage, a few snakes, and a breathtakingly depressing view of the green and brown marshland that abuts the southern edge of the brown and grey expanse of the smog-choked city to the north.

Maregeth and his followers refer to the new island as Bryn Duach ("Black Hill" in the Daanite language of Ogham) and raised to serve as a temple and base of operations for their cult, but also because of its proximity to their entrapped god.

The Copse Copse

The trees composing the copse at the base of the hill are cypress. Until recently, they had been growing in the shallow bog water of the fen before the ground they grow upon rose and became (somewhat) dry land. The copse covers an area roughly 60ft wide by 20ft deep, and the trail of children's footprints leads directly into its moss-obscured interior.

Shortly after entering the shade of these trees, the characters catch sight of a human male — obviously a resident of one of the city's poorer areas by his manner of dress — huddled pitifully against the base of one of the tree trunks. The man seems to be extending his hand for alms while keeping his eyes deferentially downcast. He is completely motionless other than a slight swaying of his extended appendage. Getting within 10ft of the beggar reveals him to actually be a fairly recently deceased corpse — his skin only now beginning to show the mottle of decomposition — held erect by a number of thin strands of web dangling from the tree limbs above. His swaying arm is caused by the slight motion of the tree limbs in the barest of breezes. At a distance of 5ft, his condition is unmistakable, as is the putrid odor that only then becomes apparent from the overlying rotten smell of the fens. Why the corpse was left here or by whom is not readily apparent, but the trail of children's tracks passes right by the fragile marionette.

In truth, the corpse is an unfortunate Blighter who fell victim to Maregeth and his cronies. He was slain and thrown into the pool in **Area 3** as Maregeth's first **bog burgyn**. The ddewin then ordered the creature to take up station here and remain in place until intruders threatened or attempted to enter the cave at **Area 1**. It has remained motionless here ever since, not even bothering to move when the spiders at **Area 1** later came to investigate. It is only by some strange quirk of fate that the spiders' webbing has strung him up like a marionette, but they in no way



inhibit his movement. As soon as any character attacks, approaches within 5ft, or tries to pass by toward **Area 1**, the undead creature lurches to its feet and attacks.

Bog Burgyn: HD 6; HP 43; AC 6[13]; Atk 2 slams (1d6); Move 9; Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 8/800; **Special:** regenerate (2hp/round), rend (2 slams, save or 1d6 damage), resistances (cold, fire) (50%). (See **Monster Appendix**)

The Caves of Bryn Duach

The hill of Bryn Duach is riddled with a system of limestone caves formed millions of years ago. They have been flooded for much of recorded history, but Maregeth's use of ritual magic pulled the entire complex up with the hill and made them more accessible in his attempts to reach his imprisoned god.

The tunnels have an average height of 8ft, with larger caverns having a ceiling height of half of their widest dimension. Floors are rough and uneven, covered by a layer of sticky mud that halves Movement. All rooms and tunnels are considered difficult terrain unless otherwise stated. Maregeth and his cultists wear elevated wooden sandals (similar to Japanese geta) that allow them to move through the muck normally. In addition, the animals, undead, vermin, and outsiders located within the cave system are unaffected by the mud, but it does slow the possessed children (**Area 7**).

The walls of the caves are moist and dripping with mud from their recent submersion, making climbing difficult (–20% Climb Walls), and the ever-present smell of bog and decay permeates everything. Simple stone oil lamps with floating wicks hang from hooks driven into the center of each cavern provide the only lighting in the caves. They give off light

CHILDREN OF THE HARVEST

Random Encounters

The occupants of the cavern tunnels are not static in their location, but move throughout the cave system as they go about their cult duties. As a result, the cave complex is a hive of activity. A roll for a random encounter should be made whenever an unoccupied cavern is entered, whenever the party passes through a tunnel between different caverns, or whenever combat occurs that involves loud or explosive magic or goes on for more than 6 rounds, except for **Areas 1, 2, 3, 12, and 13**; random encounters never occur in those areas. An encounter occurs on a roll of 1–2 on a 1d6. Roll 2d6 on the table below to determine the encounter. If the encounter calls for creatures or individuals on the roster who have all been slain or incapacitated, then they do not appear as a part of the encounter, though any other indicated creatures will.

Random Encounter Table

2d6	Encounter
2	Cult priest, cult elect, 1d3 cultists, and 1d3–1 possessed children*
3	1d2 cult elect and 1d6 cultists
4	Cwdcai and 1d3 retch hounds
5	Cult elect, 1d3 cultists, and 1d3 possessed children*
6	1d3 possessed children*
7	1d3 retch hounds
8	1d3 centipede swarms
9	Cultist
10	1d2 bog burgyns
11	1d3 cultists and 1d3–1 possessed children*
12	Maregeth, 1 cult priest, 1d2 cult elect, 1d4 cultists, and 1 possessed child* heading to Area 4 for the ritual

* Encounters with possessed children have a cumulative 4% chance (for each) of being Zacari Woodcock or Emelia Waldersham.

Bog Burgyns: HD 6; AC 6[13]; Atk 2 slams (1d6); Move 9; Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 8/800; **Special:** regenerate (2hp/round), rend (2 slams, save or 1d6 damage), resistances (cold, fire) (50%). (See **Monster Appendix**)

Centipede Swarms: HD 3; AC 7[12]; Atk 1hp + non-lethal poison; Move 3; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** non-lethal poison (+4 save or helpless for 1d4 rounds, crippled limb for 2d4 days). (**Monstrosities** 62)

Cultists (varies): HD 3; AC 7[12]; Atk club (1d4) or dagger (1d4) or heavy crossbow 1/2 (1d6+1); Move 14; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** none.

Equipment: leather armor, club, dagger, heavy crossbow with 15 bolts, flint and steel, elevated wooden sandals*, pouch with 2d4+2gp, 3d10+10sp.

* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above.

Cult Elect Cleric of Chernobog (Clr4): HD 4; AC 7[12]; Atk club (1d4); Move 12; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** , +2 saves vs. paralysis or poison, control undead, spells (2/1).

Spells: 1st—*detect magic*, *protection from good*; 2nd—*hold person*.

Equipment: leather armor, club, elevated wooden sandals*, flint and steel, vial of unholy water, 3d6+10gp.

* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above.

Cult Priest Cleric of Chernobog (Clr 8): HP 41; AC 5[14]; Atk club (1d4); Move 12; Save 8; AL C; CL/XP 9/1100;



as a torch and provide normal illumination in the central 20ft area of a room, with dim light for 20ft beyond that. If one of these lamps is broken or overturned, the oil ignites and behaves as a thrown flask of oil (dealing 1d6 points of damage for 1d3 rounds to anyone within 5ft). The caverns are dark beyond this area, and the tunnels themselves have no illumination. The cultists and children carry bundles of reeds tied together as short-lived torches (15-minute duration) when they travel between the cavern rooms. Other inhabitants (including the cult priests and Maregeth) do not require a light source. A bundle of a half-dozen or so of these crude torches — most half-used already — is stacked beside the exit of each cavern room.

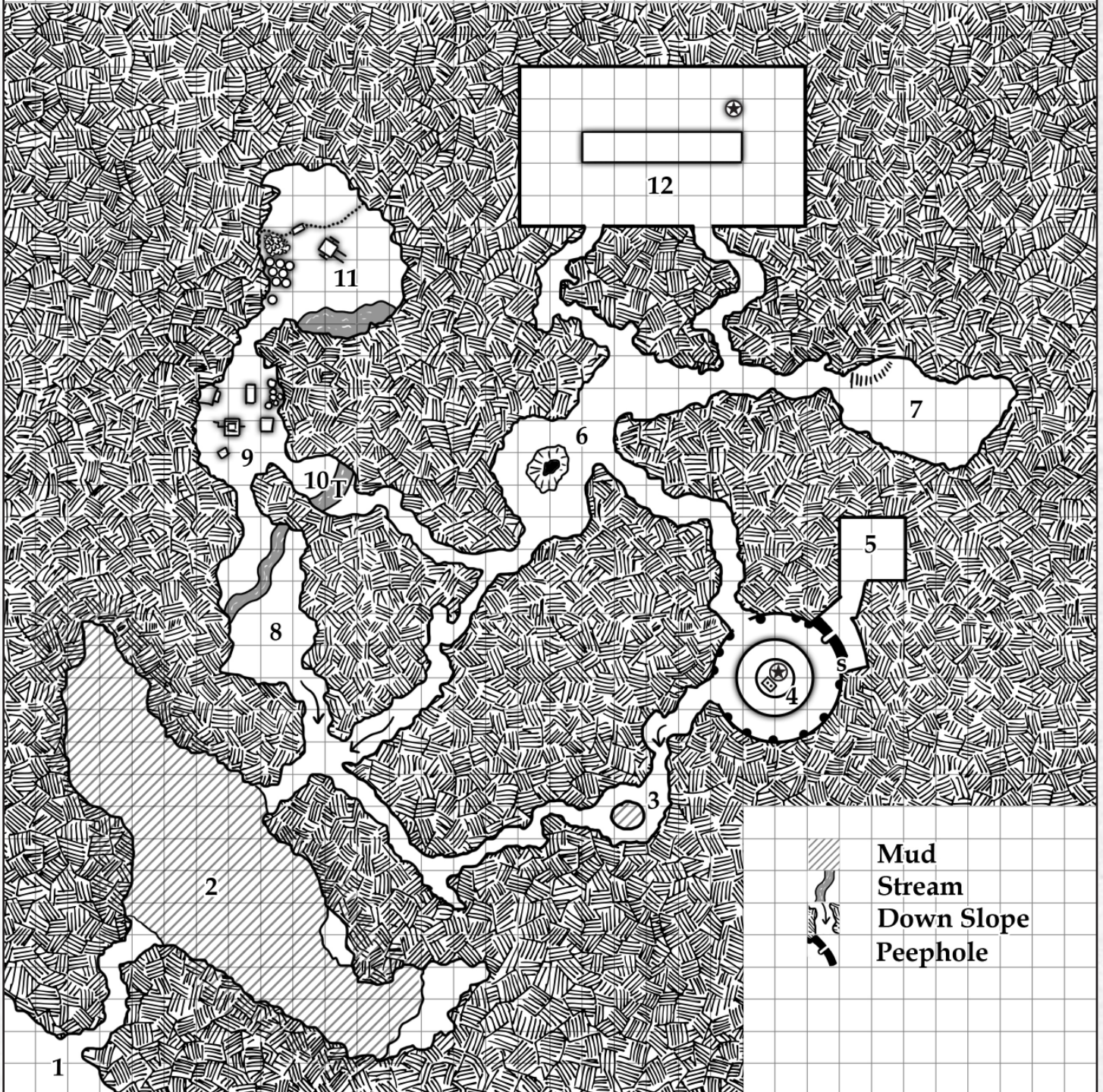
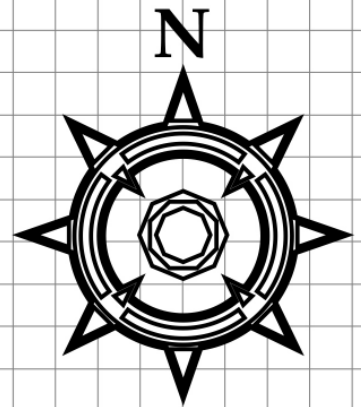
Cave Occupants

Maregeth has a finite number of followers and servitor creatures present within the tunnels. Any losses to these numbers should be removed from the overall roster. Once all of a given type are slain or incapacitated, no further encounters with that type of creature occur whether by random encounter or in a keyed area encounter. The roster of Bryn Duach's occupants is:

- Maregeth (**Area 5**)
- Cwdcai (**Area 9**)
- 5 retch hounds (**Areas 9 and 11**)
- 3 cult priests (**Areas 4 and 7**)
- 6 cult elect (**Areas 4 and 7**)
- 10 cultists (**Areas 4 and 7**)
- 28 possessed children, minus the number of hours elapsed since the adventure began (**Area 4**)
- 5 bog burgyns*, 3 of them will not be encountered outside **Area 3**.
* Does not include the bog burgyn at **Area 1**

The Caves of Bryn Duach

1 square - 20 feet



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Special: +2 saves vs. paralysis or poison, control undead, spells (2/2/2/2/2).

Spells: 1st—*cause light wounds, detect good*; 2nd—*hold person, silence 15ft radius*; 3rd—*cure disease, remove curse*; 4th—*cause serious wounds, neutralize poison*; 5th—*finger of death, insect plague*.

Equipment: chainmail, club, *potion of giant strength*, 3 vials of unholy water, unholy symbol tattoo on face, ruby ring (300gp), 4d10+20gp.

Cwdcai the Monster, Male Half-Ogre (Ftr8): HP 57; AC 5[14]; Atk +1 battleaxe (1d8+3); Move 12; Save 8; AL C; CL/XP 9/1100; **Special:** +2 to hit and damage strength bonus, multiple attacks (8) vs. creatures with 1 or fewer HD, rage (+1 to hit and damage, 16 rounds/day), stench (5ft radius, save or sickened, -1 to hit and saves). (See **Area 9**)

Equipment: +2 leather armor, heavy iron skillet (as shield), +1 battleaxe, *potion of growth* (half effectiveness, 15ft maximum height), *ring of fire resistance*, belt pouch of silver-plated chicken head (7gp), 23gp, bloodstone (100gp).

(**The Tome of Horrors Complete** 316)

Maregeth (MU12): HP 39; AC 4[15] or 2[17] (missile) and 4[15] (melee) from *shield spell*; Atk *staff of striking* (2d6); Move 12; Save 3 (+2, ring); AL C; CL/XP 14/2600; **Special:** +2 saves (vs. spells, wands and staves), spells (4/4/4/4/4/1). (See **Area 5**)

Spells: 1st—*magic missile (x3), shield*; 2nd—*detect invisibility, invisibility, phantasmal force, wizard lock*; 3rd—*clairvoyance, fireball, fly, slow*; 4th—*confusion, dimension door, polymorph other, polymorph self*; 5th—*animate dead, cone of cold, passwall, teleport*; 6th—*project image*.

Equipment: bracers of defense AC 6[13], robe of wizardry, staff of striking, ring of protection +2, *potion of invisibility*, silver horn of Valhalla, silver skullcap (55gp), fox fur-lined cloak (70gp), gold torc (150gp), silver ring set with large cracked carnelian (270gp), elevated wooden sandals*, spell component pouch, 7pp, 63pp.
* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above

Possessed Children: HD 1; AC 9[10]; Atk sickle 1d4; Move 12; Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 4/120

Equipment: sickle.

Retch Hounds: HD 3+2; AC 5[14]; Atk bite (1d8); Move 18; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** breath weapon (1/round, 10ft cone of digestive acid, 2d6 damage, save for half), stench (30ft radius, save or nauseated for 1d6 rounds, -2 to hit and damage). (**The Tome of Horrors Complete** 462)

1. Cave Entrance

At the base of the hill where the cypress copse meets the slope is a cave opening draped with vines and tendrils of swamp plants so that it resembles some form of primeval mouth, with a tangled green moustache drooping over it. Large spider webs span the overgrown slope on the left side of the cave in which trapped several mundane birds wriggle and squawk.

Hidden in the foliage of the cypress grove near these webs are 4 **giant black widows**, which have no interest in bothering the party unless they or their food are bothered first. Messing with the webs or poking around near them provokes an attack.

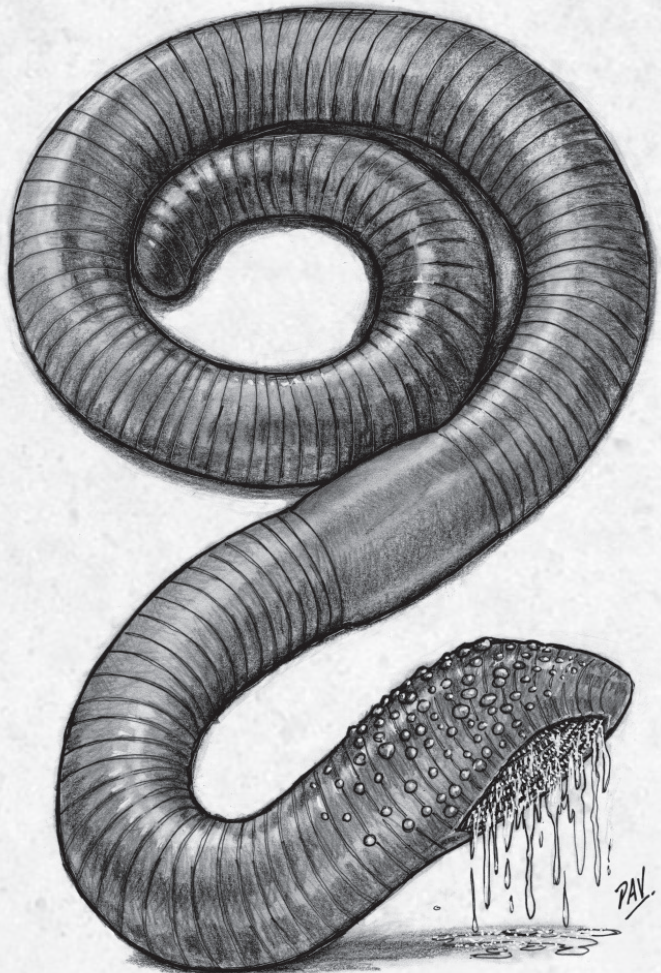
Black Widows (6ft diameter) (4): HD 4+2; HP 30, 28x2, 24; AC 4[15]; Atk bite (1d6+2 plus poison); Move 4; Save 13; AL C; CL/XP 7/600; **Special:** lethal poison, webs. (**Monstrosities** 451)

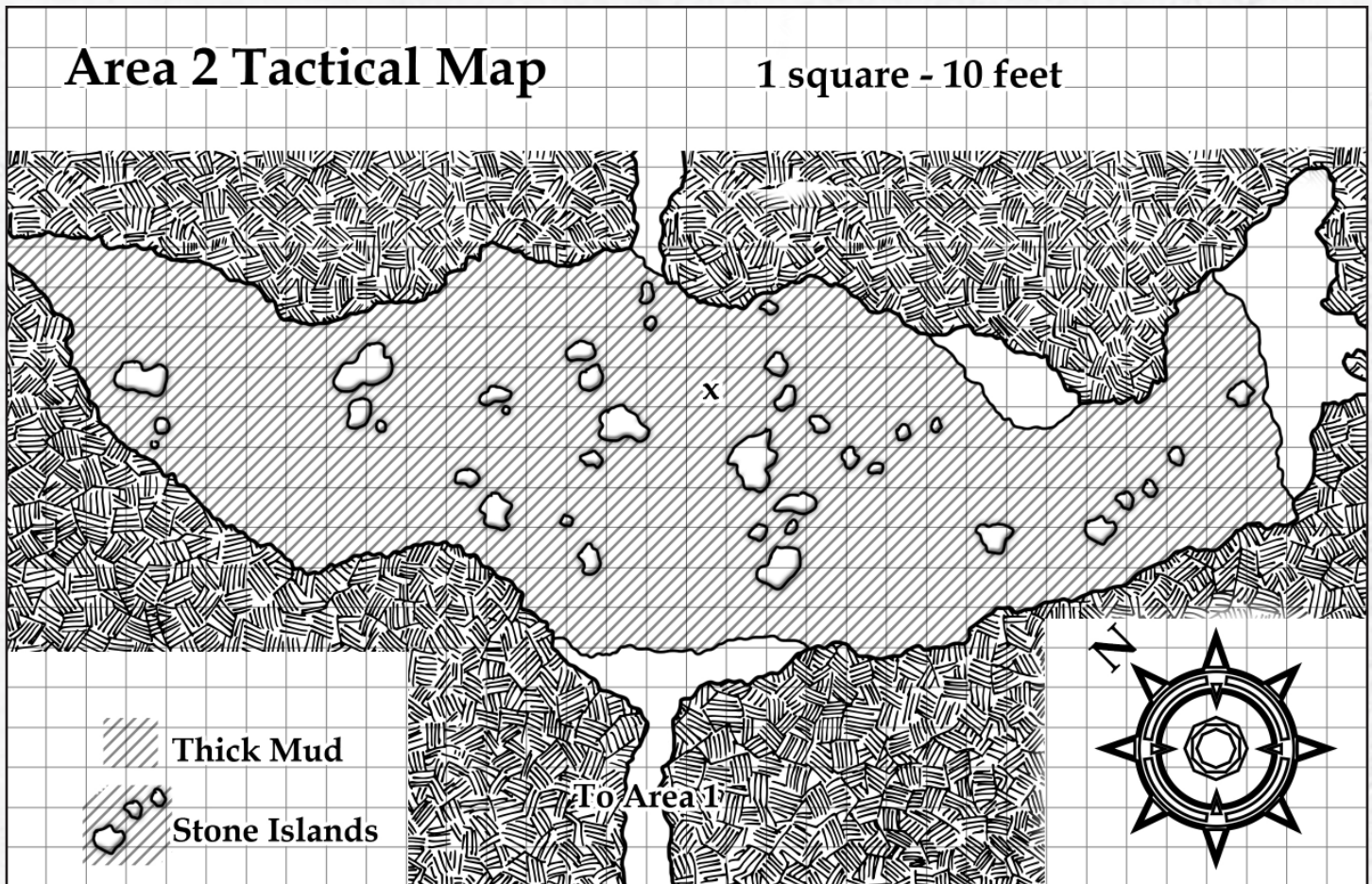
2. What Lies Beneath

The walls of the cave are grey limestone oozing with moisture. The cave is very old, as attested by the large stalactites growing from the ceiling 40 feet overhead, but most have been broken off and blunted by some unknown force long ago. The floor is a different matter, though. It is almost entirely composed of a great mud pool of unknown depth that stretches from the cavern's entrance to the exit on the far side. At numerous places throughout the cavern, islands of stone break the surface of the mud and extend a foot or two above it. Like the stalactites above, these appear to be broken off and blunted stalagmites. Dozens of these flat-topped plateaus are spaced throughout the chamber, almost like steppingstones.

The floor of this chamber is composed of mud that ranges from 20ft to 30ft deep. This mud serves as the home for a colony of 5 **mottled cave worms**. The great worms have lived here for many years. While the cavern was submerged, their movements broke off the tips of the many stalactites and stalagmites as they swam throughout the entire cave. Since the island has been raised, the worms are now confined to the depths of the mud itself where they burrow through the viscous stuff in search of their next meal.

The mud in the room is extremely thick and is treated as a shallow bog for movement purposes. Creatures eventually sink into its depths





if they remain in place for a long period of time (an hour at least), but as long as they keep moving they can slog through it with some difficulty. It, of course, provides no hindrance to the movements of the worms who burrow through it with ease. It is not thick enough to hold tracks for more than an hour or two, however, so there is no trace of the children's passing.

The secret to safely traversing this chamber is to fly over the mud, climb along the walls (-10% Climb Walls), or leap from stalagmite to stalagmite. Leaping requires the character to roll below his dexterity on 3d6. Any jump longer than 10ft requires the character to roll 4d6. The placement of the various stalagmites is shown on the tactical map for this area. There are a few places where a successful jump is unlikely, and it will be necessary to walk in the mud at least partway between two of the stalagmite platforms. At those locations, the characters risk attack by the worms (see "Tactics" below).

Mottled Cave Worms (5): HD 7; HP 53, 50, 49x2, 47
AC 5[14]; **Atk** bite (2d6 plus poison); **Move** 12 (burrow 12, swim 12); **Save** 9; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 9/1100; **Special:** poison (save or die), swallow whole (natural 20 bite attack, 3d6 acid damage/round), water dependency (suffocate after 1d3 rounds away from water or mud). (See **Monster Appendix**)

Tactics: For every round spent in the mud, a character has a cumulative 50% chance of attracting the attention of 1d3 mottled cave worms. Determine the distance away from the characters that the worms start by rolling 2d6 x 10ft. Once a character gains the attention of a worm or worms, they continue to pursue that individual until he is out of reach. As long as the characters remain on the stalagmites, the worms beneath the mud remain unaware of them. Once they acquire a target, though, they attack with abandon in their hunger. Even if the target gets back up on a stalagmite or climbs out one of the exits, the pursuing worm breaches the mud and continues to attack on land for 1 round in hopes of swallowing its prey before retreating back into the depths of the mud to avoid suffocation.

The occupants of the caverns are aware of the presence of the worms

and avoid this cavern as much as possible. Whenever the cultists do have to move through it, one of the cult elect casts a *silence 15ft radius*, which masks their presence from the worms beneath the mud long enough to make it out of the chamber. The use of multiple *silence* spells was how they managed to move the entire group of children safely through the chamber earlier in the day.

Development: At the point marked X on the tactical map, characters have a 1-in-6 chance to spot a small leather slipper with elaborate beadwork in the shape of a lion barely peaking above the surface of the mud. It is the twin of the one left in Zack Woodcock's bedroom. It is too light to sink in the mud on its own, so it appears that it likely came off the foot of the boy when he was walking through mud as opposed to him having sunk himself. No bloodstains are on it, so his being eaten by a worm seems slightly less likely, too.

3. Double, Double, Toil, and Trouble

A large pool of thick, boiling black mud occupies the center of this natural chamber. Streaks of crimson run through the muck like ribbons of fresh blood. A noxious steam rises from the brew in the mud pool, but there does not seem to be any heat from it, as this cave remains as cool as the other tunnels.

The bubbling stew at the center of the chamber is no mere mud pool; Maregeth created it and called it the Cauldron of Chernobog. Drawing inspiration from the Cauldron of Rebirth from the tales of the Old Way gods that he grew up with on Ynys Cymragh, Maregeth used the proximity of Chernobog's presence to call forth this cauldron in a natural mud pool here in the caverns. He has begun using the pool to reanimate the bodies of folk of Castorhage that his cultists have murdered and has **3 bog burgyns** standing guard in this room as a result. These creatures are under standing orders to remain on watch in this room and guard the cauldron from any intruders, and they will not leave their post for any

CHILDREN OF THE HARVEST

4. Forgotten Temple

Any Lawful creature that enters this chamber must make a saving throw or flee in fear (as the spell) and suffer a -2 to hit and saves for 24 hours. Chaotic creatures gain +1 AC bonus and +1 to hit and damage from the evil rituals cast on the chamber.



This grand chamber is a partially worked cave, with natural formations along the walls creating a series of irregular engaged columns rising to a height of 20 feet. The cavern's ceiling then rises another 30 feet to a high dome, creating a strange half-egg shape to the whole. At the center of the chamber, in a circular area where the floor is sunk a foot lower than at the room's edges, is a bloodstained altar made of a single 4-foot block of blue stone upon a low dais that dimly glows with a flickering blue light. Directly behind the altar stands a 12-foot stone statue crudely carved into the image of a bearded warrior with arms crossed and swirling spiral designs on his cheeks, arms, and shoulders. Spaced around the chamber are 12 smaller statues, each only about 2 feet high but carved in the same general style of the larger statue of the bearded warrior, with crossed arms and spiral engravings. Unlike the rest of this cave system, the stone floor of this chamber has been kept clean of mud and debris, except for dried and congealed blood that seeps from the altar into the natural cracks in the floor surrounding it.

This chamber is an ancient temple of Chernobog consecrated in primordial times before the rise of humans in the world when it was used by a race of reptilian humanoids. It was later flooded and lost beneath what was to become the Sheep's Coe, until Maregeth recently raised it. At the center of the chamber is an idol that, along with the smaller statuettes gathered around it, strongly resembles those found in the bedrooms of the kidnapped children. This statuary was all later additions added by Maregeth and his followers identifying Chernobog with his later incarnation as Crom Cruach.

The original centerpiece of the temple was the altar stone itself. This altar is a 4ft-square single block of calcite. It bears a flat top with a slight concavity for holding sacrifices. Many natural cracks and fissures in the stone allow blood to drain through it and to the floor below. The semi-translucent calcite has niobium impurities that give it a blue colour, and a *continual light* spell cast in a hollow at its center makes it glow with a flickering blue light equal in illumination to a torch.

Hidden on the east side of the room between two of the natural columns is a secret door that leads to Maregeth's chamber (**Area 5**). It is protected by a *wizard lock* and a *magic mouth* that begins screaming "Intruders!". One of the columns bears a peephole that allows someone in the secret passage to observe this room.

Currently in this chamber preparing for the next ritual of transformation are **1 cult priest**, **1 cult elect**, **1d3 cultists**, and **1 possessed child**. These inhabitants all gain +1 AC bonus and +1 to hit and damage (reflected in their stats below) from the spells cast on the chamber.

Cult Priest Cleric of Chernobog (Clr 8): HP 41; AC 5[14]; Atk club (1d4); Move 12; Save 8; AL C; CL/XP 9/1100; Special: +2 saves vs. paralysis or poison, control undead, spells (2/2/2/2/2).

Spells: 1st—*cause light wounds, detect good*; 2nd—*hold person, silence 15ft radius*; 3rd—*cure disease, remove curse*; 4th—*cause serious wounds, neutralize poison*; 5th—*finger of death, insect plague*.

Equipment: chainmail, club, *potion of giant strength*, 3 vials of unholy water, unholy symbol tattoo on face, ruby ring (300gp), 4d10+20gp.

Cult Elect Cleric of Chernobog (Clr4): HD 4; AC 7[12]; Atk club (1d4); Move 12; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 5/240;

reason. This is fortunate for characters forced to flee from battle here, as the burgyns will not give chase.

The Cauldron of Chernobog appears to be a boiling pit of black mud constantly streaked crimson with the blood of the sacrifices frequently fed to it. The cauldron continually gives off a foul brume of noxious fumes, but it does not radiate any heat nor have any apparent heat source. Actually touching the boiling mud reveals that it is nearly freezing to the touch and deals 2d6 points of damage to any living creature that comes in contact with it. A living creature submerged in its freezing embrace must make a saving throw or lose 1 level immediately. Each day, there is a 25% chance that the cauldron spontaneously produces 1d3 centipede swarms from its vile muck.

The Cauldron of Chernobog can be permanently destroyed if a living humanoid willing submerges himself in it with the intent to give up his life in order to destroy it. This act causes the sacrificial individual to immediately be destroyed (no save) and the cauldron itself is instantly destroyed, its contents drying to dust and blowing away, leaving only a shallow stone basin in the ground. All bog burgyn within 10 miles created by the cauldron instantly collapse into piles of mud.

Only Maregeth enters this chamber, and the bog burgyns attack any others who do so — even cultists or possessed children. Maregeth claims any bodies left here to create additional burgyns.

Bog Burgyns (3): HD 6; HP 45x2, 42; AC 6[13]; Atk 2 slams (1d6); Move 9; Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 8/800; Special: regenerate (2hp/round), rend (2 slams, save or 1d6 damage), resistances (cold, fire) (50%). (See **Monster Appendix**)

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Special: , +2 saves vs. paralysis or poison, control undead, spells (2/1).

Spells: 1st—*detect magic*, *protection from good*; 2nd—*hold person*.

Equipment: leather armor, club, elevated wooden sandals*, flint and steel, vial of unholy water, 3d6+10gp.

* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above.

Cultists: HD 3; AC 6[13] (chamber spells); Atk club (1d4+1) or dagger (1d4+1) or heavy crossbow 1/2 (1d6+2); Move 14;

Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** none.

Equipment: leather armor, club, dagger, heavy crossbow with 15 bolts, flint and steel, elevated wooden sandals*, pouch with 2d4+2gp, 3d10+10sp.

* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above.

Possessed Children: HD 1; AC 9[10]; Atk sickle 1d4; Move 12;

Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 4/120;

Equipment: sickle.

Tactics: The priest and the elect take cover behind the altar and its idol while the cultists and possessed child assume a defensive line in front of it. The elect and priest use their spells as the cultist and possessed child charge wildly into combat.

Development: If the cult priest is reduced to fewer than 12hp, he draws a dagger across his palm and spills his blood upon the altar and stone statue. In doing so, the last of his hit points are drained from his body as his blood is suddenly drawn forth in a torrent upon the altar. This auto-sacrifice acts as a summoning spell, and 1 round later his body swells to immense proportions and rises as a **blood wight** and begins to viciously attack any party members that remain in the room. It also gains the benefit of the temple's spell effects. It will not leave the temple chamber and remains on guard here until slain or until 24 hours pass, at which point it falls to the floor, an ordinary corpse once again. If the altar is broken (AC 0[19], 900hp or natural 20 with +2 or better magical weapon), the ritual's effect ends and the blood wight (if present) collapses into a normal corpse.

If a battle in here continues for 5 rounds, it alerts Maregeth in **Area 5**. See that area's description for his tactics.

Blood Wight: HD 10; HP 70; AC 1[18] (chamber spells); Atk 2 claws (1d6+1 plus wounding); Move 12; Save 5; AL C; CL/XP 12/2000; **Special:** +1 or better magical weapon to hit, engulf (2 claw hits on target, hold inside body until drowned in 1d4+2 rounds), wounding (1hp/round continuous damage until healed). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 596)



The Possessed Children

Though the possessed children in this adventure are not overly threatening to a party of the characters' level, they still remain one of the more difficult challenges to be faced. Through a ritual performed by the cult and led by Maregeth, each has been infused with a portion of the spirit of Chernobog.

The children are helpless against the powerful will of Chernobog and do everything they can to bring about the destruction of the characters. While *dispel evil* temporarily suppresses the possession for 2d6+4 rounds, they will never truly be free from the deity's influence as long as the black candles in **Area 13** remain lit. Until characters extinguish those candles, the children remain implacable foes of the characters and happily go to their own dooms when it is their turn to be sacrificed upon the altar stone.

Since the rescue of the children is the primary goal of the adventure for the party, the characters cannot be successful without extinguishing the candles in **Area 13**. So one of the major tasks they face is how to deal with the malevolent and possession-empowered children who are out to kill them without harming them at the same time. Killing or seriously injuring one of the children — even in self-defense — is an inherently evil act that causes not only legal repercussions in the city but also alignment repercussions with deities. Paladins beware! A better way to handle them is to subdue them or use spells that incapacitate rather than harm. As the Referee, you should guide the characters away from overtly harmful acts against the children while taking every advantage of the characters' disadvantage (of course!).

The children, of course, are under no such compunction against harming the party members and attack with glee while saying obnoxious things such as, "join us; he wants you too!" and, "come to Chaos!" To make things just a little bit more awful, the cultists have provided these wretched children with sickles that they use to great effect in making terrible wounds on those they hit while they go after the closest target with great relish and abandon. A truly black-hearted Referee might rule that the children actively place themselves in harm's way of spells, monsters, physical hazards, etc., and actually force the characters to rescue them, hacking at them with their little sickles all the while. But only a truly black-hearted Referee ...

5. Maregeth's Private Chamber

The walls of this chamber and its entry passage are dry and glassy smooth as if melted from the surrounding rock rather than hewn or naturally formed like the rest of the caves. The chamber itself is furnished with a single bed with simple wool and linen bedding, a wooden table with two chairs and the remains of a recent meal of cheese and a crust of bread upon a pewter plate next to a clay wine jug, a low couch against one wall, a large desk next to wooden shelves holding several books and rolls of parchment, and a silk dressing screen. Three standing brass candelabra provide a dim illumination throughout.

This 40ft-square chamber was created using multiple applications of the *disintegrate* spell and is the personal quarters of **Maregeth** the ddewin, leader of the cult of Chernobog. Behind the silk dressing screen are a porcelain chamber pot, several cloaks and robes hanging on metal hooks driven into the wall, and two broached casks (one common wine, one slightly musty water). Under the desk is a box of 300 tallow candles and flint and steel for the candelabra. Hidden beneath these candles are three long black tapers that have the smell of decay about them and have a faint lingering aura of evil if detected for, though their purpose is unclear (see **Area 12** for details).



The bookshelves hold several dozen volumes in the form of folios, bound books, and bundled parchment folios. Most are on mundane religious or historical topics, though they slant toward the dark, evil, and macabre. In addition, one book's spine is crafted from the vertebrae of a human infant, and the thin, delicate skin that covers it can only be that of a human child. This *Codex of Crom Cruach* is written in Ogham (the ancient language of the Daanite peoples) and has a strong aura of evil. Possession of his book is what allowed Maregeth to form his alliance with the Harvester of Cribs in an effort to free Chernobog from his eons-long prison. See the sidebox for details of this book.

Built into the base of one of the shelves is a secret compartment containing a small chest. The chest is **trapped** to deal 1d4+6 points of damage to anyone in a 5ft radius (save for half). The contents of the chest are detailed under "**Treasure**" below.

Maregeth wears a grey fur-lined cloak over a red robe and has a dark, greying beard. He is bald but covers it with a silver skullcap engraved with the image of a dragon breathing fire. The dragon's fire continues down

The Codex of Crom Cruach

Within the codex pages is the ritual necessary to raise the dungeon of Chernobog from beneath its imprisoning swamp and then free him with the sacrifice of 36 innocents (read: children) who are first possessed by him to corrupt them and then transformed into larvae, thus permanently sacrificing their souls to the powers of chaos and evil in order to overcome the ancient locks holding Chernobog fast. The actual ritual is a long, multi-step process of which Maregeth is now reaching the final stages. Anyone examining this book for 10 minutes who is able to read Ogham (naturally or by magic) can understand the gist of it. If this check is made by a spellcaster of Chaotic alignment, he is affected by a *geas* to complete this ritual. If the check is made by a spellcaster of Lawful or Neutral alignment, he is affected by a *feblemind* spell. Inscribed in the final pages of the book are the spells *gate* and *wish* if an arcane caster wishes to try to learn them.

The creator of the codex revered Chernobog as Crom Cruach or Crom Dubh and was unaware of his older "lost" identity.

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his sallow face as a black tattoo that extends to his jaw line on each side. At 5' 8", Maregeth is slightly below average height for a Daanite, but his gaunt, almost-emaciated appearance and skull-like face beneath sunken pale blue eyes that almost glow with an inner intensity make him look far more intimidating. His voice is deep and mellifluous as is common for the poetic tones of the Daanites, but a harsh sound is faintly audible beneath his words and frequently comes forth in a hacking, dry cough. He is a man who does not look well and doesn't seem to notice or care.

Maregeth (MU12): HP 39; AC 4[15] or 2[17] (missile) and 4[15] (melee) from *shield* spell; **Atk** *staff of striking* (2d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 3 (+2, ring); **AL** C; **CL/XP** 14/2600; **Special:** +2 saves (vs. spells, wands and staves), spells (4/4/4/4/4/1).

Spells: 1st—*magic missile* (x3), *shield*; 2nd—*detect invisibility*, *invisibility*, *phantasmal force*, *wizard lock*; 3rd—*clairvoyance*, *fireball*, *fly*, *slow*; 4th—*confusion*, *dimension door*, *polymorph other*, *polymorph self*; 5th—*animate dead*, *cone of cold*, *passwall*, *teleport*; 6th—*project image*.

Equipment: *bracers of defense* AC 6[13], *robe of wizardry*, *staff of striking*, *ring of protection* +2, *potion of invisibility*, *silver horn of Valhalla*, *silver skullcap* (55gp), *fox fur-lined cloak* (70gp), *gold torc* (150gp), *silver ring set with large cracked camelian* (270gp), *elevated wooden sandals**, *spell component pouch*, 7pp, 63pp.

* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above.

Tactics: If a battle in **Area 4** occurs for 5 rounds, Maregeth becomes aware of the noise and casts *clairvoyance* to see what is going on in there. When he realizes an attack is occurring, he rushes to the peephole, arriving in 2 rounds. After that, he casts *project image* to make himself appear from one of the side tunnels and spends the next 3 rounds casting *magic missile* at characters through the image. The image tries to stay out of melee combat. Polymorphed characters are changed into sheep or swine for later meal preparation by Cwdcai.

If the characters breach the secret door to **Area 5**, Maregeth winds his *silver horn of Valhalla* to bring in **2d4 2nd-level barbarians** to hold them off and retreats to his bedchamber to recover his potion stash in the desk drawer and the *Codex of Crom Cruach*. If the characters appear to be making short work of the barbarians, he uses *dimension door* to retreat to **Area 11** to hide. See that area for further details.

Barbarians of the Horn (Ftr2) (2d4): HD 2; AC 5[14]; **Atk** battle axe (1d8) or throwing axe (1d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 13; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 2/30; **Special:** multiple attacks (2) vs. creatures with 1 or fewer HD, rage (+1 to hit and damage, 4 rounds/day).

Equipment: chainmail, battle axe, 2 throwing axes.

Treasure: The wood and silk folding dressing screen is 6ft tall by 4ft wide and is painted with idyllic scenes of green fields and shepherds with their flocks (75gp). One of the hanging cloaks is made of blue linen sewn with mystic symbols in silver thread (150gp). The pewter dinnerware and plates are battered and scratched from travel but still of some value (15gp for the set). The 36 mundane books on the shelves are worth 3d6gp each for their academic value. The shelves also hold a *manual of beneficial exercise* that Maregeth has not had time to use yet. The drawer of the desk holds 3 *potions of extra healing*, a *potion of gaseous form*, and a *scroll of water breathing*, and serve as Maregeth's emergency stash if he feels he needs to flee the caves. Contained within the trapped chest are 65pp, 620gp, 2200sp, an ornate lead cross set with 16 amethysts stolen from a Daanite church of Thyr (worth 150gp per gem or 3500gp intact), a leather pouch containing 3 polished finger bones (religious relics taken from condemned past apostates of Crom Dubh, worthless except to a follower of Chernobog), and 2 spinels (100gp each).

6. Larvae Pit

The center of this irregularly shaped cavern is occupied by a pit or well. Darkness hides the depths of the shaft, but a foul, slurping, gurgling noise issues from within, and the stench rising from it is as from the Unholy Pit itself.

A light source presented to the pit reveals it to be only 15ft deep, its sides sheer stone and streaked with filth and a film of repugnant slime. However, the bottom of the pit holds its true horror. Wallowing in the filth are a number of fat, 3ft-long, pale, maggot-like creatures feeding upon the effluvia in which they writhe with hideous sucking and slurping sounds. Most horrifying of all, however, are the heads of the great maggot-worms, for they bear the distorted-but-still-recognizable heads of human children.

The occupants of the pit are larvae and are the malformed souls of the kidnapped children already sacrificed for Chernobog's release. The number of larvae in the pit depends upon how long the characters have taken to reach here. When the adventure begins, **8 larvae** are in the pit from past kidnappings, but for each hour that passes, an additional possessed child has been sacrificed in the ritual in **Area 4**, his blood spilled upon the altar, his body fed to the kitchen hounds, and his innocent soul warped and confined to this disgusting aberrant form. The Woodcock and Waldersham children are not yet among them unless the characters have taken more than 30 hours to arrive here. In that case, there is a 50% chance each hour that one of them is added. If more than 17 hours pass before the characters find the pit, the individual larvae have coalesced into a **larva horde**.

When the larvae first spy the characters, they make an incoherent clamour that calls for an immediate check for random encounters. They have no memory of their mortal lives or ability to communicate, and simply seek to feed upon whatever sources of filth come within reach. Unless a character enters the pit, the larvae are helpless to affect them. Slaying these larvae releases the children from their torment as Abyssal souls destined to be devoured by a resurgent Chernobog, but it does not free their souls from torment in the Abyss. The only way to truly rescue the children already transformed into larvae is through *resurrection* or similar powerful magic to return them to life.

Larva: HD 1; AC 7[12]; **Atk** bite (1d4+1); **Move** 6; **Save** 17; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 1/15; **Special:** none. (See **Monster Appendix**)

Horde, Larva: HD 12; AC 7[12]; **Atk** engulf (3d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 3; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 16/3200; **Special:** resistance (cold, electricity, fire) (50%), suffocation (natural 20 to hit, target engulfed and suffocates). (See **Monster Appendix**)

7. Dormitory

This cavern smells strongly of feces and urine, and even a quick look reveals that it is a pit of despair. Loose clothing and soiled blankets lay in piles amid the muck of the floor, and gnawed bones and scraps of food lie scattered about. It looks as though dozens of folks live in this absolute squalor, almost as if it was the den of a pack of ghouls. There are no other exits from the cavern, and a few bats hang from or flit about the ceiling 20 feet above, disturbed by the lights. Three beds, slightly less filthy than the rest of the cave, stand above the stinking floor on a low shelf of stone right at the cave entrance.

This cavern serves as the abode of the cult members and their possessed children guests. Usually, a **cult priest**, **2 cult elect**, **1d6 cultists**, and **4d6 possessed children** are here unless the characters have already encountered and dealt with them elsewhere in the cave system.

Cult Priest Cleric of Chernobog (Clr 8) Cult Priest Cleric of Chernobog (Clr 8): HP 43; AC 3[16] (chamber spells); **Atk**

CHILDREN OF THE HARVEST

staff of the snake (1d6+1); **Move** 12; **Save** 7 (+1, ring); **AL C**; **CL/XP** 9/1100; **Special**: +2 saves vs. paralysis or poison, control undead, spells (2/2/2/2/2).

Spells: 1st—*cause light wounds, detect good*; 2nd—*find traps, silence 15ft radius*; 3rd—*cure disease, remove curse*; 4th—*cause serious wounds, neutralize poison*; 5th—*finger of death, insect plague*.

Equipment: +1 chainmail, ring of protection +1, *staff of the snake* (12 charges), *potion of giant strength* (x2), 3 vials of unholy water, unholy symbol tattoo on face, ruby ring (300gp), 4d10+20gp.

Cult Elect Cleric of Chernobog (Clr4): **HD** 4; **AC** 7[12];

Atk club (1d4); **Move** 12; **Save** 12; **AL C**; **CL/XP** 5/240;

Special: +2 saves vs. paralysis or poison, control undead, spells (2/1).

Spells: 1st—*detect magic, protection from good*; 2nd—*hold person*.

Equipment: leather armor, club, elevated wooden sandals*, flint and steel, vial of unholy water, 3d6+10gp.

* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above.

Cultists: **HD** 3; **AC** 6[13] (chamber spells); **Atk** club (1d4+1) or dagger (1d4+1) or heavy crossbow 1/2 (1d6+2); **Move** 14; **Save** 12; **AL C**; **CL/XP** 3/60; **Special**: none.

Equipment: leather armor, club, dagger, heavy crossbow with 15 bolts, flint and steel, elevated wooden sandals*, pouch with 2d4+2gp, 3d10+10sp.

* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above.

Possessed Children: **HD** 1; **AC** 9[10]; **Atk** sickle 1d4; **Move** 12; **Save** 17; **AL C**; **CL/XP** 4/120;

Equipment: sickle.

Tactics: The priests and elect attack in similar fashion to those detailed in **Area 4**, retreating to the rear portion of the cave to use spells to keep the characters at bay while the cultists and children engage in melee. The priests and elect won't hesitate to use the possessed children as human shields while they cast their spells at invaders. If forced into melee, the cult priest activates his *staff of the snake* to use in battle. The cavern's inhabitants are all fanatical and fight to the death.

8. Abattoir

The overpowering smell of decomposition coming from this cavern is evident from 40ft away.

This long, low cavern is interrupted midway along its length by a narrow stream that enters through the north wall and exits to the south. The waters of the stream are as black as night, though whether that is from the darkness of the cave or some property of the water itself is unclear. The ceiling ranges from 10 to 15 feet high in this cavern, and the air is alive with buzzing gnats, biting flies, and other vermin. Cave beetles scuttle across the floor among gatherings of maggots. The reason for this infestation is immediately obvious.

The floor of the north part of the cavern is dark and slick with blood that drains into the stream, no doubt lending to its hue. The source of the blood is a number of meat hooks suspended from chains anchored in the rock of the ceiling. Many of the meat hooks are occupied by the dressed and draining carcasses of slaughtered beasts, mainly sheep and pigs by the look of them.

The stench of this place is almost overwhelming. Anyone entering must make a saving throw or become sickened (-1 to hit and saves) for as long as they remain within the chamber and for 1d4 rounds thereafter. The stream ranges from 1ft-2ft deep and has a gravel bottom, so it is not

treacherous to cross, but it is thoroughly fouled by the contents of the room. Anyone daring to drink of it must make a saving throw or contract a disease (1d4 damage/hour until cured).

A total of 10 carcasses hang here: 7 sheep and 3 swine. Cwdcai (**Area 9**) slaughtered and hung all of them here to age a bit before he uses them in one of his meals. If *detect magic* is cast in this chamber, 3 of the carcasses radiate magic (2 sheep and 1 pig). If a *gem of seeing* or similar magic is used, it is revealed that these 3 are actually polymorphed human carcasses that have nonetheless been gutted and flayed along with the others. These unfortunates are shepherds and pig keepers captured by cultists while they went about rustling from the local flocks. Those brought here but not immediately needed by Maregeth to create more bog burgyns were instead transformed into livestock and given to Cwdcai. The disgusting cook cares little for the source of his meat, and happily brought these here for slaughter.

The western side of the room near where the stream exits contains piles of offal and other inedible bits of the slaughtered beasts. There is a greater concentration of feeding vermin here, and if the characters approach within 10ft, they disturb 4 centipede swarms currently feeding upon the refuse. Any noise of battle here alerts Cwdcai in **Area 9** and allows him time to prepare for intruders.

Centipede Swarms (4): **HD** 3; **HP** 12, 22, 16, 15; **AC** 4[15];

Atk swarm (1d6 plus nonlethal poison); **Move** 6 (climb 6);

Save 14; **AL N**; **CL/XP** 4/120; **Special**: non-lethal poison (+4 save or helpless for 1d4 rounds, crippled limb for 2d4 days). (**Monstrosities** 62)

9. Cwdcai the Monster

The aroma of warm, fresh-baked bread makes a disconcerting counterpoint to the odor of freshly spilled bowels, all with a smoky reek as an undercurrent. The ceiling of this cavern is almost pyramidal, rising to a point 30 feet overhead. Cooking implements, barrels, jars and tables clutter the cave itself. A fire pit with a spitted pig roasting over it is near the center of the room, and nearby is a large oven crudely fashioned from mortared stones. Resting atop this stone oven is a stone platter of freshly baked crusty rolls set out to cool. Buckets of fresh turnips, leeks and carrots rest on tables on the opposite side of the room.

This kitchen is the domain of the cult's cook, **Cwdcai**, a Daanite, half-ogre barbarian called "the Monster" by his fellows for his ungodly appetites and predilections. None enters here except on direct orders from Maregeth, and even the cult leader is hesitant to venture into this chamber by himself. However, for whatever atrocities Cwdcai commits in his small kingdom, the food he serves the cult is filling and palatable if one doesn't examine what is being eaten too closely. Resting in the warmth beside the oven are 2 **retch hounds** that rise and fight if battle is joined with Cwdcai.

Currently stocking the kitchen are 6 large casks of cheap ale (20 gallons each), 2 large jars (5 gallons each) of cooking oil, a barrel of vinegar (contaminated with dirt, oil and blood), and a mop and filthy bucket. Anyone attempting *detect magic* notes an aura of magic on the spitted pig (it was originally a human eel trapper who worked the surrounding fens before running afoul of the cult).

Cwdcai does not appreciate intruders interrupting his culinary creations, and typically tries to add them to the dish. He is forbidden from harming the children, but has spiced more than one meal with an errant cultist. He wears a shaggy bearskin coat dyed dark blue and stained with grease, dried blood, and offal.

He is as bald as an egg, and upon the extremely wide crown of his head he wears a recently slaughtered sheep's head, held in place by a leather chin strap that runs from the base of the sheep's jaw to tie beneath his own acne-scarred double chin. The head's eyes are shriveled and shrunken within their sockets, and its short wool is matted with blood and swarming with lice to create a truly disturbing tableau. The constant reek of the decaying sheep's head, old blood and grease, and the naturally foul body odor coming off Cwdcai creates an extremely noxious odor in close proximity. Anyone within 5ft of him must make a saving throw or

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be sickened (-1 to hit and saves) for as long as they remain within the area and for 1d4 rounds after leaving.

Cwdcai the Monster, Male Half-Ogre (Ftr8): HP 57; AC 5[14]; **Atk** +1 battle axe (1d8+3); **Move** 12; **Save** 8; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 9/1100; **Special:** +2 to hit and damage strength bonus, multiple attacks (8) vs. creatures with 1 or fewer HD, rage (+1 to hit and damage, 16 rounds/day), stench (5ft radius, save or sickened, -1 to hit and saves)

Equipment: +2 leather armor, heavy iron skillet (as shield), +1 battleaxe, *potion of growth* (half effectiveness, 15ft maximum height), *ring of fire resistance*, belt pouch of silver-plated chicken head (7gp), 23gp, bloodstone (100gp).

(*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 316)

Retch Hounds: HD 3+2; AC 5[14]; **Atk** bite (1d8); **Move** 18; **Save** 14; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 4/120; **Special:** breath weapon (1/round, 10ft cone of digestive acid, 2d6 damage, save for half), stench (30ft radius, save or nauseated for 1d6 rounds, -2 to hit and damage). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 462)

Tactics: Cwdcai is currently present, presiding over the preparations of the next meal. If he has not been alerted by noises in **Areas 8** or **10**, Cwdcai can be surprised (1-in-6 chance) as he checks on the batch of crusty rolls still in the oven. If alerted by the sounds of battle, he is bent over a large iron skillet resting on a griddle set over the edge of the fire pit. He feigns not to notice the characters but is prepared to fling the sizzling contents of the skillet at the first person to come within 10ft. The scalding grease burns the target of the attack for 1d6 points of damage for 3 rounds. The target must also make a saving throw or be blinded for 2d4 rounds.

Cwdcai then drinks his *potion of growth* and grows to 15ft (the *potion's* efficacy broke down and became unstable due to the constant heat in the kitchen). He coats his battleaxe with the grease and lights it on fire from the pit to deal an additional 1d6 points of fire damage with each strike.

As the battle progresses, Cwdcai attempts to keep the fire pit between himself and the bulk of the party and tries to isolate spellcasters (whom he despises). If opportunity allows, he tries to push opponents into the fire pit or oven (3d6 points of fire damage per round) or oven.

Treasure: Once Cwdcai is dealt with, the room can be properly searched. Located on the various tables and shelves are 15 bottles of quality wine (10gp each), several dozen jars of expensive spices, salt cellars, and pepper grinders (worth 1000gp total but weighs 100 lbs. altogether), a *decanter of endless water*, and a collection of fine kitchen knives of excellent craftsmanship that are worth 55gp for the set.

10. Treacherous Crossing

The tunnel widens here where a flowing stream crosses it. The water is fairly clear and appears to be only a foot or two deep, with a layer of rough gravel along the bottom.

The water is fairly fresh, coming from a spring underground rather than the swamp outside, and flows through a small opening in the wall into **Area 8**. Though the water and streambed are ultimately harmless, they are likely to make the characters suspicious. The true danger here exists from the **swinging scythe trap** concealed in the stone ceiling above the stream and rigged to swing down at anyone who tries to cross. The scythe attacks as a 5HD creature and does 1d8 points of damage to anyone it hits. In addition, the scythe blade is coated in black pudding that slides onto anyone it hits (or that drops to the ground amid the party if the scythe blade misses). Noises of fighting in this chamber have a 3-in-6 chance of alerting Cwdcai in **Area 9**.

Black Pudding: HD 10; HP 68; AC 6[13]; **Atk** slam (3d8); **Move** 6; **Save** 5; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 12/2000; **Special:** acidic surface (dissolves weapons and armor), immune to cold, divides when hit by lightning. (*Monstrosities* 46)

11. Sheep and Swine

This cavern has no light source of its own.

This large cave is filled with the stench of a barnyard, and the noisy bleats and grunts of livestock. A herd of sheep and pigs has been fenced into a wooden enclosure crudely constructed across the north end of the room. That end of the cavern rises higher than the rest so that the floor below the enclosure is slick with the runoff from the animals' droppings and feed. This offal collects in a shallow pool at the cavern's south end. Stacked against the nearest wall of the chamber are a number of large barrels and burlap bags that appear to hold grain based on the spillage around it over which rats and other vermin scurry. Beside this, next to the enclosure's gate, is a large pile of rough roots, tubers, and assorted kitchen scraps apparently used as slop for the pigs. Near the enclosure is a dung cart and shovel, half full of the animals' wastes.

This cavern holds the herd of 22 sheep and 12 pigs stolen by the cultists from surrounding farms and flocks. A *detect magic* spell reveals that 6 of these animals (2 sheep and 4 pigs) bear an aura of magic and are, indeed, more victims of Maregeth's cruel capriciousness, having been polymorphed into farm animals and given to Cwdcai as foodstuffs. The pool at the southern end of the cavern is rapidly developing a strong strain of disease for anyone that drinks of it. The animals have so far proven resistant to the disease, but it will probably not be long before disease sweeps through the ranks of the cult from ingesting tainted meat. Currently splashing about in the filthy pool are **3 reth hounds** of Cwdcai's pack.

Retch Hounds (3): HD 3+2; HP 25, 22, 19; AC 5[14]; **Atk** bite (1d8); **Move** 18; **Save** 14; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 4/120; **Special:** breath weapon (1/round, 10ft cone of digestive acid, 2d6 damage, save for half), stench (30ft radius, save or nauseated for 1d6 rounds, -2 to hit and damage). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 462)

Development: If the enchantment over the polymorphed animals is broken, they return to their natural forms. None of them has any equipment beyond their own ragged clothing unless otherwise noted.

Dondra (Neutral female human commoner), a local doxie from East Ending charmed and lured into the fen by the cult. (pig)

Etis (Chaotic male human fighter 4), a mercenary of the Barbed Lance company who was found passed out drunk on the street in East Ending. (pig)

Olevad Ordurian (Lawful male human cleric of Mother Grace 3), the holy prelate was accosted by thugs in the streets of Toiltown and sold to cultists for 30sp. His wooden holy symbol still hangs at his breast, and he still has the following spells prepared: 1st—*cure light wounds*, *protection from evil*. (pig)

Meri Tuckweather (Neutral female halfling thief 4) spotted some of the cultists entering the fens a few days ago and followed them out of curiosity. She was surprised by Maregeth and polymorphed before she had a chance to run. She still wears leather armor, and carries a +1 *short sword*, 2 silver daggers, a set of thieves' tools, and wears a very nice red velvet hat with a bent plume (25gp). (pig)

Puc (Neutral male human commoner 2), a local shepherd's boy captured by the cult during a sheep raid. (sheep)

Nabru (Lawful male human expert 3), a shepherd and skilled carpenter. Nabru is very strong and was waylaid while investigating sounds in his sheepfold during the night. (sheep, a notably large one)

If rescued, all of the former barnyard animals are quite grateful, and all but Puc and Nabru offer their services to the characters as henchmen or hirelings at half normal rates. There is otherwise no real reward any of



them can give (they own little enough as it is), but the characters should be awarded 1000 XP for each of the prisoners that they transform back into their natural forms and deliver safely from the swamp. If ordered to by the characters, all but Puc and Nabru guard the skiff and any other boats at the edge of the island until they return. Puc and Nabru start trying to pick their own way home through the mire (whether they make it home safely or not, the characters still receive XP for their rescue). If the other four are ordered to accompany the party within the tunnels, they likewise do so if given something to fight with, but the characters will not receive XP for any who are killed in this fashion.

12. Chamber of the Prison

This chamber is completely unlike any of the others seen among these caves. Rather than the rough cavern walls you are accustomed to, this room has smooth, even walls constructed of close-fitting, dry-stacked masonry, and its ceiling is a corbelled arch rising 40 feet overhead. The walls, floor, and ceiling bear the stains of past immersion but have since been scrubbed clean of any of the mud and filth found elsewhere, and the chamber itself is dry. Dominating the room is a massive block of crimson-flecked, black marble, shot through with veins of purple and silvery quartz, 100 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 20 feet high. It appears to be a single, seamless piece and glows eerily with an inner, dark violet light that seems to draw in light rather than provide illumination. This half-light pulses with some unguessed rhythm and seems to cause dancing shadows to flit within the reddish-black stone.

The massive block is the “perfect stone” of legend used by The Goddess to imprison Chernobog in time immemorial. Though its appearance is marble, it is actually formed of no stone known to mortals. The half-light given off by the block bathes the entire chamber in dim radiance regardless of any light sources. The entire block of stone has an overwhelming aura of magic if detected for, but does not detect as evil.

A quick search of the chamber reveals that a strange statue stands on the far side holding a parchment scroll. The statue is extremely lifelike and depicts a bedraggled man in worn and ragged magic-user’s robes. The roll of parchment in his hand is actual parchment upon which a strange charcoal rubbing of some writing has been made. The writing’s characters seem nonsensical to anyone who attempts to read them. While the parchment itself is not magical, the statue itself detects as magic.

The statue is **Abrylcus**, a ddewin of Maregeth’s original chylch. When Maregeth was cast out for his research into the forbidden, Abrylcus followed him, becoming the first and most devout convert to his cult of Chernobog. Abrylcus assisted Maregeth in finding this location to intone the ritual so he could begin releasing the imprisoned Chernobog. When this chamber was discovered, Abrylcus took a charcoal rubbing of the inscription atop the stone block and showed it to Maregeth. Maregeth had been seeking to eliminate his increasingly unstable follower, and he chose that moment to turn him to stone, finding it amusing for Abrylcus to continue to serve as a holder for the sacred message from Chernobog. If the enchantment over Abrylcus is broken, upon returning to flesh he is found to be wholly insane and incoherent from his ordeal. He no longer possesses any spellcasting ability and acts erratically, as if under a permanent *confusion* spell. If the characters wish to restore his sanity, it is up to the Referee to determine if it is possible and how the fallen ddewin reacts, as it lies beyond the scope of this adventure.

Abrylcus (Cultist): HD 3; HP 16; AC 7[12]; Atk strike (1hp); Move 14; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** insane (as *confusion* spell).

Equipment: none.

The writing on the charcoal rubbing is in a virtually unknown language called Foundation, a written interpretation of the Language Eternal, the words of the gods. Foundation was the legendary source of writing passed down to mortals by Yenomesh the God of Glyphs in the days before the rise of mythical Phoromycaea. It cannot be read or interpreted by any mundane means that the characters possess. However, as the root source of such magical languages as azhar*, loquatia arcana**, necronomus*, and draconic, the writing can be interpreted with a simple *read magic* spell. However, even that process isn’t so simple. If *read magic* is cast upon the

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parchment, provide the players with the **Player Handout** to show what is revealed. As the phrase was etched from inside the stone (see below), its letters are reversed, requiring a mirror to reveal their true message as:

“While you live,
we can not part,
I must live lifelong inside you,
locked within your beating heart.”

No other items of interest are within the chamber other than the statue and the great block. The only way to save the children is by entering the stone block and breaking the power of the ritual from within. Attempts to peer within the block with magic automatically fail, and it proves to be invulnerable to any means of damaging that the characters may possess. Even a *disintegrate* spell leaves it unharmed. Attempts to bash a way into the block attracts every other sentient occupant of the caves, with a random encounter (see table) arriving every 1d2 rounds until all are accounted for.

Climbing up the great block of stone's smooth sides is difficult (–30 Climb Walls), but magical means can provide much easier access. Examining its upper surface locates the Foundation inscription from which the rubbing was made incised in the center of the block. As before, even with a *read magic* it still provides only the mirror image translation. The letters inscribed in the stone are 2in deep and bear no mark of chisel, almost as if their appearance was by some natural formation. In fact, they were formed by the will of the entrapped Chernobog through immense expenditure of his godlike power to cause the stone to be absorbed within in this particular pattern. This is also why the Foundation letters were written in reverse.

If **Maregeth** survived an initial confrontation with the characters, then he may have used *dimension door* to flee to this chamber to prepare an appropriate reception to defend this holy fane. If so, he tries to gather what nearby cult members and possessed children he can to lie in ambush behind the great block while he lurks invisibly atop it watching for the characters to enter by one of the two tunnels. He casts *detect invisibility* if he hears anyone coming to prevent them from sneaking up on him.

Maregeth (MU12): HP 39; AC 4[15] or 2[17] (missile) and 4[15] (melee) from *shield* spell; **Atk** *staff of striking* (2d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 3 (+2, ring); **AL** C; **CL/XP** 14/2600; **Special:** +2 saves (vs. spells, wands and staves), spells (4/4/4/4/4/1). (See **Area 5**)

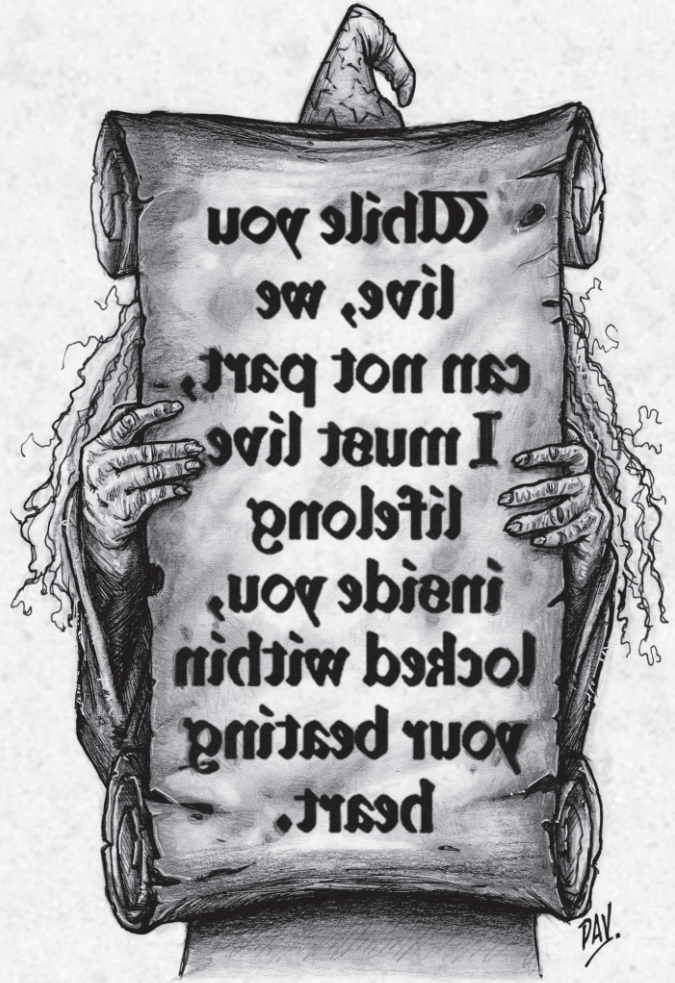
Spells: 1st—*magic missile* (x3), *shield*; 2nd—*detect invisibility*, *invisibility*, *phantasmal force*, *wizard lock*; 3rd—*clairvoyance*, *fireball*, *fly*, *slow*; 4th—*confusion*, *dimension door*, *polymorph other*, *polymorph self*; 5th—*animate dead*, *cone of cold*, *passwall*, *teleport*; 6th—*project image*.

Equipment: *bracers of defense* AC 6[13], *robe of wizardry*, *staff of striking*, *ring of protection* +2, *potion of invisibility*, *silver horn of Valhalla*, *silver skullcap* (55gp), *fox fur-lined cloak* (70gp), *gold torc* (150gp), *silver ring set with large cracked carnelian* (270gp), *elevated wooden sandals**, *spell component pouch*, 7pp, 63pp.

* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above.

Tactics: The fallen ddewin is fanatically devout and uses all resources he has available to bring about the destruction of the characters. If forced into melee atop the block, Maregeth uses *polymorph self* to assume the form of a triceratops, a creature he learned about through communion with the primeval essence of Chernobog. Despite being a fanatic, Maregeth is also a mastermind villain and survivor, having lived for the last several decades on the run from his own people and anyone who may have guessed his true purpose. If reduced to 18 hit points, there is a cumulative 33% chance each round that he realizes his cause is lost and chooses to flee instead. If so, he transforms back into human form and *teleports* to the outskirts of Castorhage and attempts to blend with the poor and downtrodden of that population while he quietly begins to plan again for his next attempt to free his master Chernobog.

Maregeth (Triceratops Form): HP as Maregeth; AC –1[20] front, 4[15] back; **Atk** bite (1d8) and 2 gore (1d12); **Move** 9; **Save** 3 (+2, ring); **AL** C; **CL/XP** 14/2600; **Special:** cannot cast spells, charge (double horn damage). (**Monstrosities** 124)



Development: The key to gaining entrance to the prison block is in the riddle Chernobog provided. The answer is *blood*, which the God of Blood Sacrifice found particularly appropriate and was able to provide a covert clue for without being thwarted by the proscriptions set up on his prison by The Goddess. However, just knowing the answer to the riddle is insufficient, as anyone thinking about the true aspects of Chernobog might conclude; the means of solving the riddle is with blood itself. To whit, the blood of living creatures must be used to fill the deep grooves that form the letters of the inscription. To fill the inscription requires 64 total hit points of blood. Any number of donors can contribute, but if it is divided among various individuals, Chernobog is displeased and each donor must make a saving throw or lose 1d4 permanent hit points of blood loss.

Once the requisite blood has been placed in the inscription, one final challenge to entry remains. If at least one of the blood donors was not a true follower of Chernobog, the evil god senses it through the taste of the blood and sends a guardian **hellwidow** to destroy the defilers of his temple. The massive spider-like creature appears atop the block and immediately attacks anyone present, fighting until destroyed. An easy way for the characters to avoid this is if they have the foresight to use one or more of any live cult members they have captured to provide at least a portion of the necessary blood sacrifice. Once the hellwidow has been dealt with or avoided with an appropriate believer sacrifice, a 10ft-by-10ft *phase door* opens in the center of the block's top surface directly where the inscription was. It is visible to everyone in the room and remains open for 2 hours. After 1 hour, it noticeably begins to close at a rate of 1ft every 6 minutes. After 45 minutes, human-size creatures have to squeeze to get through. After 50 minutes, characters must roll below their dexterity on 4d6 to avoid becoming trapped inside.

Hellwidow: HD 10; HP 43; AC 0[19]; **Atk** bite (2d8 plus 1d8 poison); **Move** 15 (climb 12); **Save** 5; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 16/3200; **Special:** silver or +1 magical weapons needed to hit, fiery webs (3/day, as web spell, set alight with hellwidow touch,

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2d6 fire damage, save to end damage after escape), immune to fire, resistance to acid and cold (50%).

* See *The Lost Lands Campaign Setting* forthcoming from Frog God Games.

** See *The Lost Lands Campaign Setting* forthcoming from Frog God Games or *F1: Vindication* by Necromancer Games.

13. Wholly of Unholies

The interior of the great block is composed of the same smooth unidentifiable stone as the exterior. The walls are 3 feet thick and appear to be slightly translucent, giving vague impressions of movement and light in the chamber outside but without providing any detail. Set at the far western end of the block's interior chamber are three large golden candelabras, each set with multiple candles of black wax, though not all appear to have been lit. Inlaid in silver into the floor in the exact center of the chamber — directly beneath the *phase door* — is a circle inscribed with unknown runes and symbols. Its center is filled with a great twisting spiral that begins at the outer edge and disappears into an impossibly fine point in the middle. The silver inlaid grooves of this circle run with thick, fresh blood. From the darkness at the far eastern end of the chamber comes the unsettling sound of a small child giggling.

This interior chamber serves not as the prison of Chernobog but as the anteroom that accesses the prison of Chernobog. The silver inlaid circle on the floor bears his symbol and serves as the final doorway to where he has long been imprisoned. It radiates overwhelming evil and magic. The fresh blood in the circle was provided in the sacrifice made to enter this chamber from above. The circle's power has caused it to spread across the entire smooth floor of the chamber to create a bloody, slippery surface.

Anyone standing on the floor in the chamber and fighting or attempting to move at greater than half speed must make a saving throw to maintain his balance. A failed check means that the character slips and falls prone where he stood. Anyone falling onto the bloody floor or otherwise touching it with bare skin discovers that it is supernaturally cold. Touching it with exposed skin (such as walking barefoot) deals 1d3 points of cold damage per round. Falling onto the floor deals 3d3 points of cold damage per round that the victim remains prone. This cold is generated by an infusion of negative energy, so ordinary cold resistance does not prevent its effects. The room's current occupant (see below) is immune to this effect.

Like **Area 12**, the lighting in this chamber is dim. However, since the dimming effect is focused on the exterior chamber rather than the interior, magical light sources function normally. As long as such a light source is present within this chamber, its illumination seeps through the veins of the block's exterior and removes the dimming effect in **Area 12** as well.

Each of the 3 candelabras at the western end holds 12 black candles (similar to those that might have been discovered in **Area 5**). The number of lit candles depends on how long the characters have taken to reach Bryn Duach. One candle is lit for each of the possessed children that has undergone the ritual in **Area 4** and been transformed into a larvae in **Area 6**. Destroying the larvae has no effect on the candles, because their innocence has already been stolen to fuel the foul light. When all 36 candles are lit, the silver-inlaid circle becomes an open portal leading directly to Chernobog's prison, releasing the ancient deity upon an unsuspecting world. The only way to extinguish the candles is by destroying the **silver-inlaid circle** that infuses this chamber with its power.

Unfortunately for the characters, the silver-inlaid circle is not the only challenge they must face in this chamber, for currently it also serves as the temporary quarters of Maregeth's erstwhile ally, **The Harvester of Cribs**. As given away by the child's giggle when the characters first gain access to this chamber, the Harvester lurks in the total darkness that encompasses the easternmost 20ft as a result of his *darkness 15ft radius* spell. He observes the characters curiously for 2 rounds after they gain access to the



room unless he is attacked first. Even attacks upon the silver-inlaid circle do not draw his immediate ire as his almost childlike inquisitiveness and chaotic nature hold sway over his actions.

Harvester of Cribs: HD 10; HP 70; AC 1[18]; **Atk** *Harvester's Wand* (1d6), claw (1d3), bite (2d6) or 2 claws (1d3), bite (2d6); **Move** 15; **Save** 5; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 16/3200; **Special:** +2 save vs. traps and magical devices, abilities of a 12th level thief, backstab (x4), darkvision, dissolving strike (Once every 1d3 rounds, 3-in-6 chance after strike of vanishing, appears 30ft in concealment), immunities (acid, fire, poison), read languages, resists cold (50%), magical abilities. (See **Monster Appendix**)

Thieving Skills: Climb 96%, Tasks/Traps 90%, Hear 6 in 6, Hide 95%, Silent 100%, Locks 95%.

Magical abilities: at will—*darkness 15ft radius, locate animals, obscuring mist, polymorph self, silence 15ft radius, suggestion*; 3/day—*dimension door, ESP, invisibility, mirror image*; 2/day—*charm monster, mass charm*.

Equipment: *Harvester's Wand* (see sidebox in **Monster Appendix**).

The Harvester is far more of a deadly sneak than martial opponent. As stated, he attempts to observe the characters for 2 rounds before attacking. He prefers to focus on humans and to attack from some form of concealment. He always uses his wand's bite attack ability initially. He always tries to avoid a stand-up fight, using his dissolving strike to attack and escape again. He makes liberal use of *darkness* spells, etc., to give him concealment to which he can retreat. He does not make use of his wand's shriek ability, at least initially, because he prefers that all of his opponents stay to "play" for as long as possible. Only if reduced below 40 hp does he use the shriek to try to thin out the crowd a little bit and allow him to linger longer over a choice few.

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Development: If the Harvester is reduced below 20 hp or if the silver-inlaid circle is destroyed, he quickly loses interest in Maregeth's master plan to free Chernobog and decides his old manner of existence was just fine. If this occurs, he'll try to use *dimension door* to leave the stone block and the entire cave complex and never look back. His loyalty to Maregeth's vision was always whimsical at best, and he sees no reason to go down fighting for a being that makes a waste of perfectly good kidnapped children. Unless the characters have done something particularly egregious to incur his wrath during the battle, he dismisses the whole affair as an entertaining lark and quickly forgets about it in the pursuit of his usual agenda.

Treasure: The golden candelabras are worth 2000gp each, and the silver inlay in the floor, if recovered after the circle is destroyed, is worth 500gp in total.

Concluding the Adventure

If the silver-inlaid circle in **Area 13** is destroyed, Maregeth's ritual is ruined; the candles can be extinguished to prevent Chernobog's escape attempt, and the deity's possession of any surviving children is ended. Those children immediately stop whatever they're doing and revert to acting as children of their age, crying or hiding as they try to figure out where they are and why. They have no recollection of their kidnapping at the hands of the Harvester or their possession by Chernobog afterward and simply want to go home as soon as possible. Unfortunately, children already transformed into larvae cannot be saved unless the characters have access to or find some way to cast *resurrection* (which clerics in Castorhage might agree to do if characters pay or perform a needed task as determined by the Referee). This of course means collecting and safely transporting all of the larvae back to the city.

Once Maregeth falls or abandons the caves, any remaining cult members quickly flee and try to escape into the surrounding fens. The success of pursuing characters is left up to the Referee. In any case, the cult of Chernobog in the Sheep's Coe is destroyed for now and their grand ritual disrupted. Within an hour, the hill begins to sink back into the fen, flooding the caves once again. Within 24 hours, there is no trace that it was ever there. Even attempts to dive beneath the waters of the bog will be unable to find any trace as the latent wards of The Goddess relocate the prison she crafted to the depths of some other swamp in the **Lost Lands** in hopes of continuing to hold Chernobog for all eternity.

The characters are rewarded for any rescued children returned to their parents as agreed upon at the beginning of the adventure. In addition, the characters should receive 1000 XP for each kidnapped child brought back alive from the caves of Bryn Duach. This applies as well to any children saved from being larvae through *resurrection* spells or the like.

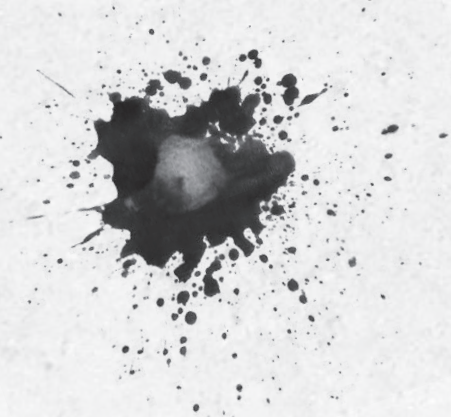
The Watch take in the characters and question them as to what occurred within the depths of the fen. Any reports of the cult turning children into larvae are met with horrified incredulity, though the characters will not be held responsible for their demise. However, if tales of the characters slaying or seriously harming any possessed children are discovered, the party possibly finds itself in serious trouble with the Watch depending, of course, on who the children, or — more importantly — who their parents, are. Fortunately, none of the children has any recollection of the events, so unless any other witnesses bring it up, the Watch will not be suspicious or look into the possibility.

Though Chernobog's freedom has been thwarted, it is obvious that the "lost" god still possesses some amount of influence over the mortal world through the existence of the heretical cults of Crom Cruach and Crom Dubh. These have both been outlawed for centuries at least, but clearly some followers still exist on the fringes of society, and Maregeth's research, if it becomes known, has connected them to their much older and more powerful roots. If Maregeth escaped, the characters may wish to hunt him down and prevent him from making another attempt at releasing such a dangerous being upon the world, or they may just wish to hunt down any surviving cult members if any escaped after Maregeth's death.



Finally, it is entirely possible that the characters have slain one of the infamous Gods of Castorhage in their showdown with the Harvester of Cribs. This is quite an accomplishment in and of itself. While it will not greatly change the risks faced by the children of Castorhage (the Harvester is not actually responsible for the vast number of child disappearances in the city), it may bring the characters to the attention of some of the powerful and mighty of both the Blight and Between, including such personages as the Royal Family or even Demoriel herself. The ramifications of any of this are left to the Referee, but they could become a springboard to launch an all-new kind of campaign in the Blight — one that takes place within the cloistered halls of the Capitol rather than down in the grimy streets below, for instance.

And then there is the small matter of a certain baby-headed wand that the characters might find in their possession. Who knows what kind of troubles could arise as this sentient artifact works to create a new Harvester of Cribs from one of the characters themselves? The imagination is truly staggered.



Monster Appendix

Bog Burgyn

Hit Dice: 6

Armor Class: 6[13]

Attacks: 2 slams (1d6)

Saving Throw: 11

Special: regenerate, rend, resists cold and fire

Move: 9

Alignment: Chaos

Number Encountered: 1, 2, 3d4 (troop)

Challenge Level: 8/800

A bog burgyn is a dripping, mud-stained corpse of a man with a slack-jaw. Its eyes are blank and glazed over. Its hardened fists are blackened by decay. They are formed in enchanted mud pools dedicated to the foul primordial deity Chernobog. Frequently, their mouths and eyes are sewn shut to symbolically silence the spirit of the deceased before the god and his servants. Bog burgyns regenerate 2hp per round. If a bog burgyn hits a single target with 2 slams, the target must make a saving throw or be grabbed and rent for an additional 1d6 points of damage.

Bog Burgyn: HD 6;

AC 6[13]; Atk 2 slams

(1d6); Move 9;

Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 8/800;

Special: regenerate (2hp/round),
rend (2 slams, save or 1d6 damage),
resistances (cold, fire) (50%).



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Harvester of Cribs, The

Hit Dice: 10

Armor Class: 1 [18]

Attacks: *Harvester's Wand* (1d6), claw (1d3), bite (2d6) or 2 claws (1d3), bite (2d6)

Saving Throw: 5

Special: +2 save vs. traps and magical devices, abilities of a 12th level thief, backstab (x4), darkvision, dissolving strike (Once every 1d3 rounds, 3-in-6 chance after strike of vanishing, appears 30ft in concealment), immunities (acid, fire, poison), read languages, resists cold (50%), magical abilities.†

Move: 15

Alignment: Chaos

Number Encountered: 1

Challenge Level: 16/3200

The Harvester of Cribs' features are ugly, resembling a goblin or perhaps a kobold, but somehow worse than either. It wears a vaguely ludicrous clown's outfit complete with fool's cap and bell-toed slippers, and it holds a crude rod crafted from what appears to be an old broomstick topped by a doll's head. But the moving jaw and smiling face of the doll's head seem too fleshy and real to be a toy, and the bell's on the little beast's shoes seem to jingle only when he wants them to. The Harvester attacks with the wand (see sidebox) and its claws and vicious bite. Every 1d3 rounds, the Harvester can attempt to backstab a creature with a 3-in-6 chance of dissolving into nothingness to appear in another concealed position of his choice within 30ft of the creature.

Many are the so-called "gods" of Castorhage, but few are as dreaded by the ordinary folk of the city as the Harvester of Cribs. The Harvester (as he is often called) is a rogue, a thief in the night. But he comes not looking to rob and take the worldly treasures of his victims; rather, he seeks a prize much more precious: the children. The Harvester enters the homes of the citizens of Castorhage at night and absconds with their children, like a deformed pied piper with far more sinister appetites. He makes no distinction between the upper class and the low born in his nocturnal jaunts, taking whomever he fancies regardless of any guards or precautions put in place. His only compunction seems to be limiting himself to victims between the ages of infancy and somewhere around 8 or 9 years of age; children any older than that seem to be too much on the cusp of adolescence to pique his interest. He prefers human children but does not seek them out exclusively.

When the Harvester strikes, there is rarely any trace of the crime or any sign of who did it or how it was done — the child in question is simply gone from his bed in the morning. Other pets, nannies, or guards may still be asleep in the room when the disappearance is discovered. Even other children sleeping in the same bed are likely unaware until they wake the next morning, for the Harvester rarely takes more than one child at a time and has never taken more than three at once in the centuries that he has haunted the folk of the Blight, and then only once in the Taking of the Triplets of Grace Hamminy in 1416. The folk of the Blight are fortunate indeed that the Harvester hunts so infrequently, no more than two or three nights in any given month usually, because there has proven to be little that can be done to stop him. Disappearances of children in the city occur much more frequently due to a variety of different hazards, and usually the only clue that it was the work of the Harvester is that there are no clues at all — no signs that the nursery was broken into or of a struggle by any taken children. On the few occasions when servants, watchdogs, or even guards are awake and might accidentally stumble upon the crime, their broken and battered corpses lying in pools of cooling blood on the nursery floor are usually the only real clues to be found.

No one knows the actual origin of the Harvester of Cribs. He is a creature of Between, but why he preys upon the children of Castorhage so compulsively is a mystery. He apparently knows the

locations of most, or perhaps all, of the mirror-portals that provide access between the city and its dark, shadowy reflection and may even have his own means of traveling back and forth as yet undiscovered. As for the children he takes, their fate remains entirely unknown to those they have left behind. No trace of any of them has ever been discovered by anyone in all the years that the takings have occurred.

In fact, the Harvester collects most of the children he takes and carries them to his own realm in Between — a nightmare land of fairy tales and monsters where the children are simultaneously tormented by their living nightmares and delighted by their living dreams. Many of the children fall victim to the predators that stalk this nightmare realm, and more than of a few of them go on to become ... something more — which is perhaps somehow the ultimate goal for the Harvester's doings, if a capricious creature such as him can be said to have anything like a true goal. It is true, however, that not all of his victims even make it to his nightmare realm. Many instead find themselves devoured as his next meal, and the number of these seems to be rising. Most of the children he takes, however, do make it to Between alive and there linger for long years in the Harvester's realm, never aging or otherwise feeling the effects of time, for the Harvester truly does cherish them as a collection for the most part.



Cursed Item: Harvester's Wand

The *Harvester's Wand* appears to be a sawed-off broom handle topped by the animated head of a screaming, giggling, talking baby. It functions in battle as a +3 *intelligent heavy mace*. Its purpose is to kidnap children to take back to Between. When used for that purpose, its wielder rolls the weapon's damage twice and adds the results together. Due to the Harvester's inherent nature, he is always considered to be using the *Harvester's Wand* for that purpose when he makes an attack with it.

On a successful melee attack, the wielder can instead choose to roll damage once but allow the wand's baby head also to take a bite out of the victim. This attack is automatically successful and deals 2d6 points of damage plus the victim loses 1hp per round as the wound continues bleeding until magically healed. However, after this attack is made, the wand cannot do so again for 1d3 rounds as the baby's head chews and swallows its meal.

In addition, in any round that the wand's baby head is not using its bite attack or chewing from a previous bite attack, it can emit a terrifying shriek. This shriek causes fear as a *fear* spell to anyone other than the wielder within 60ft (save resists). A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the shriek for 24 hours. Using this power is usually done by the wielder but can be instigated by the baby's head itself, and it has been known to do so of its own volition from time to time.

The wand is a hideous caricature of a human child/sentient ventriloquist dummy/comedic sidekick and often giggles and titters to itself in a most disturbing manner. It is unknown whether the Harvester originally found the wand or constructed it himself from the first child he ever took, but in any case, it makes the perfect companion and occasional foil for the demented creature. If the wand is somehow taken by another owner, its first priority will be to get itself back into the hands of the Harvester of Cribs, and the Harvester can always unerringly locate the wand. If the Harvester has been killed, the wand does everything in its power to bend its new owner to its will and create a new Harvester of Cribs to pick up where the old one left off.

The wand is an essential part of the Harvester of Cribs himself, and as long as he lives, it cannot be destroyed. If the Harvester of Cribs has been killed, then the Harvester's Wand can be destroyed by carrying it to the fairy land in Between where many of the Harvester's victims are kept and then using it to slaughter every one of the kidnapped children that are still there. If this action is taken, the wand laughs with glee during the bloodletting only to let out a pouty sigh as the last child falls and it realizes its own actions have brought about its destruction. Its head then transforms into an ordinary kewpie doll, and it permanently loses all its magical properties.

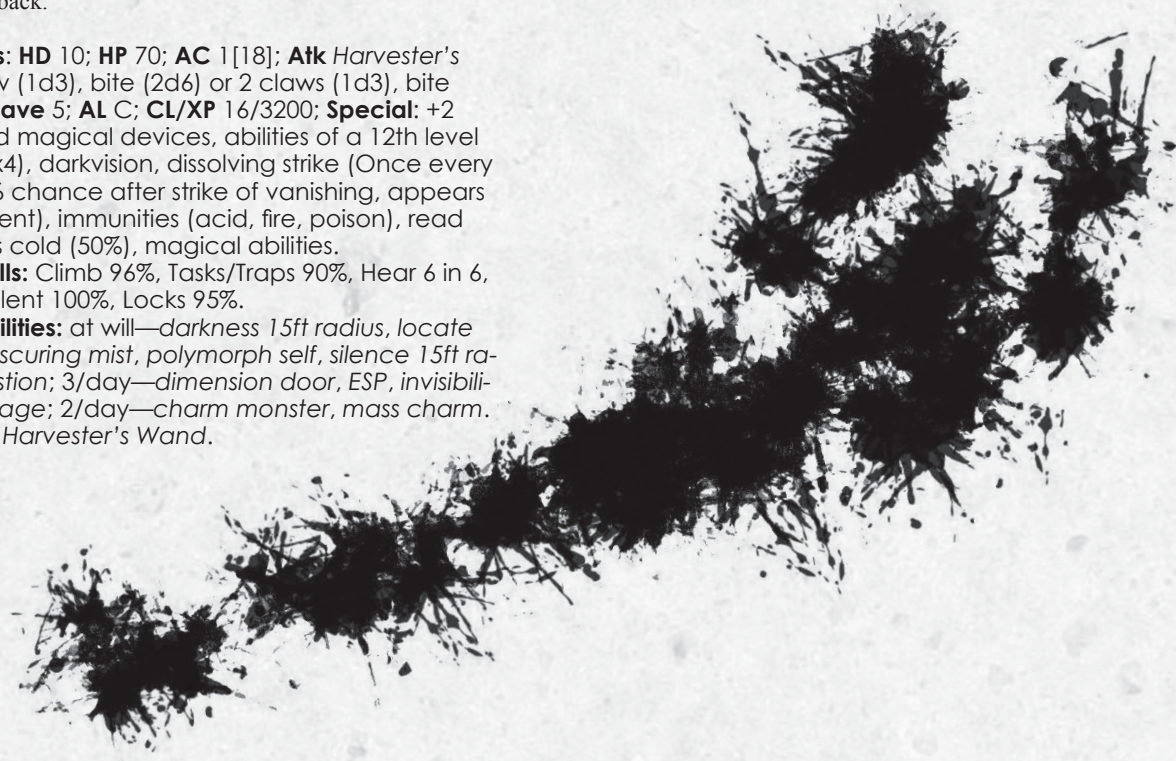
If some brave and powerful souls were ever to be able to locate this hidden realm, it would even be possible to free the many captive children that remain and return them to the city of their birth. But even then, most of them would find that the homes as they remembered them have moved on — mothers and fathers long dead, homes sold to strangers or fallen into ruin — and that they have no true home after all. This and the trauma of their ordeal that will likely plague their nightmares until their dying day are perhaps the cruelest fate that the Harvester has decreed for them. Additionally, if the Harvester was to survive such a bold raid on his home, there is no telling what depths of vengeance or depravity he might go to in order to get them back.

Harvester of Cribs: HD 10; HP 70; AC 1[18]; **Atk** *Harvester's Wand* (1d6), claw (1d3), bite (2d6) or 2 claws (1d3), bite (2d6); **Move** 15; **Save** 5; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 16/3200; **Special:** +2 save vs. traps and magical devices, abilities of a 12th level thief, backstab (x4), darkvision, dissolving strike (Once every 1d3 rounds, 3-in-6 chance after strike of vanishing, appears 30ft in concealment), immunities (acid, fire, poison), read languages, resists cold (50%), magical abilities.

Thieving Skills: Climb 96%, Tasks/Traps 90%, Hear 6 in 6, Hide 95%, Silent 100%, Locks 95%.

Magical abilities: at will—*darkness* 15ft radius, *locate animals*, *obscuring mist*, *polymorph self*, *silence* 15ft radius, *suggestion*; 3/day—*dimension door*, *ESP*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*; 2/day—*charm monster*, *mass charm*.

Equipment: *Harvester's Wand*.



THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

Larva

Hit Dice: 1
Armor Class: 7[12]
Attacks: bite (1d4+1)
Saving Throw: 17
Special: none
Move: 6
Alignment: Chaos
Number Encountered: 1d4x10
Challenge Level: 1/15

Larvae are bloated, human-size maggots that curl and twist in a tangle of disgusting bodies. Worse is the fact that each of these worm-things has a human face — that of a man or a woman, mouth agape, and distorted into an expression of utmost horror and suffering. If more than 25 larvae are in a writhing mass, it forms a larva horde.

Larva: HD 1; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d4+1);
Move 6; **Save** 17;
AL C; **CL/XP** 1/15; **Special:** none.

Horde, Larva

Hit Dice: 12
Armor Class: 7[12]
Attacks: engulf (3d6)
Saving Throw: 3
Special: resistance (cold, electricity, fire), suffocation
Move: 12
Alignment: Chaos
Number Encountered: 1, or 1d3+1 (horde)
Challenge Level: 16/3200

A larva horde is a hideous mass composed of at least 25 of the bloated, human-size maggots. A larva horde attacks by swarming over foes, drowning them in the writhing mass of maggots. If a larva horde rolls a natural 20 to hit, it pulls a creature into its body where it begins to suffocate inside the dense mass.

Horde, Larva: HD 12; AC 7[12]; Atk engulf (3d6); **Move** 12;
Save 3; **AL** C; **CL/XP** 16/3200; **Special:** resistance (cold, electricity, fire) (50%), suffocation (natural 20 to hit, target engulfed and suffocates).

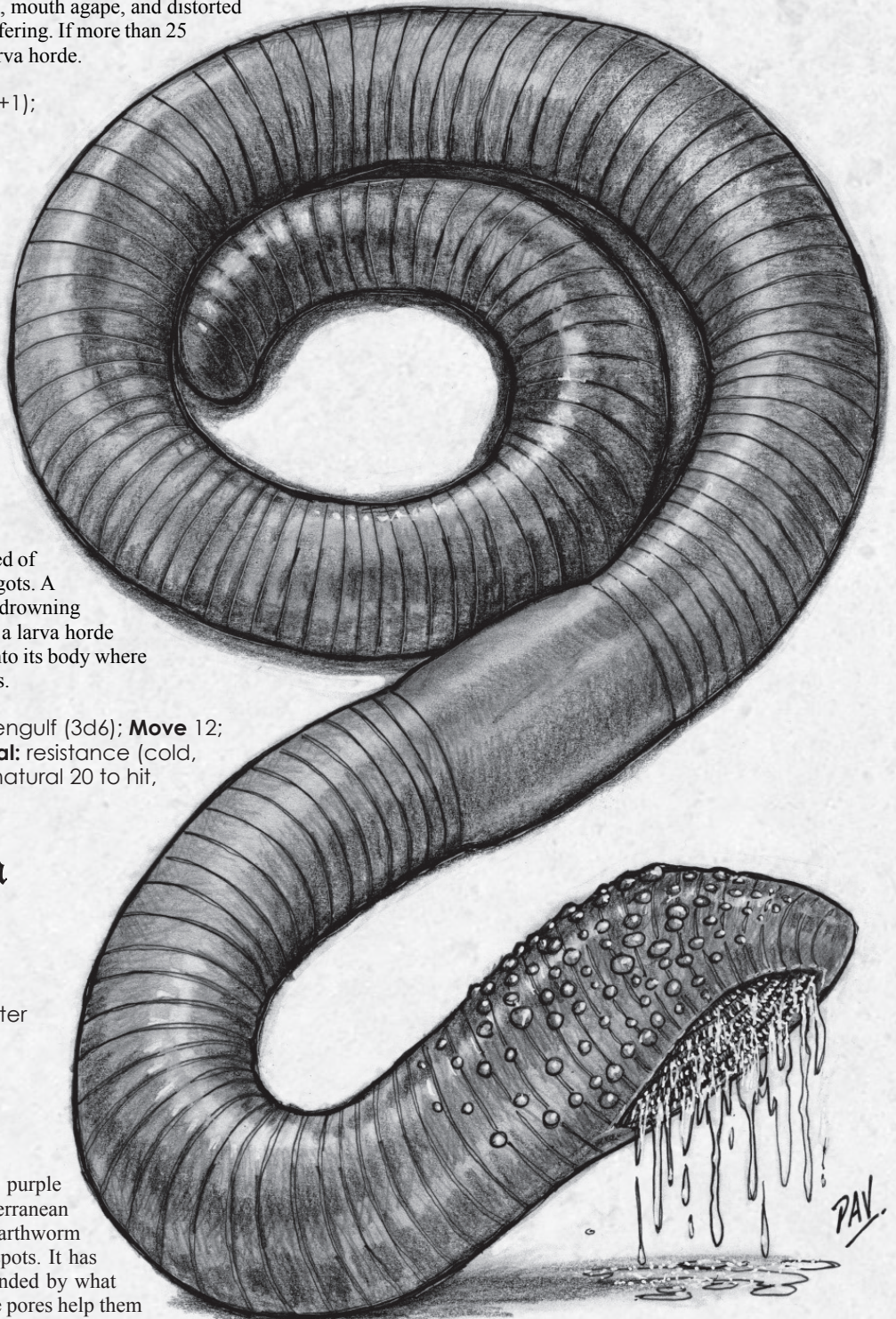
Mottled Cave Worm

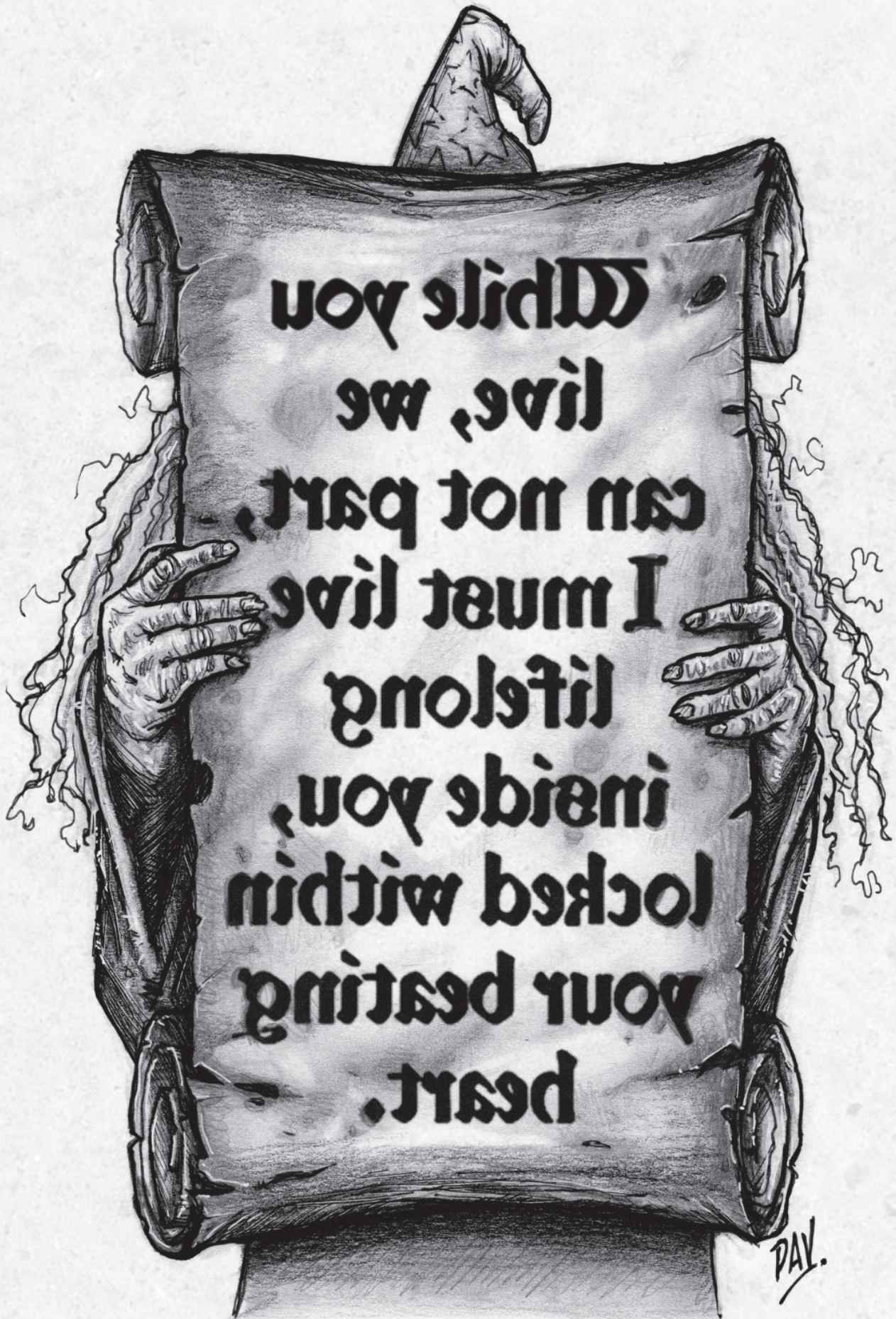
Hit Dice: 7
Armor Class: 5[14]
Attacks: bite (2d6 plus poison)
Saving Throw: 9
Special: poison, swallow whole, water dependency
Move: 12/12/12 (burrow, swim)
Alignment: Neutrality
Number Encountered: 1, 2, or 3d4
Challenge Level: 9/1100

Mottled cave worms are a species of purple worms that live in the muck and silt of subterranean spaces. The worm resembles a massive earthworm with a gray hide bearing irregular white spots. It has a dripping fanged maw at one end surrounded by what appear to be dozens of gaping pores. These pores help them sense prey through the thick mud they prefer to hide in. If

the worm leaves the mud, it can last for 1d3 rounds on dry land before its skin dries and it begins to suffocate. The worm's bite delivers a lethal poison. If the worm rolls a natural 20 with its bite attack, it swallows the target whole. The victim takes 3d6 points of damage each round from acid damage.

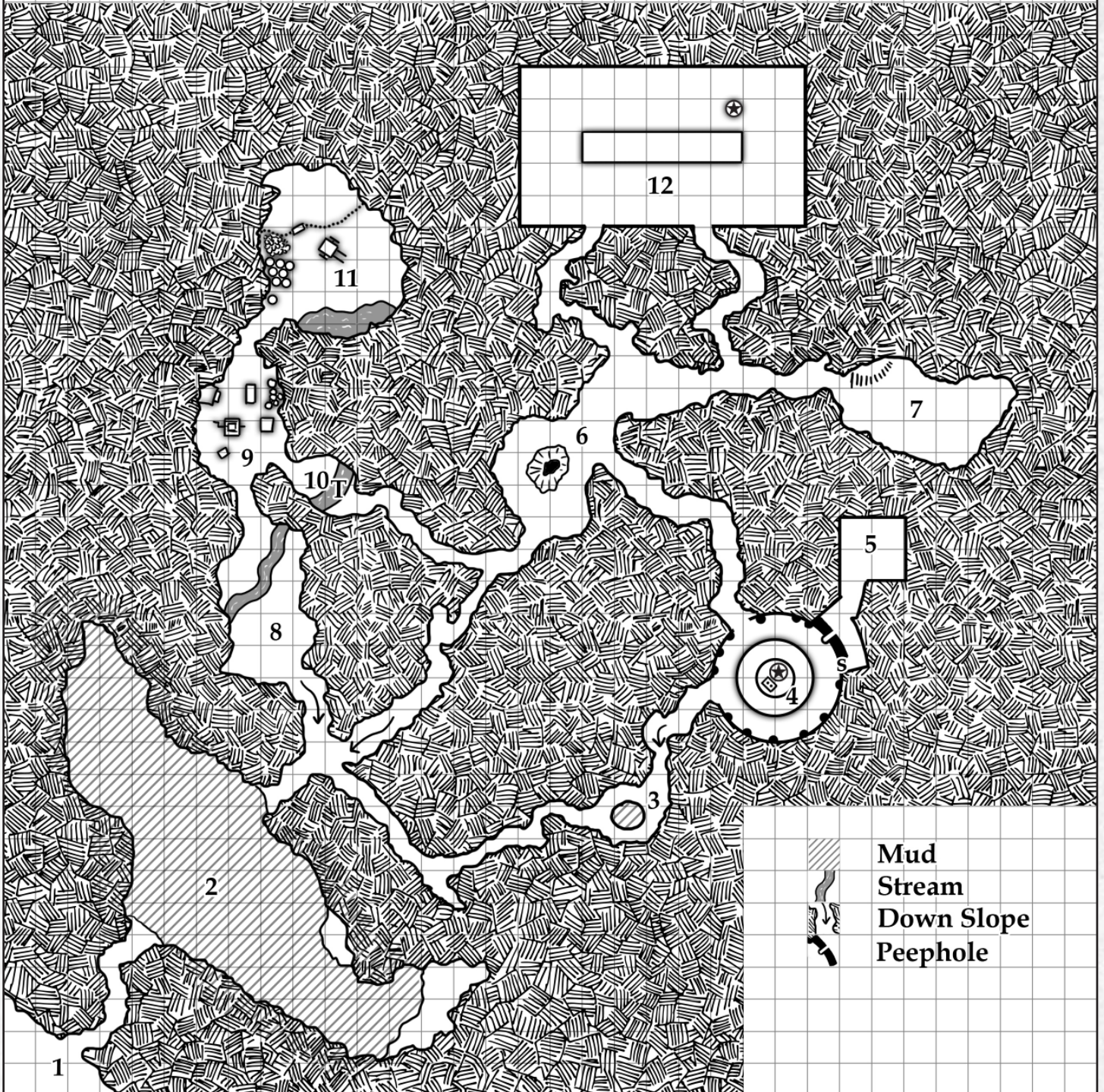
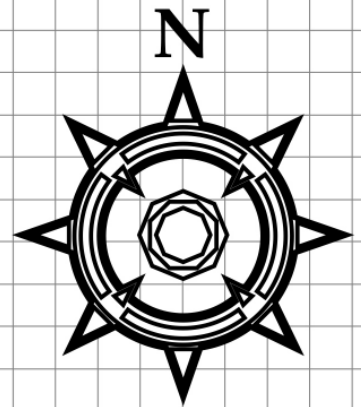
Mottled Cave Worm: HD 7; AC 5[14]; Atk bite (2d6 plus poison); **Move** 12 (burrow 12, swim 12); **Save** 9; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 9/1100; **Special:** poison (save or die), swallow whole (natural 20 bite attack, 3d6 acid damage/round), water dependency (suffocate after 1d3 rounds away from water or mud).





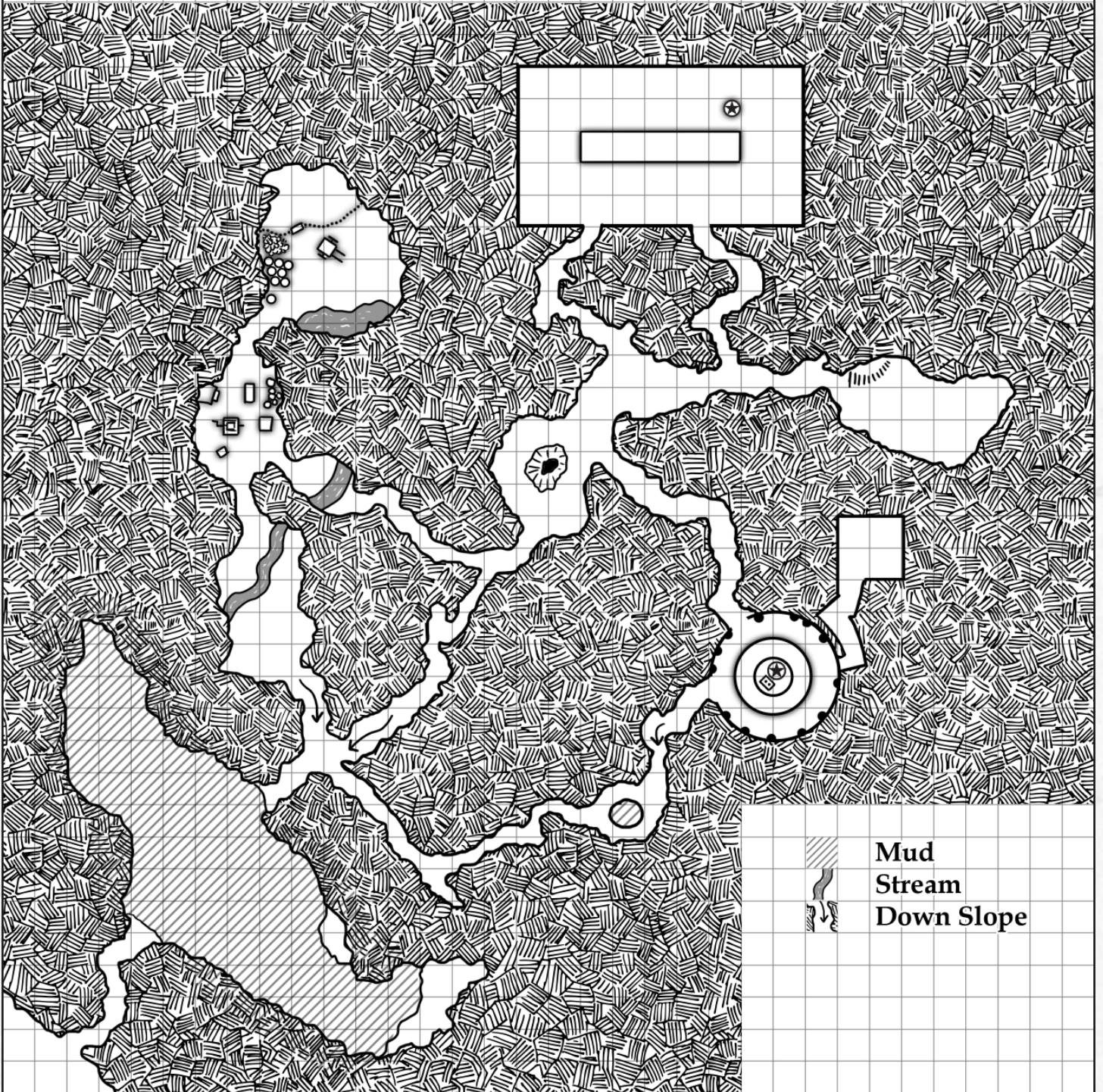
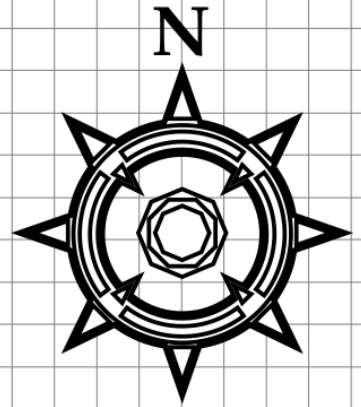
The Caves of Bryn Duach

1 square - 20 feet

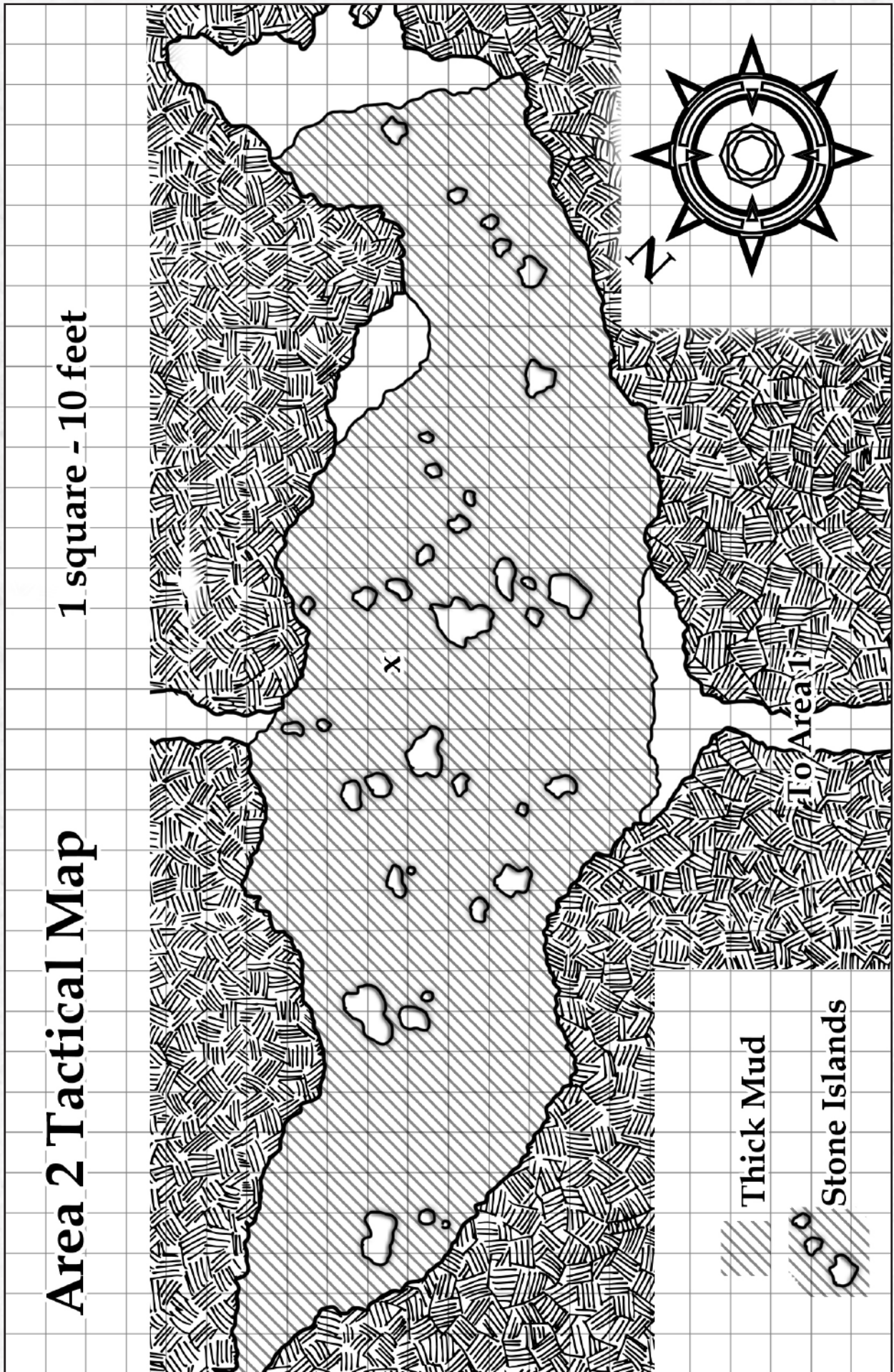


The Caves of Bryn Duach

1 square - 20 feet

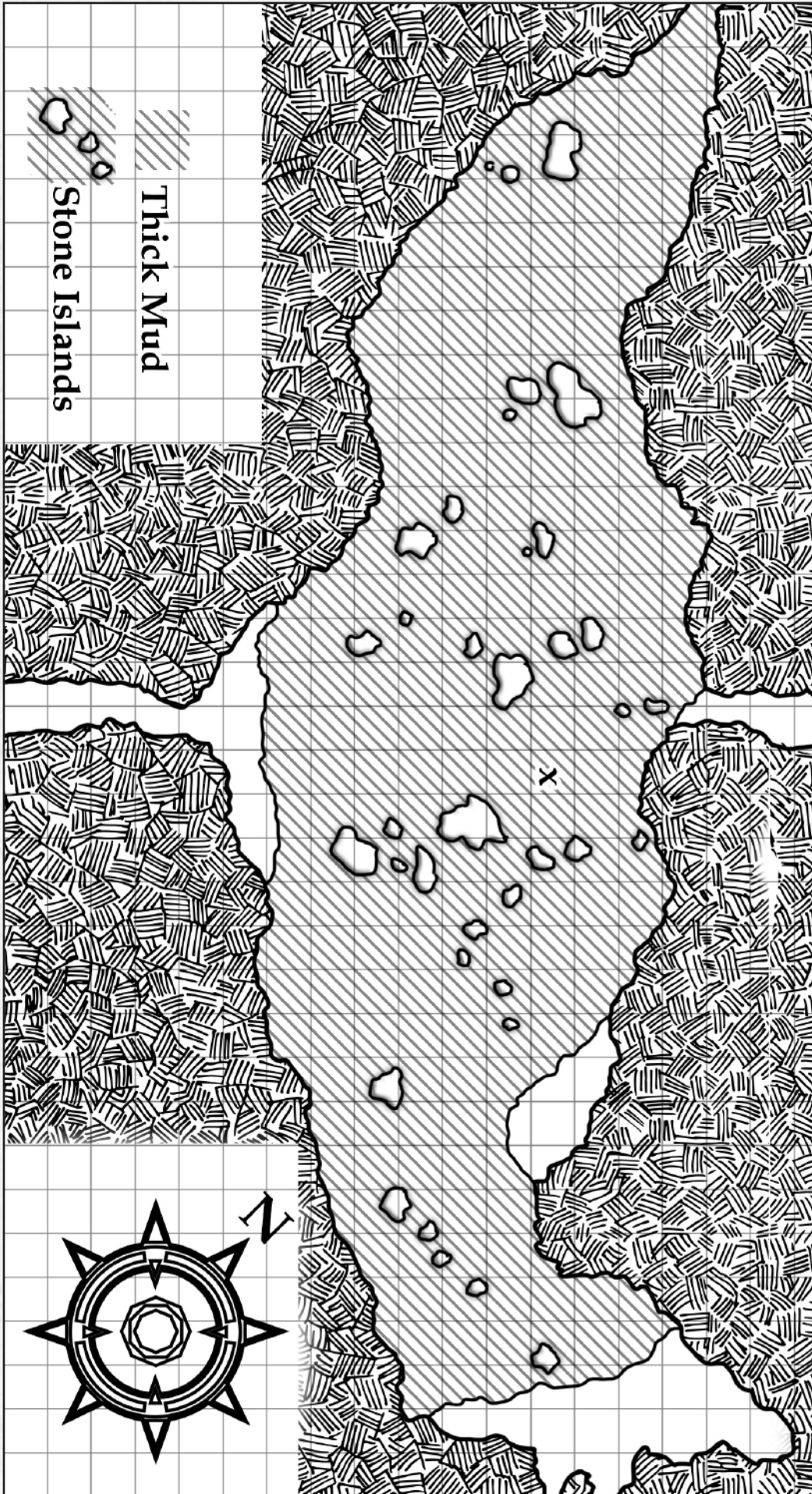


 Mud
 Stream
 Down Slope



Area 2 Tactical Map

1 square - 10 feet



THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

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The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

EB5: Children of the Harvest

The Blight is a dark place. Children disappear all the time, especially those of the poor. The Harvester of Cribs, one of the city's strange local gods, is blamed for many of these disappearances. Typically, these disappearances are random, isolated instances, and in many cases, the Harvester has nothing to do with it all, merely being a convenient explanation or alibi for some other nefarious activity.

This time, however, 36 children have disappeared from their homes—all in a single night—and many of them were not from the houses of the poor. Not even the jaded folk of the City-State of Castorhage will stand for this (especially not a prominent Justice and a guild leader who have each lost a child in this rash of disappearance). Now is the time for a call to action. Now is the time for heroes.

The Children of the Harvest is a stand-alone adventure set in **The Blight** for 4–6 7th- to 8th-level characters.



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