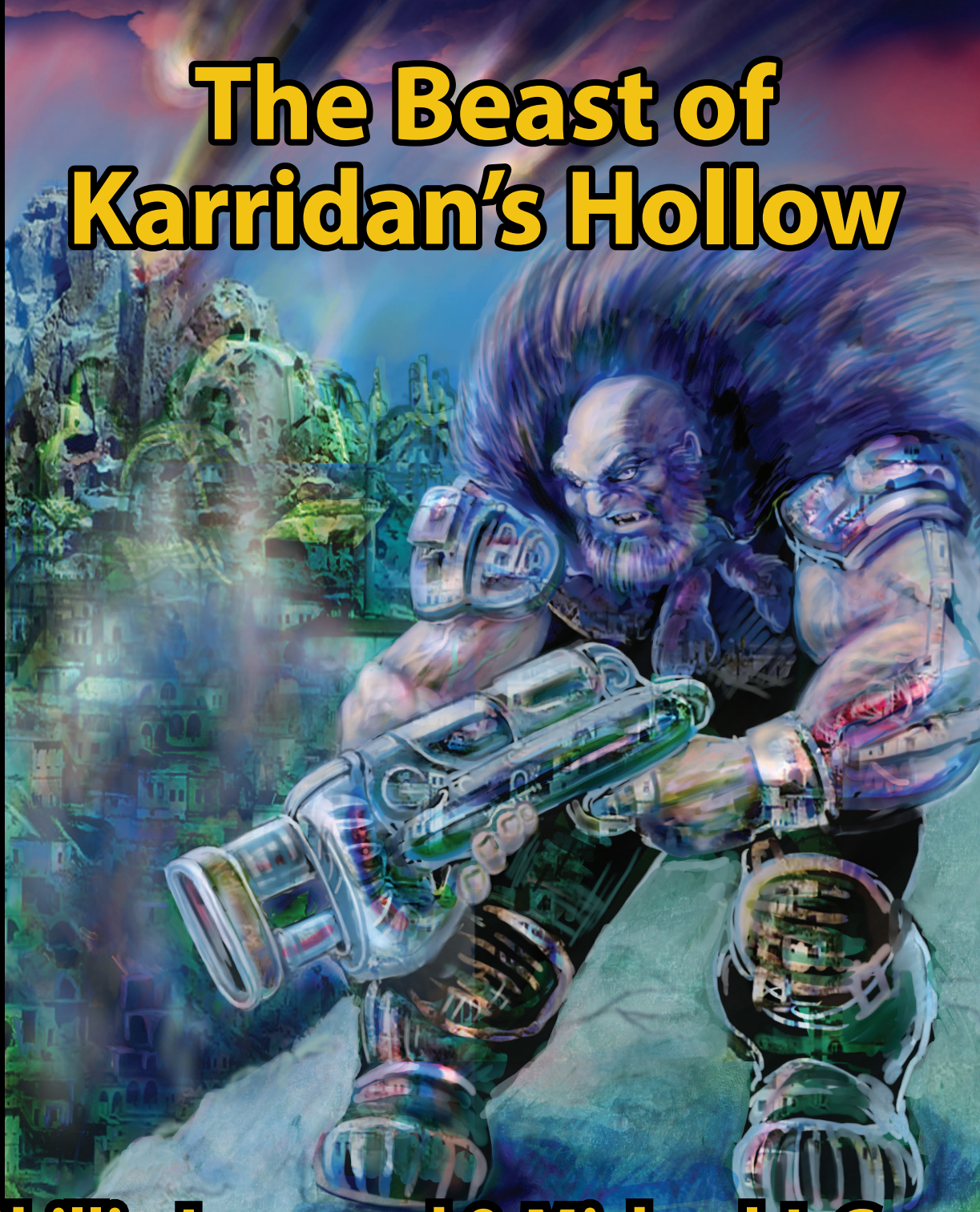


NETHERELL

EPIC FANTASY 10

The Beast of Karridan's Hollow



Phillip Larwood & Michael J. Cross

TRAVELLER

Compatible Product

The Beast of Karridan's Hollow is a Traveller adventure for four to six characters. It's set in the small village of Karridan's Hollow in southeastern Dravelnar, a medieval kingdom in the fantasy world of Netherell. The adventure includes a mix of combat, roleplaying and investigatory skills, and players must stay on their toes to survive some of the more grueling encounters. The adventure also introduces some elements from the Twilight Sector setting, including Scientifically Induced Mutations (SIMs) and advanced technology such as laser pistols, medikits and subdermal armor. (Referees can change or remove these elements entirely to suit their own campaigns.)

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TWILIGHT SECTOR: NETHERELL

The Beast of Karridan's Hollow

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BACKGROUND

The Archenar People's Republic has long dabbled in the creation of mutants for various military applications. Their actions take place in the face of continued public disapproval and scrutiny from other galactic nations. Most of these SIMs began life as military personnel who chose to serve the APR and its socialist ideals, but others had no choice in the matter. Criminals often served as the subjects of the most terrible genetic experiments: hardened killers who would otherwise be executed or imprisoned for life.

Recently, the APR has attempted to recreate the process which produces the so-called Ogres native to Netherell. The APR's purpose in this research is the creation of super-soldiers with incredible size and strength and in many cases Psionic abilities as well. These super-soldiers would provide a real advantage to the APR armed forces.

The project was stuck for a long time as the scientists sought to create the conditions on a laboratory ship that they had observed in their field research. When this failed they resorted to ever higher doses of psionic drugs designed to trigger the Ogre transformation process. All they succeeded in doing was burning through a large number of test subjects. Finally, they realized that the planet itself must somehow be a part of the process. To test this hypothesis they set up a covert lab on the Island of Skerathos (where legends claim that more of such transformations occur than anywhere else) and developed a protocol similar to what they had observed which created the Ogres on the island (They took psionics, fed them large amounts of psionic drugs and had them use their powers). The new approach proved to be a phenomenal success: one that the APR hoped to replicate on a grand scale.

One of the unlucky prisoners to test the new process was Kristoff Jenkus. Kristoff was a career criminal in the APR underworld who sold guns to political dissidents opposing the communist regime. For several years Kristoff had evaded the authorities and became something of a personality in criminal circles, until the authorities finally captured him and sentenced him to life imprisonment. Kristoff firmly believed he would rot in gaol or be sent to a gulag planet for his actions, until the authorities offered him a deal to escape his incarceration. He grabbed at it with both hands, not initially aware of the consequences.

Months later, Kristoff was subjected to experimentation at a secure facility built on the northern coast of Skerathos, created solely for the Ogre experiments. He soon realized what was intended for him; and thoughts of a better life vanished, to be replaced by inhuman torment. Kristoff witnessed subject after subject

Where do they come from?

One of the odd things about the APR is how in a communist totalitarian state an anti-statist criminal like Kristoff could survive at all in the system. The truth like most things political...is complicated. The APR's leadership is not a monolithic block but a conglomeration of competing factions. To one such faction, the Reformists, Kristoff was and is a useful idiot. A low level operative, his gun running career conducted with the backing and support of this group. His arrest and sentence represented a victory by the Hard Line Communist faction over his patron. The loss represented a far greater defeat to Kristoff however than it did to his patron.

succumbing to the rigors of the experiments. Fearing it was only a matter of time until he too would suffer their fate, he was relieved when he was transferred planet side. Once there though, he was subjected to the APR's transformation triggering process. It worked and after a long brutally painful process Kristoff found himself a huge creature, a caricature of a human. He was hideously ugly by human standards, however he was now powerful both physically and mentally, his psionic skills having been enhanced as well. He wasn't yet sure what his fate would be but he was sure he was now very valuable to the APR. Kristoff's worth to the reformists also skyrocketed. The Reformists

have a number of adherents participating in the APR's various research projects throughout the Netherell system and they have been quick to implement a plan to reactivate their asset.

One of the researchers on Skerathos, Xavier Reynolds, was the Reformist operative selected to reactivate Kristoff. He was assigned to the Skerathos Ogre experiments and filled Kristoff in on the faction's plan to secure his freedom and bring him back into the Reformist fold. Kristoff was surprised to find out that the Reformists had operatives all over the system. In fact it caused him to wonder if maybe they couldn't have rescued him before he was subjected to the hell of the Ogre transformation process.

The goal of the reformists was to use Kristoff once he was transferred from Netherell. The plan was working beautifully until other circumstances intervened.

The Incarnator is an enigma wrapped in a riddle. How his reasoning works is a mystery to the Galactics of the APR every bit as much as it is to the natives of Netherell. What is clear is that he has some extraordinary powers one which based on observation may well be the ability to see future outcomes based on current choices. Or as a native might say, "he can see the future". That may well be the reason that after his spys discovered the APRs project on Skerathos he did not let their success there go unchallenged.

When the APR vessel carrying Kristoff took off for orbit, the Incarnator destroyed it. The resulting crash spread debris throughout the eastern God Bay region, the final pieces coming to rest in Dravelnar.

When Kristoff awoke from the crash, he realized that he was the only survivor -- the crew were either burnt beyond recognition or missing altogether -- and the pinnacle little more than junk. He surmised that the Hard Liners must have found out he had been contacted by the Reformists and decided to take him out. He believes this version of events even though it doesn't stand up to close examination. Knowing that the APR would investigate the wreckage the first chance they got, Kristoff grabbed what he could and left, trudging through the wilds towards a distant trail of smoke. For hours he walked. Finally, he came upon a village, and was surprised to see humans in simple cloth garb farming the soil. They were perfect for the plan he had concocted on his journey here. Kristoff had resolved to carve out his own niche on this little planet. Since his transformation he felt he fit in better here than he did in the Known Galaxy. His survival from the crash was nothing less than miraculous, and he was suffused with a sense of



Audience with the God-King

Emert Augustana was already regarded as a favorite of The God King even before this latest summons. Owing to the fact that he had been called for by name twice before to take on tasks for the Incarnator. So when he was called for a third time, something unparalleled in the history of the Temet-Kau, the leadership of that organization began to worry. Was this young priest a threat to their hegemony? The other young priests had already begun to whisper that he was the chosen one and would someday be elevated to the Pontificy by the God King himself bypassing the Bishops Council. Such things worried the leadership.

Emert felt the eyes on him from the minute he entered the Holy See. The looks of respect and joy on the younger priests' faces and the worry, fear and angst on the faces of those in authority. He understood both reactions and feared both equally. He had done nothing to earn these summonses. He had merely followed the teachings of his God as best he could, as any number of pious and devout members of the Temet-Kau did every day.

Upon being ushered into the presence of His Magnificence Emert felt the odd hollow form in the pit of his stomach as it had every time he'd been in the presence of his God. Emert was prostrate before the dais on which the Incarnator stood staring blankly over the heads of those before him, a giant in a giant room. Emert felt the probing thoughts of The God King enter his mind; "Emert Augustana will you once again serve me?" There was no hesitation in Emert's mind which replied with an affirmative thought. His mind was flooded with the images gathered on Skerathos by The God King's spy's. Most of all though his mind was flooded with the image of a huge ogre and the command; "Bring me this weapon".

The Beast of Karridan's Hollow

his inflated superiority. He'd contact the reformists if he could and enlist their help if they were interested, but he knew with some unwaivering sense of foreknowledge, that his destiny lay on this isolated world. One way or another he had made up his mind to stay on Netherell and become a King!

He hid in the woods, conducted some raids on towns like (and including) Karridan's Hollow, and started building a base camp for himself. He also began to build a tower to baffle any high-tech detection efforts (using broken components from the downed ship he picked from the wreckage). He also rallied some of the local bandits to his side: crude, desperate men easily cowed by his fearsome form and high-tech weaponry. They believed him to be some kind of ogre sorcerer. He promised that if they helped him, he would make them mighty warlords, armed with powerful magic that would destroy their enemies. He attempted to contact the residents of Karridan's Hollow but they were terrified by 'The Ogre who speaks through a box with a maiden's voice.' Referring to the translation program he uses to communicate with them via a rather wonky computer scavenged from the wreckage of the vessel.

With new minions beneath him and a new purpose in his life, Kristoff set out to gather the supplies and people he needed. He stalks the local villages, and waylays the refugees moving through the area: kidnapping those he can put to work and stealing foodstuffs and other supplies. Kristoff sets his captives to work at a plateau in the center of the forest: constructing a 'Blackout' tower that he can use to prevent the satellites and sensor nets from picking up his efforts. This was, after all, what he had been doing for so many years as a 'criminal' within the APR, and the wreckage bore enough equipment to pull it off. While they build the Blackout Tower, Kristoff has repaired the ship's communicators... something the natives believe is a form of dark sorcery. When his equipment is ready and the conditions are right (satellites unable to spot his zone of the ground, favorable barometric conditions etc.) Kristoff talks with his Reformist allies.

The people of the area think of the SIM as something of a bogeyman and have become increasingly frightened by his antics. This feeling is exacerbated by the chaos currently gripping Dravelnar. Many believe he is working some horrid sorcery, but no one has the courage to go into the forest and seek him out. Someone brave must solve the problem and slay the fearsome ogre; the Characters are just what the villagers have in mind.

The Reformists on Kristoff Now

Following the destruction of their craft, the Reformists have cooled considerably on their original plan to take Kristoff off-world. They are aware that the destruction of the ship was unusual, and they strongly suspect (based on energy signatures taken at the time and other fragments they have been able to discover from the event) that the Incarnator was involved. For now, the Reformists have decided to wait. They have sufficient assets on Netherell to keep an eye on Kristoff, but their ability to sneak in a interstellar vessel, or to co-opt an existing ship from the hardliners, is relatively low. In a few months they might be more insistent, but for now they want to placate the obviously deranged Kristoff, and have agreed to his 'order' of weapons.

What's the Incarnator Up To?:

The Incarnator has long been leery of APR involvement on 'his' planet. As such he keeps a close eye on APR shenanigans. When he got wind that they were experimenting with Ogres on Skerathos he was interested in what they were trying to accomplish. Before he had a chance to send the Temet-Kau to investigate his spys told him that the APR was going to transport their first experiment off planet. The Incarnator wasn't about to let that happen. Using his God-like powers he reached out and destroyed the shuttle as it tried to reach orbit.

However the Incarnator wasn't interested in just keeping the experiment (Kristoff) from getting off world he also wanted to get a look at this new 'weapon' the APR had created. To that end he protected the Ogre just enough to insure he wouldn't be killed in the crash. Now he has sent one of his handpicked priests to retrieve his prize and learn what secrets the APR has discovered.

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

The Characters can become involved in this adventure in a number of ways. Three possible ideas are detailed below, though Referees are free to make up their own if one of the following doesn't suit the needs of the campaign.

- /// The Characters are mercenaries for hire who are contacted by the villagers to deal with the problem of the ogre and his minions. This is the default assumption of the adventure and is reflected in the descriptions and encounters below.
- /// The Characters are locals whose farms have been attacked by Kristoff. They may have family members taken away from them, and some of the Characters might have knowledge about the SIM or met him earlier. These Characters possess more information about Kristoff than most, but should also have a more personal reason for stopping him. Local Characters may also possess more knowledge about the woods surrounding Karridan's Hollow and will need to talk to their Referee about how much they actually know.
- /// The Characters are Galactics tasked with taking Kristoff into custody. In order to do so, they need to either infiltrate the local culture or remain hidden from them, lest they expose knowledge of the larger universe to the Netherell natives and alert Kristoff to their presence. The good news is that they will be in an isolated locale. The bad news is that they will need to fabricate a cover story, and refrain from flashing any high-tech equipment where any outsiders will see them. The Blackout Tower that Kristoff has constructed will prevent them from using most of their communications gear, and some other high-tech goodies (drones and such), which should keep the adventure interesting.

Whatever the reasons for the Characters arrival in Karridan's Hollow, they quickly discover that the village lies in a shambles, and that bandits and a fearsome magic-wielding ogre have been harassing the settlement. As soon as Characters approach the village they see the following:

As the quiet dirt road bends around a copse of wild tangled trees, you notice a village in the distance. At first glance, it seems just like any other sleepy community, but as you draw nearer

you begin to see evidence of violence on the town itself and a quiet desperation on the faces of the residents.

(For Netherell Locals) *At first, you wonder if the place has been visited by some of the deformed creatures that come from the Blight, but quickly the damage that you see reveals itself as something different: circular holes in stone and brick, scorch marks that were left by no torch. Something here is different and terrible in it's own fashion.*

(For Galactics) *The local people appear to have run into some kind of technology, most likely some serious laser weapons by the scorching and the precise holes made in the rough materials that they use to construct their dwellings.*

Depending on the reason for Characters' presence, this scene will either be a new experience or something they were anticipating. The villagers are reluctant to talk about the events in town to strangers, but open up to those who succeed on a Difficult (-2) *Persuade* (Intelligence or Social Standing) check. If the Characters can get any villagers to speak to them, they hear about the ogre's vicious attacks and its power to burn right through walls with its magic. They also hear about multiple residents captured and taken away by the ogre's minions... presumably to a fate worse than death.

Characters who inspect the damage done to the village notice several strange holes burnt into the walls of dwellings, or fences and crops torn down with savage intensity. They also notice a few old bloodstains on some cobblestones with a Routine (+0) Intelligence or *Notice* check. Further signs of violence would be a plus, something to show how the town has suffered from the Beast.

Soon after their arrival in Karridan's Hollow, the Characters are greeted by Devanus Heloril, the village elder. A weather-beaten man in his early fifties suffering from a bad case of gout, Devanus is desperate to end the threat to his village. He calls for the Characters to speak with him in his house (along with two or three younger men wielding spears). Once inside, Devanus offers the Characters a deal he hopes they won't refuse.



Metagaming Players

Some players who have played Traveller or in the Twilight Sector Setting before may be tempted to use their knowledge of the wider Twilight Sector universe to make assumptions about the adventure and the ogre's menace (particularly after hearing about the strange weapon used by the ogre). While some level of metagaming is impossible to fully stamp out, players should realize that this is a medieval fantasy setting and play the game accordingly.

Of course, this may change if the Characters come from off-world; furthermore, the Referee can alter the particulars to throw off whatever assumptions the players may have. That could make the game even more surprising for those concerned. Regardless of the circumstances, feel free to ignore a small level of metagaming unless it starts to derail the adventure or compromises the fun of other players.

"Well Met travelers. I hoped to give you a more cordial welcome, but alas Karridan's Hollow is suffering under the yoke of a dreadful beast – an ogre that stalks our homes and has killed brothers, fathers and sons in its rampage. On top of that, it has claimed a number of villagers as captives, dragging them deep into the forest. The bandits in its employ harass and harry those who attempt to seek help.

"You seem to be capable folk. Perhaps we could come to a mutually beneficial arrangement that can save Karridan's Hollow from this blight?"

If the Characters are locals, they probably don't need any incentive beyond saving their homes, families and friends, but for all others, Devanus is willing to offer a payment of 300 gold coins in total to defeat or drive away the ogre. He also offers a bounty of 10 gold coins for each bandit killed, but wants the Characters to focus on getting rid of the ogre first. This treasure represents the total savings of most of the residents in the village, and includes a mix of different coin types, jewelry and even some trade goods. If compassionate Characters waive the

reward, Devanus actually acts suspicious and attempts to reassure the Characters that he can pay them. If they continue to balk at a reward, Devanus appears truly surprised, and word of the Characters' generosity raises their Social Standing by +2 while they are in the village.

If Characters try to swindle more out of Devanus, he becomes irritated but raises the reward to 400 gold coins. He can go no higher than that, however, and truthfully tells the Characters that the villagers can't afford it. He treats future demands by the Characters with increasing distaste and their reputation in the village drops dramatically: decreasing their Social Standing by -2 while they are there.

Devanus can describe the ogre attacking the town in detail; he tells the Characters that the creature differs from other ogres due to the strange metal plates growing out of its skin and the metal tube it wields that can shoot a red ray from its tip. He points out that the metal tube made the holes seen around town and that a baby unuk (a six-legged bison-like creature native to Netherell) struck by the magical ray burst into flame.

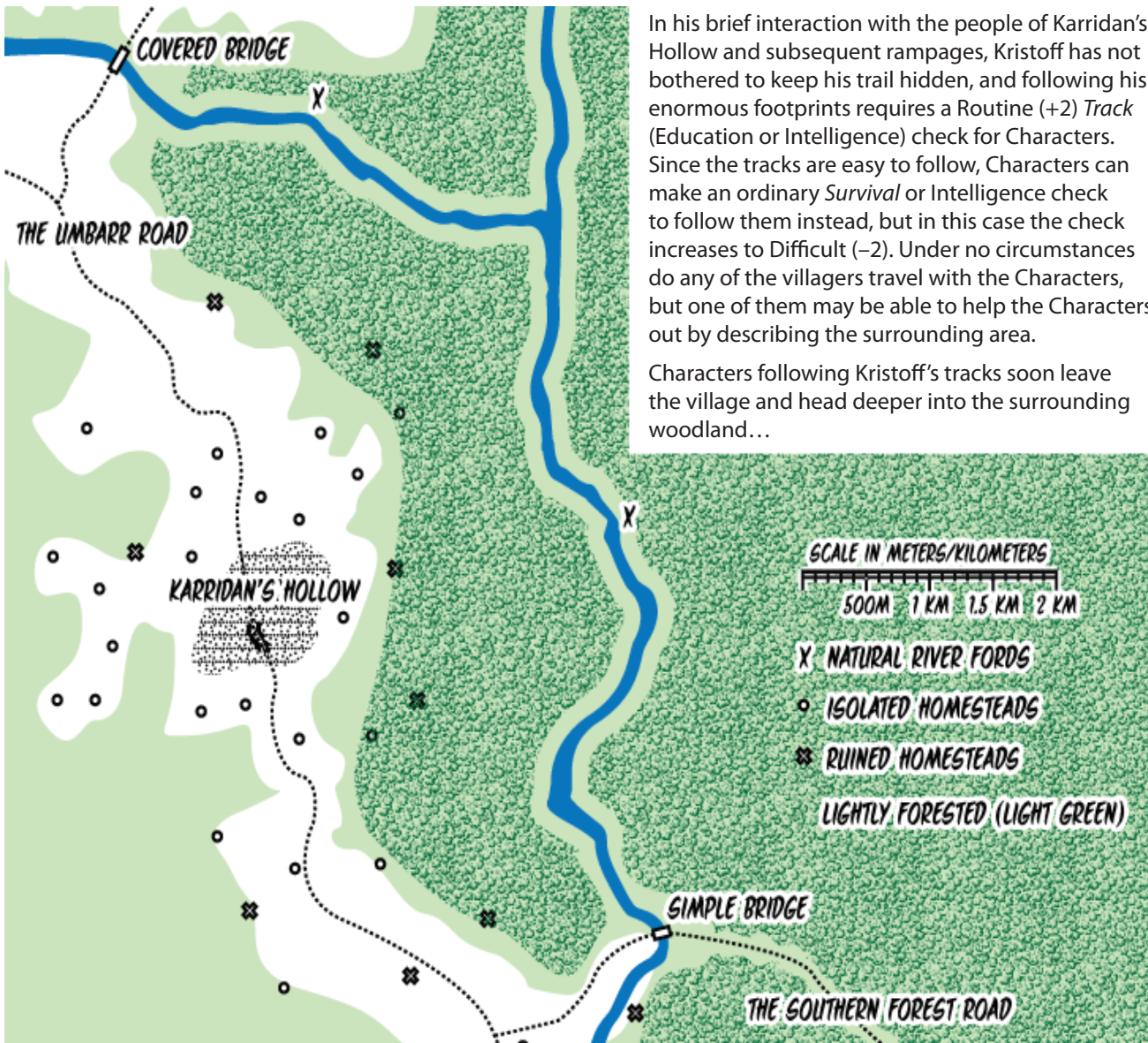


The aftermath of one of Kristoff's raids on the town demonstrates the kiind of mayhem the "Beast of Karridan's Hollow" is capable of...

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure is a series of encounters beginning with the initial one with the Leader of Karridan's Hollow Devanus Heloril. From that point on if they've accepted the Elder's offer of employment they are trying to track down Kristoff. There are a number of encounters that are possible during this process. These include an **Encounter with Bandits**, discovering **The Fate of Xavier Reynolds**, the **Crash Site of the Pinnacle**, meeting the refugees in **No place to call Home**, or **The Children of the Blight**, or meeting **Kristoff** himself. Except for meeting Kristoff these encounters can be used in any order that the referee sees fit. To add spice the referee can also include the complications encounters with the **Reformists** and/or the **Temet-Kau**.

TRACKING DOWN KRISTOFF



In his brief interaction with the people of Karridan's Hollow and subsequent rampages, Kristoff has not bothered to keep his trail hidden, and following his enormous footprints requires a Routine (+2) *Track* (Education or Intelligence) check for Characters. Since the tracks are easy to follow, Characters can make an ordinary *Survival* or Intelligence check to follow them instead, but in this case the check increases to Difficult (-2). Under no circumstances do any of the villagers travel with the Characters, but one of them may be able to help the Characters out by describing the surrounding area.

Characters following Kristoff's tracks soon leave the village and head deeper into the surrounding woodland...

The players map of the Hollow and surrounding areas

COMPLICATIONS

Here are several options to spice up this adventure. Referees can add any one of these to make their adventures more interesting, or if the primary action starts to bog down

COMPLICATION ONE:

A couple of Reformists arrive to deal with Kristoff.

Although Kristoff continues to work on his transmitter he has unwittingly managed to get off a message that was received by his gun-running reformist friends. The message described his situation and his plans. To placate Kristoff and try to get him “back on the ranch” they are bringing a few weapons they had on hand (or could cobble together using their high tech manufacturing base) as an offering to help Kristoff with his plans.

Two Reformist agents have arrived in the general vicinity of Karridan’s Hollow in a Heavy-duty Grav Vehicle, loaded with Kristoff’s ‘order’. They don’t have an exact fix on Kristoff’s location (thanks to the Blackout Tower) and are therefore looking for him just like the players. Because they do not want to attract notice, they have left the Grav Vehicle and are searching for Kristoff on foot in a small group.

These are not nice men, they are dissidents living under a repressive regime. They will have little time for locals beyond bullying them for information on Kristoff’s location, although with the obviously more savvy PCs they might conscript (hire?) them to help them find Kristoff. If the PCs are Galactics, the Reformist agents will assume they are APR personnel and attempt to silence them if they think they’ve been compromised. Convincing them otherwise might save the characters from being shot at, but will certainly arouse the interests of the Reformists who will want to know more about their story (to see how they can be best made use of in their own efforts).

In their vehicle, the agents have a case with a half-dozen modern (30th Century) crossbows with 120 bolts. They have another crate containing 12 hand crossbows with 240 bolts. There is one other crate containing 24 hand grenades jury rigged to look like they might have come from Perrain (with a twisting knob on the top and rugged appearance).

High Tech Crossbows:

- ✎ **Hand Crossbow** (TL 11), d6, Recoil: -1, Cost: 500cr (5 cr/quarrel);
- ✎ **Crossbow (Easy-Cock Repeater)** (TL 11), 3d6+1, Recoil: 0, Cost: 250cr (1 cr/quarrel);
- ✎ **Grenades** (TL 6), Treat as Frag Grenades TMB pg. 101

All the crossbows (normal and hand) are far superior to those of local manufacture. The ease of cocking and loading them reduces reload time for these to one minor action and for the full size crossbows eliminates recoil entirely. In addition the quality of the bolts increases damage (see chart). Kristoff wants his troops to be armed better than any of the other locals, but not as good as himself.

The Vessel also contains a working translation system (to augment the decidedly glitchy one that Kristoff uses now), a few components that will help with the Blackout Tower’s power needs thus making him more secure to keep him out of the hands of the hardliners (something the Reformists want as much as Kristoff), and some backup power cells for Kristoff’s existing high-tech weaponry.

Reformists Operatives (2)

Criminal (Galactic)

STR	8		INT	8
DEX	9	+1	EDU	6
END	6		SOC	4 (-1)

Skills: Computers 0, Deception 1, Gun Combat (Slug Rifle) 2, Investigate 1, Personal Combat (Blades, Short) 1, Persuade 0, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Recon 1, Flyer (Grav) 1

Equipment: Cloth (5), Autorifle (3d6), Body Pistol (3d6-3), TL 13 Radio Comm., TL12 Hand Computer (with Translator)

COMPLICATION TWO

The Temet-Kau in search of Kristoff

Setheeral Soldiers (6)

Soldier

STR	10	+1	INT	6	
DEX	9	+1	EDU	5	(-1)
END	8		SOC	7	

Skills: Archery 1, Athletics (Co-Ordination) 2, Athletics (Endurance) 1, Personal Combat (Blades, Long) 2, Ride 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1.

Equipment: Chainmail 6(3), Long Sword (3d6), Dagger (1d6+2)

Emert Augustana, Temet-Kau Magician (Rank: Ideal)

Zealot

STR	5		INT	8	
DEX	8		EDU	10	+1
END	9	+1	SOC	10	+1

Skills: Alchemy 1, Ceremony 2, Channel 3, Crossbow 1, Investigate 2, Personal Combat (Blunt weapons, Hvy) 0, Ride 1

Psi: 15 (+3)

Magic Houses: *Battle* 2, *Glass* 1, *Life* 1, *Shields* 2, *Whispers* 2, *Wind* 1

Equipment: Leather 2(1), Staff (2d6), Hand Crossbow (1d6-3)

The crash of Kristoff's ship has prompted the Incarnator to send a team to investigate. He did not detect the death of the Ogre and so rightly suspects he may have survived the crash. He has sent one of his trusted Temet-Kau (Emert Augustana) priests with a team of operatives to ascertain the situation and more importantly to recruit the Ogre to the Incarnator's employ. Failing that their orders are to kill Kristoff.

The Temet-Kau leader has some real sympathy for the plight of Dravelnar. With locals or those aiding the locals he will seek information about the crash of Kristoff's ship. He will be keen to hear the stories of the Ogre recently arrived. He will try and find out when exactly the Ogre showed up in an attempt to piece together if Kristoff is indeed the object of his mission. Emert will agree to meet back up with the players and exchange intelligence and could thus prove a useful tool for the referee to impart information to floundering player groups.

Remember that Emert is a powerful Magician-Zealot and would make a very difficult opponent for the PCs. His purpose in the adventure is to provide information, a complication and in desperate need, snatch the PCs bacon from the fire. As well, he also provides a contact for the PCs to use as an entry to other adventures that involve the Incarnator (with or without Kristoff).

Emert's Tactics

If it comes to a fight with the PCs, Emert isn't here to cut a path of destruction through Dravelnar. One of the reasons he is favored by his god is that he stays focused on his task. Destroying the PCs doesn't advance him towards accomplishing his task. In fact learning what they might know is of far more importance to him. So in a fight with the PCs he will use some of his *House of Whispers* (Netherell pg. 67-68) skills to bring the PCs to his side. He will start with **Empathy**, if that doesn't work he will progress to **Sleep**, disabling the PCs for later questioning.

Make no mistake however if the PCs prove to be troublesome he will resort to lethal force most liking using **Blast** from the *House of Battle* (Netherell pg. 61).

A: MEETING UP WITH THE BANDITS



At some point after they leave Karridan's Hollow (but definitely before their encounter with Kristoff) the Characters are accosted by a group of bandits....

...one of many who have heard word of the ogre and seek to join him. They are led by a vile man with a thick mangy orange moustache and rotting teeth named Velfaran. A former soldier with Dravelnar's army, Velfaran deserted his posting shortly after the blight from the Graven Abyss afflicted the southern half of the country (see the **Netherell Sourcebook** for details). He joined up with a group of like-minded men and began attacking caravans from the woods west of Karridan's Hollow.

The bandits initially demand that the Characters turn around and head out of the area, but they quickly resort to combat if the Characters refuse. There are a total of four bandits with Velfaran and they follow the more experienced warrior's commands (Referees should feel free to adjust this number based on the abilities of the PCs and how stern a test the referee might wish to provide them). None of them are ready for stiff resistance however, and they flee once Velfaran is dead or at least two other bandits have fallen. They will eventually find their way to Kristoff and join his forces. For his part, Velfaran fights to the death, as he is too belligerent to do otherwise.

Aftermath:

Velfaran and his men have roughly the same knowledge as the villagers regarding the ogre, but know that it lives deeper in the woods than they do. If the bandits are brought back to the village and handed to Devanus, they are hanged the following day for past crimes.

If the Characters try to track the bandits back to their camp, they can do so with a Difficult (-2) *Track* (Intelligence or Education) check. The bandits' camp lies roughly one mile north of the ambush position (it moves frequently) and the Characters can find another three bandits waiting for the others to return. If the Characters let any bandits escape and wait more than half an hour before tracking them, the survivors pick up their camp and begin moving: refusing to stop until they are no longer being followed.

Bandits (4)

Soldier (Raider) 1

STR	8	INT	5	(-1)
DEX	7	EDU	5	(-1)
END	6	SOC	4	(-1)

Skills: Armor 1, Athletics 0, Personal Combat (Blades, Light) 1, Language (Ghutt, Trade Tongue) 0, Stealth 1, Survival 0.

Equipment: Short Sword (2d6), Studded Leather (3) and 4d6 gold coins each.

Velfaran, Bandit Leader

Soldier (Raider) 3

STR	9	(+1)	INT	7	
END	7		EDU	6	
DEX	9	(+1)	SOC	5	(-1)

Skills: Armor 2, Athletics (Strength) 1, Personal Combat (Axes, Heavy) 1, Personal Combat (Spears, Light) 1, Language (Ghutt, Trade Tongue) 0, Stealth 1, Survival 1.

Equipment: Battleaxe (3d6+3), Chainmail (6) and 175 gold coins (bandit loot).

B: THE FATE OF XAVIER REYNOLDS

Kristoff's Reformist contact on Netherell, Xavier died in the crash: his burning body flung out of the spacecraft as it fell into Netherell's atmosphere. Unlike most of the other's however it didn't completely burn up in the atmosphere. It landed in the trees a few miles from the main crash site. Dead before he hit the canopy, Xavier's body now rests in the branches of a large oak-like tree and has attracted the attention of a giant woodland spider that uses it as a handy lure for scavengers such as birds and rodents.

At some point before the Characters reach the ogre's lair, they pass beneath the remains of Xavier and can spot them with a Routine (+2) Recon (Intelligence) check. If one of the Characters succeeds on this check, read the following:

As you walk through the gloomy depths of the forest, a sudden flash of light catches your eye from somewhere up above. You look up to see a body dangling from the branches of a large tree. The corpse is horribly disfigured and burnt, yet patches of the body still wear what looks like a strange silvery garment that reflects the feeble light filtering through the leaves.

Giant Woodland Spider

Pouncer/Forest Walker

STR	14	(+2)	DEX	14	(+2)
END	12	(+2)	INT	1	(-2)

Insinct: 6 Pack 3

Skills: Athletics (Co-ordination) 2 (5 while climbing), Natural (Teeth) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Weapons/Abilities: Teeth (2d6+2 plus poison), Exoskeleton (4 Armor), poison (-2 DM, 1d6 Dexterity damage, any creature reduced to 0 Dexterity is paralyzed).

Xavier's corpse hangs almost four meters in the air in the branches of a particularly massive oak-like tree. Characters can climb the tree if they wish; it only requires two Routine (+2) Athletics (Coordination) checks to reach the body. Any Character who falls takes 1d6 points of damage for every two meters fallen.

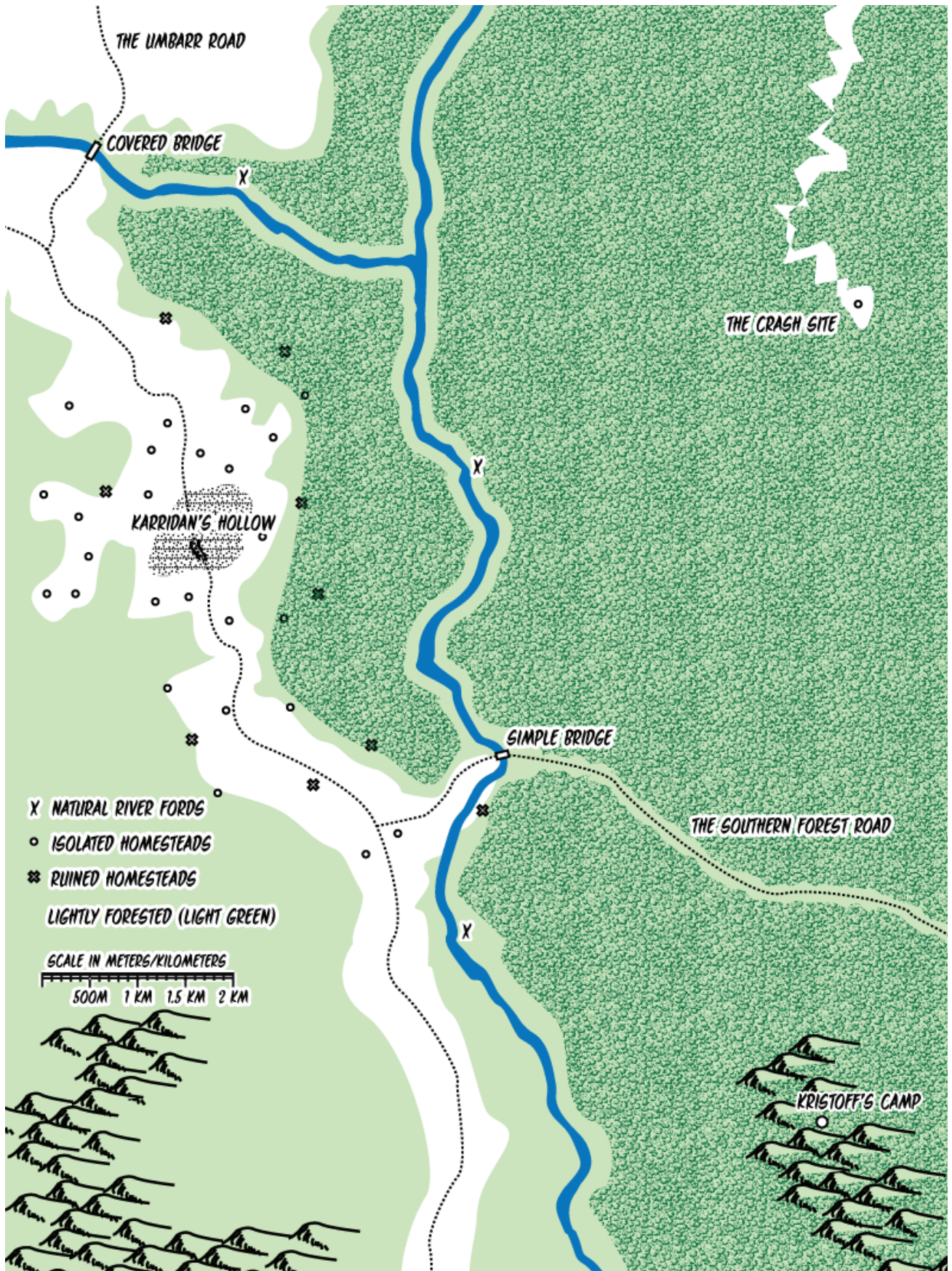
Once they reach Xavier's body, the Characters can loosen it from the branches with a Difficult (-2) Athletics (Strength) check. Unfortunately, this also draws the attention of the spider lurking in the nearby trees; it races along the branches to attack the offending Character.

Characters attacking while in the tree suffer a -2 DM penalty on all attack rolls; if struck for any damage, they must make an automatic Difficult (-2) Athletics (Dexterity) check or fall out of the tree (taking falling damage as appropriate).

The giant woodland spider is a monstrous evolution of Netherell's wildlife that dwells in the forests of Dravelnar and Kovushu. It hunts equally well through the forest canopy as it does on the ground; it's as big as a horse with patterned flesh of varying shades of brown and yellow (allowing it to camouflage its gigantic bulk with surprising ease).

The spider does not expect tough resistance and skitters off once its Endurance reaches 3 or less. If the Characters pursue the spider, it does its best to destroy them.

Once the spider has been dealt with, the Characters can investigate Xavier's body. The corpse is in bad shape and the exact cause of death (the deep burns that cover the body) can only be determined with a Difficult (-2) Medic (Intelligence or Education) check. Even though much of Xavier's possessions have been destroyed (including the vacc suit he was wearing), Characters can still find two things of interest on his body: an intact breather mask and a hand computer (both of these items can be found in the **Traveller Core Rulebook**). Neither of these objects should make any sense to local Characters, since they are considered advanced technologies (see the **Netherell Rulebook** for details). However, the potential usefulness of such items (and their worth) is immeasurable.



Referee's Map for Karridan's Hollow and the surrounding area

C: THE CRASH SITE

Following Kristoff's tracks, the Characters eventually reach the crash site of the pinnacle. Once they do so, read the following information to the players:

Suddenly the forest trail you have been following ends in a scene of immeasurable devastation. Acres of trees have been flattened and burnt, creating a massive clearing. A gigantic furrow has been gouged into the soil as if by a titanic plough. Little of the forest that once stood here remains, yet what caused the destruction appears to be gone... as if whisked away by the hands of a god.

This is the site of a portion of the crashed vessel used by the the Reformists to get Kristoff offworld. While the destruction it caused would normally be visible from Karridan's Hollow, both the weather (it was raining heavily) and the time that it crashed (in the early hours of the morning) meant that no one witnessed it. It also prevented a potential forest fire.

Kristoff has since returned to the crash site several times and stripped it of anything worthwhile. Now all that remains is the crash site itself and a few pieces of twisted metal and melted plastic half buried in the soil. The SIM's captives have carted away the rest to help him build his Blackout Tower. Galactics with the proper equipment should also be able to detect a slightly elevated radiation count coming from the wreckage, which was produced as a result of power plant sections which fell within this wreckage.

Characters who reach the crash site can make a Very Difficult (-4) Recon (Intelligence) check to hear a strange humming drone coming from off to the north. These sounds come from Kristoff's generator (see below). If the characters are Galactics, they will note that the sections ripped apart were to expose circuitry that he went on to use for the construction of his Blackout Tower, although the specific purpose is not evident with what remains (they will know however, that something was stripped from the wreck).

D. NO PLACE TO CALL HOME

Refugees from the Blight, Type I

Commoner (Farmer)

STR	6	INT	6
DEX	6	EDU	5 (-1)
END	7	SOC	5 (-1)

Skills: Food Production 1, Personal Combat (Spears, Light) 1, Track 1, Trade 0

Equipment: Makeshift Spears (2d6)

Refugees from the Blight, Type II

Artisan

STR	5	INT	6
DEX	9 +1	EDU	6
END	6	SOC	5 (-1)

Skills: Personal Combat (club, Light) 1, Persuade 0, Streetwise 1, Trade 1

Equipment: Makeshift club (d6)

Somewhere along the road outside of Karridan's Hollow the Players run into a large group of people moving south. There are 60 or more people, young and old pushing pulling and carrying household items and supplies. Some are loaded on carts, others on donkeys but most are simply carried. They will be leery of the players at first as they have not been welcomed by other communities on their journey from the heartlands of Dravelnar and they fear more of the same. If the players in some way befriend them, at the referee's discretion they could be a source of information on the whereabouts of Kristoff.

They might have even lost several of their younger members to some of Kristoff's press gangs and are so eager for payback against the fearsome Ogre.

The purpose of this encounter is to impart to the PCs the weight of the disaster that has struck Dravelnar from the Blight and how it's social fabric is crumbling. The referee should play up the fear, despair and guarded hope in the people's faces as they encounter the Players.



E. CHILDREN OF THE BLIGHT

The blight has exacted a terrible toll on the people of Dravelnar, the worst thing it has done however is take the countries children exposed to the Blight's weird radioactivity and turn them into hideous creatures akin to zombies. Adults have seldom been able to survive the transformation process, but peculiarly children have a much higher tolerance (their bodies are able to acclimate before toxic levels are reached).

Some of these creatures have been attracted to the crash site because of its radioactivity. The site is not radioactive enough to pose a problem for the player characters unless they linger in close proximity to it for a number of weeks, but it is still higher than 'normal' background counts.

The Children that will be encountered are a mix of teenagers and younger children. Some of whom appear by size to be not more than 6 or 7 years old. Other than size they look like frightful, shuffling creatures with skin sloughing off them, watery vacant eyes and tattered clothing. They possess a feral intelligence and they survive by foraging off the land. Eating what they find in their path including carrion or living creatures that are unfortunate enough to find themselves in the path of one of these "Zombies". It will be interesting to see what the long-term survival prospects are for the "Zombies".

The purpose of this encounter is to provide the Players both a threat and a moral quandary. Do they just eliminate the threat in the process destroying children albeit grossly transfigured ones, or do they seek a creative way to get around the threat. Referees should play up the fact of the size of the smaller "Zombies" and the apparent youth of all of them. As always referees should feel free to adjust the size of the "Zombie" group to meet their requirements.

Blight Children, Older (5)

STR	10	(+1)	INT	2	(-2)
DEX	4	(-1)	EDU	2	(-2)
END	12	(+2)	SOC	0	(-1)

Skills: Unarmed Combat 1 (d6 damage+STR DM)

Equipment: None

Blight Children, Younger (5)

STR	6		INT	2	(-2)
DEX	4	(-1)	EDU	2	(-2)
END	12	(+2)	SOC	0	(-1)

Skills: Unarmed Combat 0 (d3+1 damage)

Equipment: None



F: A MEETING WITH KRISTOFF

Whether the Characters are following Kristoff's tracks or the sound of humming coming from his site, they should eventually reach his location: a camp located outside of a cave in the side of a tree-covered hill that he has tried to make as livable as possible given the circumstances. Kristoff has erected several primitive tents based around a central cooking pit, and fashioned a crude gate to the cave entrance out of parts from the pinnacle. There, he keeps a growing number of captives to work on his disturbance-creating "Blackout Tower" while he continues to tinker with the signaling device.

The tower itself rises from the top of the hill, just above the surrounding trees. It possesses a ramshackle appearance – cobbled together from disparate pieces of metal and wood, it appears structurally unsound in places, but adequate for Kristoff's purposes.

There are a total of 18 villagers in the cave, housed in filthy conditions and fed on scraps. 12 are kept here at all times, with the remaining six serving a rotating shift under Kristoff's watchful eye. Multiple bandits watch them or loiter about the camp. The exact number depends upon how stiff a challenge the Referee wishes to impose upon the Characters.

At any time, half a dozen kidnapped villagers will be at the top of the hill working on the tower. (Kristoff initially employed them to help strip the wrecked vessel of components, but that phase of the operation has passed.) It's dangerous work – several captives have fallen to their death from the tower top already – but Kristoff and his underlings can always hunt for more. A trio of bandits keeps a close eye on the working captives, while Kristoff himself occasionally arrives to provide direction and punish workers who slack off.

When the Characters first see Kristoff, read or paraphrase the following:

A faint trail leads up the side of the hill for several dozen meters before arriving at the base of a broad ledge covered in toppled boulders and a set of tents constructed from animal hides and ropes. The dark opening to a cave sits nearby, blocked by a crude portcullis composed of some strange kind of metal. As series of ropes and ladders ascend from the sides of the cave entrance to the top of the nearby hill, where multiple villagers and several bandits are building a tall, crude tower. Several other bandits lounge about the campsite in various states of relaxation. Striding up and down before the cave entrance is a monstrous giant dressed in torn silvery clothing, angrily berating a gray metallic box.

Kristoff and/or the bandits must make a Difficult (–2) Recon (Intelligence) check to notice the Characters. Otherwise, Kristoff continues his enraged ranting for another minute before slumping against the hill with a sullen expression on his face. If anyone notices the Characters or they make their presence known, the bandits take up defensive positions among the boulders and wait for their foes to make the next move.

Kristoff does not attack the Characters unless they attack him first or attempt to approach the campsite. He immediately ascertains that they are cut from sterner stuff than the local peasants and wants to make a deal. If the Characters take a non-aggressive stance and try to talk with him, they experience "The Ogre who speaks through a box with a maiden's voice" for themselves. Communication can still be difficult with Kristoff as the wonky computer provides far from perfect translations of either side of a conversation. Referees should play this up to provide the players a non-combat challenge.

At this point it should become clear to the Characters that they are not dealing with an ordinary ogre. Ultimately, the success or failure of communication attempts with Kristoff should be based around roleplaying rather than rolls.

Communicating with Kristoff is a delicate procedure given his fragile mental state, and if he fails to understand them he becomes agitated and motions for them to leave with his weapon. If the Characters refuse to leave or make any aggressive motions towards him, he shoots and combat ensues as detailed below.

If the Characters succeed in understanding Kristoff, he indicates a willingness to bargain. They can leave and never return, and he'll allow them safe passage through the forest. Alternately, he offers them a place in his burgeoning "army:" demonstrating the power of his magic by using his psionic ability to move objects. They may even be able to negotiate for the release of the villagers... if they agree to take the villagers' place during the final stages of the tower's construction. It may present a tempting offer to the right (or wrong) sort of Character. Of course, even if the Characters decide not to attack the ogre, events may still force them into combat (see the **Angry Mob** scenario detailed below).

FIGHTING THE OGRE



Kristoff Jenkus, Ogre SIM

Rogue (Thief)

STR	16	(+3)	INT	9	(+1)
END	7		EDU	8	
DEX	15	(+3)	SOC	4	(-1)

Skills: Carouse 0, Engineering (Electronics) 4, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 2, Mechanic 3, Personal Combat (Bludgeon, Heavy) 2, Recon 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Trade (Commercial Construction) 2

PSI: 11 (+1)

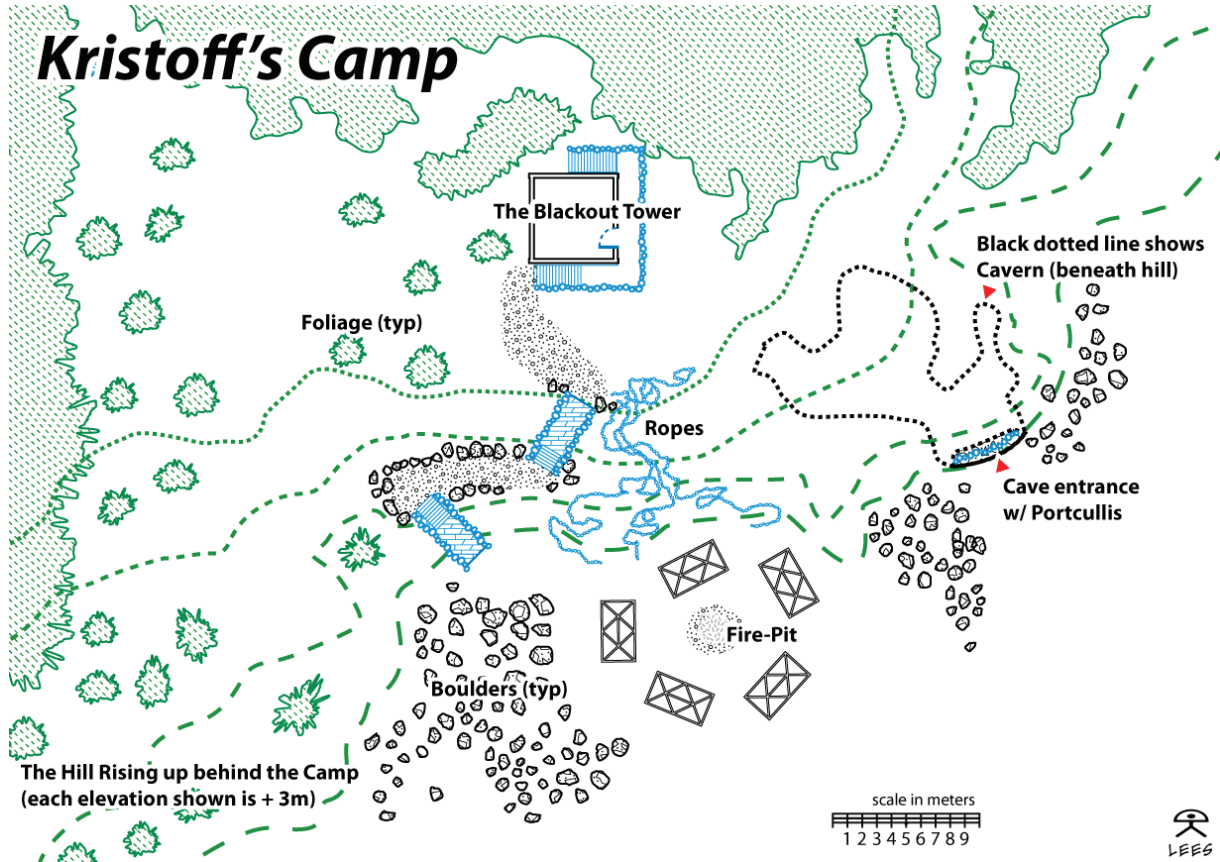
Awareness (or Noetics in Twilight Sector) 3, Telekinesis 4, Telepathy 1

Equipment: Laser Pistol 3d6+3 (TL 11), Massive Club 4d6, Endurance Augment +2, Strength Augment +2, Subdermal Armor, Thick Skin and Rags (total of 5), one magazine clip with 20 shots remaining, a hodge-podge of electronics and mechanical tools, a personal computer gauntlet (TL11 Computer 2).

While he does not want to expend unnecessary resources, Kristoff is fairly frustrated at the rate of his repairs, and he has a huge superiority complex when it comes to the locals. He quickly resorts to combat if pushed too far. Kristoff's first action in combat is to fire his laser pistol at those closing with him or actively using psionic powers against him in combat. He then resorts to using his club to batter nearby enemies, retreating up the hillside if he takes too much damage and fleeing once his Endurance drops to less than one-quarter of its original value. If cornered, Kristoff falls to his knees and surrenders, precipitating the **Angry Mob** scenario described below if the Characters decide to let him live.

Other than the communication device itself and some junk that is of little obvious usefulness (including a portable generator, the main object the Characters can retrieve from Kristoff is his laser pistol. Though it has very few shots left, some Referees will be hesitant to let such a highly advanced weapon into his or her campaign. In this case you are free to remove the pistol entirely, have it break during the battle or simply have it run out of charges, leaving behind a wondrous but harmless artifact.

Use the statistics in Section A for the bandits; adjust their number to make a fitting challenge for the Characters. Stats for the villagers can be found in "The Angry Mob," below.



G: THE ANGRY MOB

If the Characters spare Kristoff's life or do not attack the ogre at all, they are not out of the woods completely. An angry mob of villagers has decided to follow their trail and witness the ogre's death first hand. When they come upon the campsite and find the ogre alive, their rage takes over and they try to kill Kristoff... along with any Characters on the scene, who they perceive as traitors and accomplices.

Characters can prevent this potential bloodbath from occurring with a Very Difficult (-4) *Bluff* or *Persuade* (Intelligence or Social Standing) check and some swift roleplaying. Canny or resourceful players may potentially receive some bonuses to this check depending on the strength of their arguments or lies. However, any failure on this check only serves to infuriate the crowd and they attack, targeting Kristoff first and then any Characters who sided with him.

Depending on the events of the final encounter, the story may continue in several different directions if the Referee wishes. Below are three of the most likely.

- ⌘ If the Characters kill Kristoff and his minions, they are free to take his weapons and equipment, and are paid for a job well done. Devanus is also pleased that they dealt with the bandits and pays them for every bandit they killed or captured. In addition, the Characters are treated like heroes and their Social Standing in Karridan's Hollow and the surrounding area increases by +2.
- ⌘ If the Characters let Kristoff live and killed any villagers in the process Devanus is suitably horrified and refuses to pay them anything. He also bans them from setting foot in Karridan's Hollow ever again, threatening them with harm if they do (even if he is genuinely scared of them). Kristoff for his part thanks the Characters for their aid and offers further aid in the future, lending them his knowledge of advanced technology and his size and strength. Of course this does not come without its risks and Characters may find themselves on the wrong side of the local rulers or militia once they realize what a threat he truly poses.
- ⌘ If the Characters manage to convince the mob that Kristoff is simply misunderstood and let him be (a monumental task but not impossible) Kristoff tries to make amends by protecting the town from further harm... if he can get his tower completed within a fortnight. In this case Devanus gratefully pays the

The villagers are all simple peasants and farmers, and present little challenge individually. Still, their numbers make this encounter potentially dangerous for the Characters, even with Kristoff's help. Thankfully, despite their numbers, the villagers are disorganized and run off once more than a third of their number are killed. Of course, this has potential repercussions for the Characters if the Referee plans to continue the adventure beyond its end.

Angry Mob Participants

Commoner (Farmer)

STR	8	INT	6	
DEX	7	EDU	5	(-1)
END	8	SOC	5	(-1)

Skills: Food Production 1, Personal Combat (Spears, Light) 1, Track 1, Trade 0

Equipment: Makeshift Spears (2d6) or Torches (1d6 fire damage)

CONCLUSION

Characters the 300 gold coins for ending the threat and whatever coin he owes them for the bandits. Of course this also likely deprives the Characters of the laser pistol and/or Kristoff's services, but is the price they have to pay for being peacemakers. Regardless of the Characters' ultimate decision, if they don't stop or kill Kristoff, he will complete his construction and make regular contact with his suppliers by the time the next full moon rises. They will bring him several crates of weapons, which he pays for with his ill-gotten spoils, and then disperse these to his underlings. Within a few weeks, he will have the core of a powerful fighting force, which he intends to use to conquer his own kingdom. He starts with the nearby villages: demonstrating his powers and offering safety in return for their fealty. Most of them agree wholeheartedly, with a few of the younger villagers offering to join his "army" (Devanus agrees only reluctantly, having seen first-hand what Kristoff's ambitions are. At the first opportunity, he begins organizing a resistance... one which could derail Kristoff's plans if allowed to grow to fruition.) In the course of a few months, Kristoff carves out enough territory and recruits enough men to challenge Dravelnar itself. Stopping him – assuming it can be done at all – will prove extremely difficult without outside help.

- ⌘ Emert Augustana the Temet-Kau priest would be a great contact for anyone attempting to resist Kristoff and his attempts to create his own little kingdom.

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