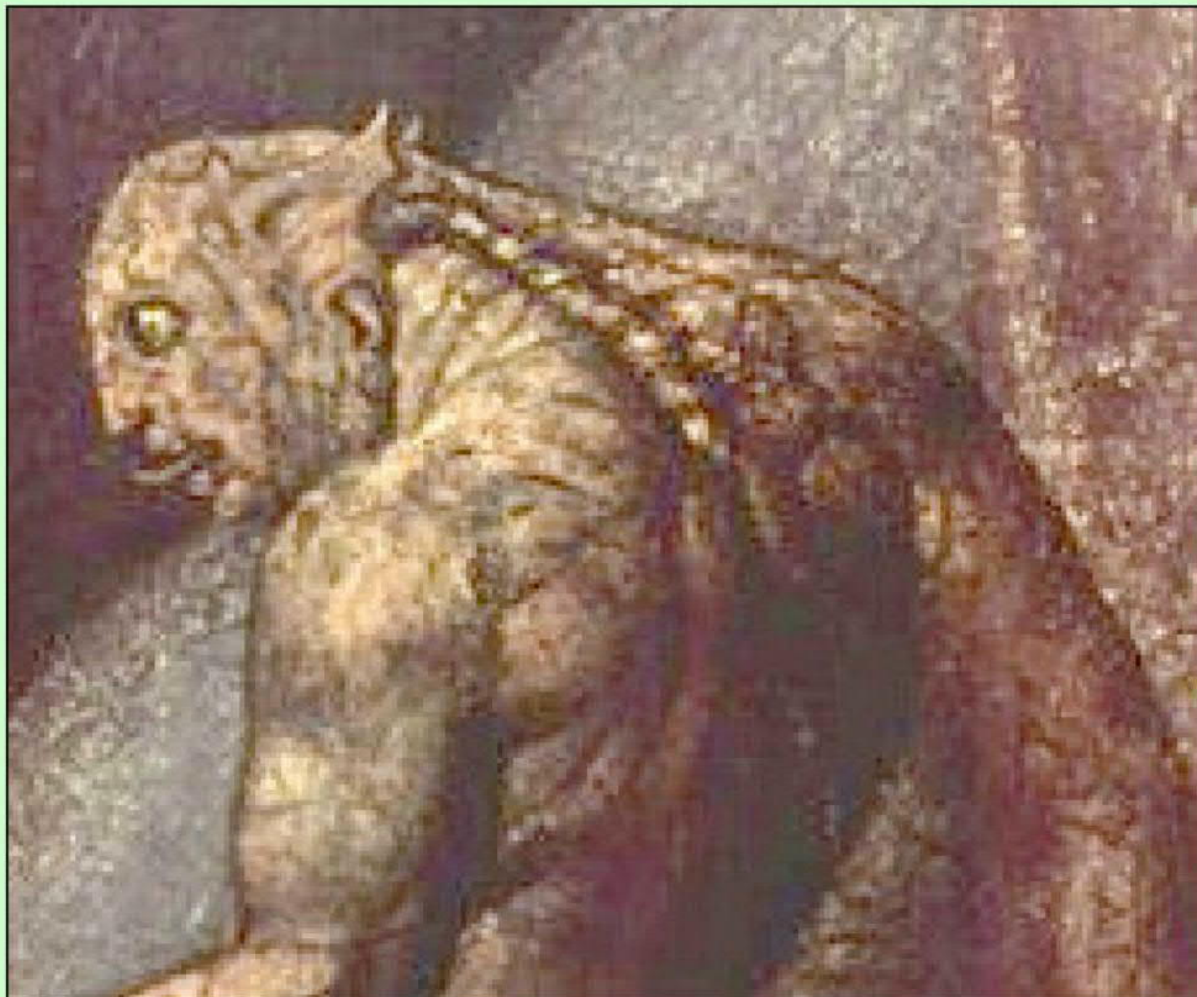


THE FEN ORC ALMANAC 2020



*Six One-Shot Scenarios for Old
School RPGs
Suitable for 3-6 adventurers
of levels 1-3*

BLUEHOLME
COMPATIBLE PRODUCT

Jonathan Rowe

THE FEN ORC ALMANAC 2020

From December 2019 to March 2020, the Fen Orc Blog (www.fenorc.co.uk) hosted a series of short scenarios that are reproduced and expanded here. These are suitable for any Fantasy Roleplaying Game, especially those rooted in 'Old School' conventions. The rules used here are compatible with **BLUEHOLME™**.



The scenarios are inspired by Tristan Tanner in his **Bogeyman Blog** (bogeymanscave.blogspot.com). Tristan recommends creating '30 minute Dungeons' that have 10 rooms, including a Hook, General Background, 3 Combat Encounters, 3 "Empty" Rooms, 2 Traps, 1 NPC, 1 Weird Thing To Experiment With, some Treasure and a Magic Item.

As a discipline, creating short mini-scenarios in this framework is like challenging yourself to write a haiku every week. But of course, you get carried away: you want to expand and embellish and, before you know it, a 30-minute dungeon has taken you several hours to compose. These scenarios all appeared in the **Fen Orc blog** in moderate detail, but I've further expanded on them here. The conventions of Tristan's 30-minute challenge are all-but-invisible in many of them, but readers will notice that they still adhere to the 10-room limit, even if the 'rooms' are interpreted pretty loosely.

The scenarios are intended for a group of 3-6 'beginner' characters: level 1 characters in a game like **BLUEHOLME™**. With smaller groups, increase the level of the Player Characters (PCs), promoting one character in a group of 5, two in a group of 4 and all the characters in a 2- or 3-player group.

When the Crypt Bell Chimes

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The PCs are recruited by a sinister cult to enter a trapped crypt and head off some graverobbers before they rouse the crypt's dangerous occupant.

Return to Dead Man's Isle

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The PCs are successful mutineers, taking their pirate ship to a mysterious island to retrieve their old captain's precious treasure.

The Vampyr's Wedding

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The PCs must rush to rescue the Duchess from the vampyr Margrave, before she becomes his undead bride at sunset.

Bury My Tusks at Broken Jaw

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The PCs are all Goblins, forced off their land by imperialist Elves and now keen for revenge.

At the Inn of the Cold Companion

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The PCs arrive at a strange Inn and find themselves unable to leave while they await the arrival of the Cold Companion.

Bring Me the Heart of Finbar Forkbeard

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The PCs are recruited by a lovelorn Dwarf lady to assist her in winning the affections of a Dwarfish adventurer: they must pose as Goblins in a fictional dungeon she has created!

WHEN THE CRYPT BELL CHIMES

This scenario tasks the PCs with entering a haunted crypt. Unlike the normal tomb-raiders, on this occasion the adventurers are protecting the crypt from robbers intent on releasing its occupant. As they penetrate the tomb, the players might decide that their loyalties are more with the intruders they have been sent to catch than with the sinister cult that employs them.

This dungeon derives its rationale from the Cult of the Lichkeepers described below. If used as part of a campaign, the GM might locate the scenario in a region the players are visiting or passing through: the 'Lich-lands' are dominated by this necromantic religion.

It is important to emphasize the wealth and political power of the Cult and its control over the everyday life of the inhabitants helps drive home the theme.

Background

The masked and hooded Lichkeepers preach that death is annihilation and undeath the only afterlife.

The Lichkeepers are a widespread cult with a lot of political power. They perform the rites of Animate Dead on corpses of the faithful and seal the undead away in tombs. The tombs are guarded and trapped to prevent the undead escaping without permission, although the Cult sometimes frees them to attend public festivals or (properly supervised) family celebrations of their descendants.

The Cult attacks as heresy any notion that there is any other sort of Afterlife or that the undead are only macabre distortions of what the living once were.

Ulurok was one such heretic who raised a huge following with her teachings about a benign, spiritual afterlife and her attacks on the Cult's greed and the falseness of its claims that the mindless undead were in any sense still the relatives and ancestors of the living.

Ulurok was captured by the Lichkeepers and mummified for her crimes.

To the Cult's horror, stories began circulating that Ulurok had returned from the dead as a spiritual messenger. The Cult performed a ritual on Ulurok's corpse to animate her cadaver and bind her spirit. This brought Ulurok's spiritual appearances to an end and the Cult set about muddying her reputation, spreading stories that she was a demonist and witch that are widely believed to this day.



The Hook

Ulurok the Unclean was an evil heretic. Now her crypt bells are ringing: these alarm means tomb robbers have entered Ulurok's crypt.

The Lichwardens have hired you – as a band of mercenaries – to go into the crypt to intercept the robbers before they can rouse the undead Ulurok imprisoned within.

You are given a Lichkey - a 6" long iron key studded with gems - which can activate or deactivate traps inside the crypt.



First, the key opens the gates to the underground tomb and a long tunnel stretches down into darkness.

The Fen Orc Almanac 2020

Rumours (1d10)

1. *Ulurok still has followers who cling to her heretical beliefs* (true)
2. *Those who do not pay the Life Tithe to the Lichkeepers are converted into zombies to work on the Cult's vast plantations* (true)
3. *The leaders of the Lichkeepers are no longer human: behind their masks, they are undead vampires and liches* (possibly true)
4. *The Lichkeepers convert people into undead zombies on death – this is the only Afterlife they believe in* (true)
5. *The Lichkeepers have grown fabulously wealthy from tithes and free undead labour* (true)
6. *The Lichkeepers arrest and torture anyone who believes in any other sort of Afterlife* (possibly true)
7. *When people defy the Lichkeepers, hideous undead assassins come for them in the night* (true)
8. *The Lichkeepers do not admit it, but they have magical devices to extract and trap the souls of the living* (true)
9. *The ordinary people resent the Lichkeepers but dare not rebel because the Cult promises the only Afterlife – at least the undead get to see their loved ones from time to time* (true)
10. *Ulurok was so evil she had to be exorcised then mummified and sealed inside a chained coffin* (false)

Referee's Notes

The scenario assumes the PCs are not members of the Lichkeeper Cult and are free to question its teachings. If you want more roleplaying, include one or more PCs who are cultists, with the following motivations (1d4):

The Zealot: The character has unshakeable belief in the Cult and will be angered by revelations about Ulurok.

The Afterlife is a lie: there are no ghosts, spirits, angels, no heavens, no hells. The dead live on as the undead, as you hope to be one day, at peace for ever after. Ulurok was a revolting heretic for promoting the lie of life after death.

The Ecclesiarch: The character has no belief at all but enjoys the privileges the Cult confers and won't want to lose these.

Frankly, you don't care one way or the other about the Afterlife: undead, heaven, hell, you're still dead, right? The Cult has made you wealthy and influential. You won't stand for any ideas that threaten your power and security.

The Faithful: The character is an idealistic believer and will be troubled by revelations about Ulurok.

Undeath is a beautiful thing, the centuries passing by in your nice quiet tomb, occasionally coming out to attend your grandchildren's weddings. Why would anyone want to believe in some sort of unknown spirit world? Why can't people just accept this world is all there is? That's what you believe, with all your heart.

The Sceptic: The character harbours many doubts about the Cult's teachings and will be keen to explore revelations about Ulurok.

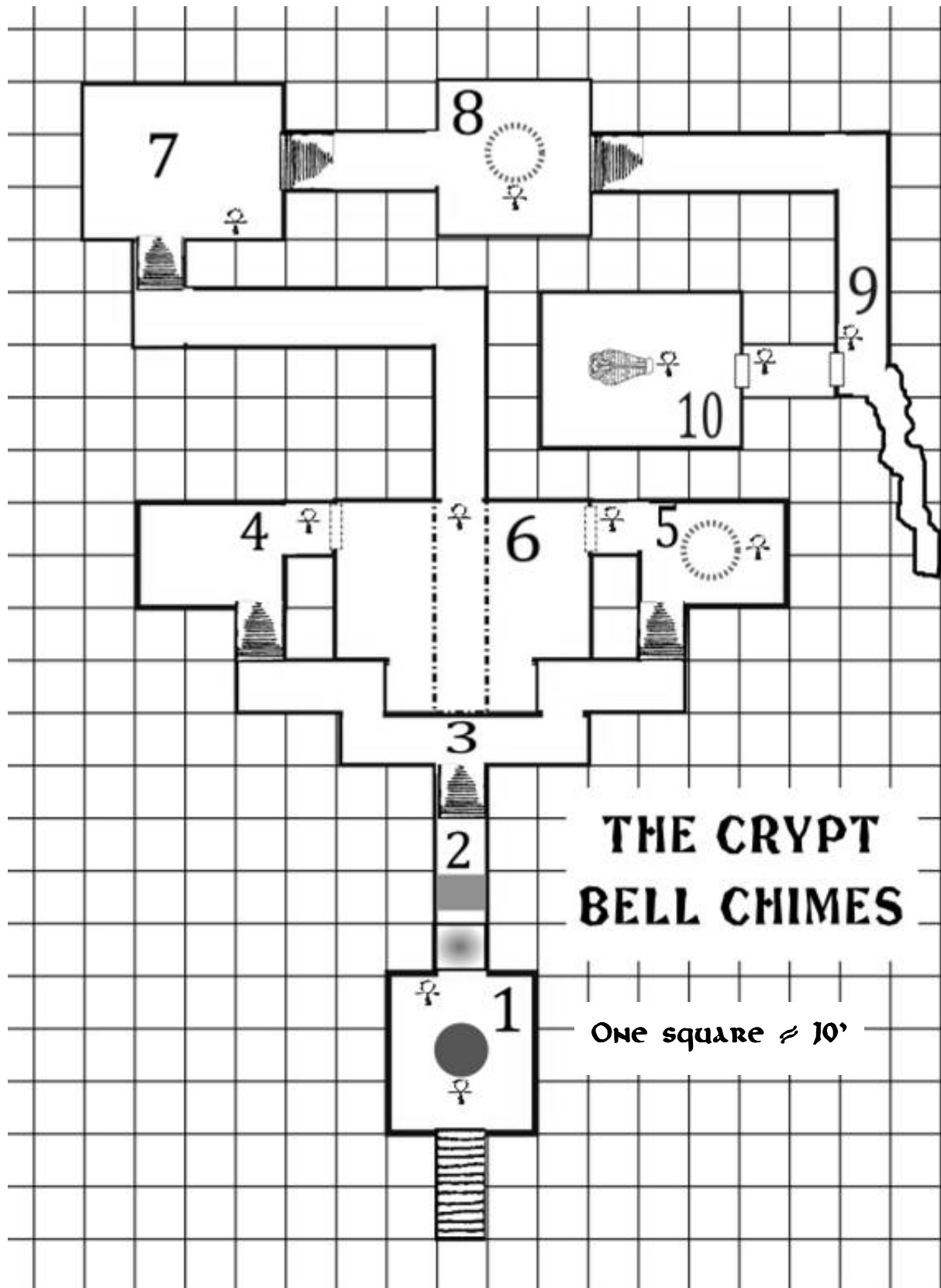
It's never felt right to you, somehow, that those shambling zombies were really your parents or that your grandmother was really there, inside that animated skeleton. Surely there's more to the Afterlife than this? But you keep your doubts and questions to yourself. The Cult does horrible things to heretics...

The Crypt

Each room is given a time that the PCs will spend in the room if they examine or interact with it fully. It will take the graverobbers (9) an hour to enter the final room (10) and another 10 minutes to open Ulurok's coffin.

The keyhole symbols indicate points where the Lichkey can be used to interact with a location. Lichkeys are inserted into large keyslots in the walls or floor and must be left in place. At the start of the scenario the PCs have single key and must be thoughtful concerning how to use it.

When the Crypt Bell Chimes



1. The Guardian Golem

15' high (5 minutes)

A 9' tall statue of an armoured reaper dominates the room. It carries a scythe and an hourglass. It faces into the crypt. There is a key slot underneath the statue that will fit a Lichkey.



An inscription besides the key slot reads:

*"Here stand I
Scythe at the ready
Against heresy
And the unquiet dead."*

Above the passageway (2) is another inscription:

*"Ulurok the Unclean: twice cursed, twice buried, let
none disturb her nor trust her lies."*

Guardian Golem

AC 3, 30hp, DEX 13, 6HD, AT scythe for 2d10, 725 XP

- The Golem is unaffected by non-magical weapons and most spells

The Golem activates when Ulurok's coffin is breached (10); it proceeds towards her tomb, crossing all traps with ease, and attacks all intruders who are not carrying Lichkeys.

Using a Lichkey

If a Lichkey is inserted in the slot it prevents the Golem from activating (so long as the key remains here)

2. The Passage of Time

10' high, 5-20 minutes

Hourglass symbols mark the entrance to this passage, which has a Lichkey slot in the wall to the right. An open pit blocks the corridor: it is 10' deep and there is a secret trapdoor in the far wall of the pit, about half way up. The pit is 10' across.

Descending and climbing up the other side of the pit will take at least 15 minutes, 10 minutes if using Climbing skills or grappling hooks; using spikes and rope to cross along the wall might only take 5 minutes but risks falling in, which causes 1d6 damage.

Beyond the pit is a pit trap which opens onto a chute that deposits victims at the bottom of the pit; they take 1d4 damage and will need help to climb out again (5 minutes with climbing skills but ropes etc might have been left in place).

Using a Lichkey

If a Lichkey is inserted in the slot it prevents the trap from activating (so long as the key remains here).

3. The Balcony

15' high, 20' drop, 5 minutes

From the balcony, the Bonevault (6) can be viewed, 20' below, where there is a key slot to raise the bridge that will reach the exit in the opposite wall. PCs can descend directly (using rope or climbing skill) or take either stairway to the left or right.

4. The Key Room

10' high, 5 minutes

Both entrances to 6 are blocked by barred gates that must be torn or lifted by strong characters (use Strength characteristic, doubled, as percentage chance of success at this).

This room has the key slot that lifts both gates. There is already a Lichkey inside it.

Using a Lichkey

This Lichkey keeps the gates at 4 and 5 closed. If it is removed, both gates open – and the PCs have an extra Lichkey!

Every minute, there is a 50% chance 1d4 undead scarabs will enter this room through the bars of the gate if PCs are present and making noise.

5. The Soul Ripper

10' high, 5-10 minutes

A 10' diameter mystical circle is engraved on the floor with a cage above it suspended from a chain. There is a keyslot in the floor beside the circle.

Using a Lichkey

A Lichkey inserted in the key slot will lower the cage, which crackles with magical energy. A living being in the cage is converted into an undead zombie, albeit with some trace of their former identity (low intelligence, recognition of friends, follows orders). This is not a reversible process; the Lichkey can be removed afterwards, causing the cage to rise and freeing the zombie.

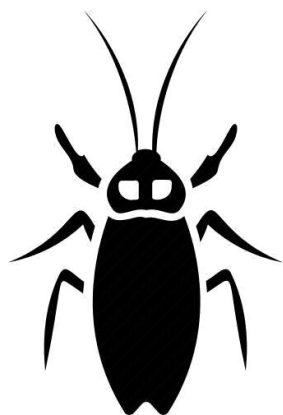
A zombified PC will be ignored by the undead scarabs in **6** but will activate the Golem in **1** if it tries to leave the dungeon by that route.

There is a metal gate blocking the entrance to **6** with a key slot beside it. – see **4** for more information, but this slot is empty.

6. The Bone Vault

45' high, 5 minutes + duration of combat

Flesh-eating undead scarabs occupy this room, feeding on the corpses (of unbelievers) dropped through a chimney in the ceiling.



There is a keyslot in the middle of the north wall.

Using a Lichkey

A Lichkey inserted in the key slot will raise the central section of the floor to create a bridge from 3 to the exit corridor. The Lichkey is destroyed as the bridge rises. The bridge cannot be lowered again.

Undead Scarabs

AC 6, 2 hp, dex 7, ½HD, AT bite for 1 damage, 7 XP

Scarabs crawl inside armour so if an attack is successful, all subsequent attacks by that scarab ignore armour protection

- 1d3 scarabs attack each character
- An additional 2d3 scarabs join the combat each round

Scarabs may be turned as Skeletons, causing all current scarabs to flee, but new scarabs will keep arriving

If PCs leave the Bonevault, they must continue combat with scarabs currently attacking them, but no further scarabs will arrive.

7. Library of the Heresiarch

12' high, 5 minutes + duration of research

Ulurok's heretical teachings are preserved here in scrolls chained to the wall. There is a key slot in the facing wall.

Using a Lichkey

A Lichkey inserted in the key slot will unlock all the scrolls by causing the chains to retract. The key can only be retrieved if all the scrolls are put back in place.

If the PCs do not use a Lichkey, each scroll must be unlocked separately (taking 1 minute for each attempt). There are 20 scrolls.

The PCs can build up an impression of Ulurok's heresy by perusing several scrolls; it takes a PC 2 minutes to peruse one scroll, half that time if Intelligence is high (13+):

1 scroll: Ulurok did not believe in the blessedness of undeath

2-5 scrolls: Ulurok believed in some sort of spiritual afterlife

6-10 scrolls: Ulurok attracted many followers with her teachings about an afterlife for the virtuous and undeath being a curse for the wicked

11-15 scrolls: Ulurok was condemned by the Lichkeepers for blasphemy and sealed inside an iron coffin but she prophesied her spirit would return to prove the truth of her doctrines

16-20 scrolls: Ulurok's followers claimed her spirit appeared to them afterwards, but the Lichkeepers performed a ritual in her tomb that ended these posthumous appearances by trapping her soul in a spirit cell.

Religious crisis

There is an opportunity for roleplaying here if some PCs are members of the Cult or supportive of it. These scrolls would demolish the Cult's reputation if taken out of the dungeon (but the Lichkey cannot be retrieved if this is done).

8. The Spirit Cell

10' high, 5 minutes + duration of discussion

A magic circle is set into the floor, inlaid with silver and gems worth 500gp (but it takes 5 minutes to prize them all free). The spirit of Ulurok is trapped within. It is visible as a beautiful yet wasted woman, translucent, pleading yet inaudible. If Ulurok's spirit sees a Lichkey in the PCs' possession, she will gesture towards the key slot, begging to be freed.

Using a Lichkey

If a Lichkey is inserted in the keyslot in the floor, the Key is destroyed and Ulurok's spirit is freed. Ulurok will bless the PCs (each heals 1d4HP) and ask to be restored to her body (10). The spirit will accompany the PCs from this point if they venture deeper into the dungeon: it has no further powers and does not know about traps; it cannot be turned (it is not undead), harmed or returned to the Spirit Cell.



Religious crisis

There is more opportunity for roleplaying here if some PCs are members of the Cult: Ulurok is a hated heretic in the Cult's teachings but her existence as a non-undead spirit is a profound refutation of the Cult's doctrine about the impossibility of the Afterlife. Ulurok refuses to explain her condition, saying only: "Life after death is all about Faith."

9. Tunnel of Final Repose

10' high

The tomb robbers have broken into this room through the north wall, pushing away the big stone blocks. An earthen tunnel rises to the surface over the course of a mile. The two robbers, Meraneth and Kanacht (see below), are devotees of Ulurok who want to free her from her tomb so that her spirit can speak to her followers again.

The final trapped tunnel has two vault doors but the robbers have no Lichkey to open them. It will take Meraneth 10 minutes to find each trap, 10 minutes to deactivate it and 10 minutes to open the lock: it takes the robbers 1 hour to enter Ulurok's tomb (**10**).

The first door has a poison gas trap that fills the room with necrotizing gas: everyone in the corridor within 20' must save vs Poison or be turned into a Zombie (unintelligent, attacks other living characters).

The second door has a trap which fires necrotic darts: each character within 10' is hit by 1d6 darts, each dealing 1 damage each plus necessitating a save vs Poison or turn into a Zombie (as above).

Each door has a keyslot on the outside. There is no Lichkey slot on the inside of the doors.

Using a Lichkey

If a Lichkey is inserted in the keyslot beside either door, the door unlocks trap is deactivated; the door closes and locks and the trap triggers if the key is ever removed. If Lichkeys are inserted in both slots, both traps are permanently deactivated.

When the Crypt Bell Chimes

Arriving too late

If 30 minutes have passed, the first door is open and its trap deactivated by Meraneth. After 50 minutes, Meraneth has deactivated the second trap. After 60 minutes, the PCs will arrive to find both doors open and no longer trapped.

Meraneth

Thief AC7, hp7, DEX15, HD2, AT 2 x 1d6 dagger 30XP

Leather armour, 2 daggers +1, elven cloak.

Meraneth has a high Dexterity to improve her ranged weapon attacks by +1

She dual wields +1 magic daggers with no penalty and she has a bandolier of (non-magical) throwing daggers

She wears an Elven Cloak and will use it to attempt to backstab her enemies.

Meraneth is devoted to Ulurok's teachings and believes that if Ulurok's corpse can be cleansed her immortal spirit will be freed – she is correct about this. She is very much the brains of the mission. She directs Kanacht, whom she loves as a brother.

Kanacht

Fighter AC4, hp15, DEX12, HD2, AT 1d6 sword 30XP

Mail armour & shield, sword +1 (+3 vs. undead)

Kanacht has a sword is magical +1 (included above), +3 vs undead

Kanacht is rather slow with a dog-like devotion to Meraneth. He doesn't entirely understand the mission, but believes that if they can get Ulurok out of her coffin they will be rewarded in Heaven.

Without Meraneth's guidance, he is easily fooled or intimidated, despite his size and strength.

10. Uulrok's Tomb

15' high

The chamber is dominated by an ornate iron coffin shaped rather like a spiky egg, wrapped in chains. There is a keyslot in the floor beside it.

Using a Lichkey

If a Lichkey is inserted in the keyslot beside the coffin, it will be destroyed and the coffin opens.

If the party have no key, the coffin can be opened by using the Open Locks skill or similar spell, or hacked open – this will take 10 minutes and ruin 1d4 weapons.

Opening the Coffin activates the Guardian Golem (1, see below)



The coffin contains Ulurok's corpse, which is an undead Mummy.

Ulurok's Mummy

Mummy AC5, hp30, DEX9, HD5, AT 2x1d6 plus Infected Touch, 300XP

- When the Mummy rises, onlookers must Save vs Spells or be frozen with dread

The infected touch drains a point of Charisma and a character who loses all Charisma becomes a Zombie immediately and attacks her erstwhile allies; Charisma is regained if the infection is cured (NB: this differs from normal Mummies in the BLUEHOLME™ rules)

Arriving too late

If 60 minutes have passed, the PCs will arrive to find Meraneth picking the locks on the coffin while Kanacht stands guard. If 70 minutes have passed, the PCs will find the two graverobbers fighting the Mummy (all combatants are on half Hit Points).

The Resurrection of Ulurok

If the Mummy is defeated and Ulurok's spirit is present, it will enter the corpse and restore it to life. Ulurok is a high level Cleric but in her weakened state she has only 10HP and knows the spells *Bless*, *Cure Light Wounds*, *Cure Disease* and *Raise Dead*.

The Guardian Golem

If the coffin in **10** is opened, the Guardian Golem in **1** activates (unless a Lichkey was used to 'lock' it). If the PCs don't open the coffin, Meraneth and Kanacht (**9**) will do this, 70 minutes after the PCs enter the dungeon.

It will take the Golem 6 rounds to activate and reach the Tomb (**10**), making a great clattering noise as it approaches. It will stop to attack any intruders who are not carrying Lichkeys.

Once inside the tomb, the Golem will attack all intruders, whether or not they carry Lichkeys. If the Mummy is present, the Golem will target the Mummy if possible.

The Golem will not pursue anyone out of the dungeon (and will not enter the earthen tunnel leading into **9**).

The Epilogue

Several outcomes are possible:

The PCs liberate Ulurok: If the PCs decide to revive Ulurok, they can escape along the tunnel and be welcomed by agents of her cult. They will have made enemies of the Lichkeepers but a recovered Ulurok will use *Raise Dead* on any PCs who died rescuing her. This is the 'intended' ending but the players might have other ideas...

The PCs capture or entomb Ulurok: The PCs might not free Ulurok's spirit, might prevent the opening of the coffin or might capture Ulurok when she resurrects. Any of these actions earns them a reward from the Lichkeepers: 500gp each and any dead comrades are animated as loyal Zombies! However, the PCs know too much and had better leave the Lichlands quickly or the Cult's agents will come to silence them.

The PCs kill Ulurok: The PCs might enable Ulurok to resurrect but then kill her. Since this will only liberate her immortal spirit (which will go on to appear to her growing cult of devotees), the Lichkeepers are less happy: a reward of 100gp each and any dead comrades are raised as Wights and sent after the PCs to silence them.

The PCs blackmail the Lichkeepers: If they possess Ulurok's library or Ulurok herself, the PCs could try to extort the Lichkeepers. The Cult will pay each PC up to 2000gp to ensure their silence, but will certainly send assassins after them (Wights at first, Vampires if that fails).

Commentary

The Lichkeepers are a fantasy combination of Ancient Egyptian mythology (with its focus on mummification and death) and the worst interpretation of Medieval Catholicism (a highly controlling religion that makes use of torture and fear to keep the populace in line).

The scenario could play out very simply if the PCs race through the dungeon, ignoring the library and Ulurok's spirit, and intercept the tomb robbers before they open the coffin. One hour is plenty of time to do this if the players are very incurious. Of course, the players do not know how much time they have available to them.

Meraneth and Kanacht can put up a tough fight (she can hide and backstab, he is armoured and armed with a magic sword) but, once they are defeated, the PCs can exit through the tunnel they created.

Things get more interesting if the PCs read the heretical library or interact with Ulurok herself. If they realise that Ulurok is the heroine, not the villain, they might allow her coffin to be opened, but then they have to confront the Guardian Golem, a nasty foe. If they delay too long, the robbers will open the coffin, releasing a dangerous Mummy and also activating the Golem, catching the PCs between two deadly opponents and making the release of Ulurok's spirit a more attractive strategy.

The Rumours at the start strongly suggest that the Lichkeepers are the 'bad guys' and increase the likelihood that players will investigate the opposing factions; if the GM includes Lichkeeper PCs in the party, that might swing things back the other way or at least promote lively debate.

Will the Zealot suppress Ulurok's teachings or the Faithful PC have her beliefs shaken?

Will the Sceptic turn against his Cult?

What lengths will the Ecclesiarch go to in order to keep power at the expense of truth?

Whether Meraneth and Kanacht turn out to be enemies or allies depends on how these debates resolve.

The GM should reward this sort of roleplaying. Tracking experience points is irrelevant in a one-shot scenario, but promoting a beginning character to 2nd level in their class or skill is a great way to reward players who enter into the spirit of the scenario and the issues it raises as well as better preparing them for the showdown with the Mummy and the Golem.

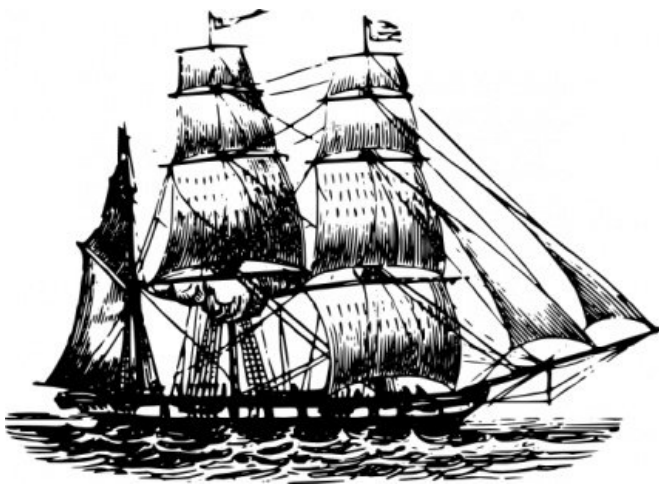
RETURN TO DEADMAN'S ISLE

In this scenario, a significant event takes place before everything starts. The players have seized control of a pirate ship with the name **Unspoken Grief**. The scenario is predicated on the PCs being pirates themselves who have mutinied against the tyrannical Captain Redmayne. The scenario also works if the PCs are prisoners who have escaped from the brig and captured the ship or even if they are pirate-hunters who have overtaken and stormed *Unspoken Grief*, losing their own vessel in the process.

Background

Elizar Redmayne is a pirate who discovers Deadman's Isle when his ship, *Zanzibar*, founders on the reef. He is the only survivor, burying his wife, Captain Sheba, in the ruined city there. Redmayne befriends the Rat-people and escapes the isle on one of *Zanzibar's* boats. He acquires a new ship, *Unspoken Grief*, and crew (including the PCs) but returns every year to the Isle to head into the interior alone to visit "his greatest treasure" (his wife's grave, though no one knows this and his crew supposes he means his loot).

Years pass and Redmayne's grief makes him increasingly deranged and when he dies in the mutiny (see below), he returns as an undead Revenant (an intelligent Zombie) and travels to the Isle to protect his wife's grave from the mutineers, enlisting his allies on the island to help him.



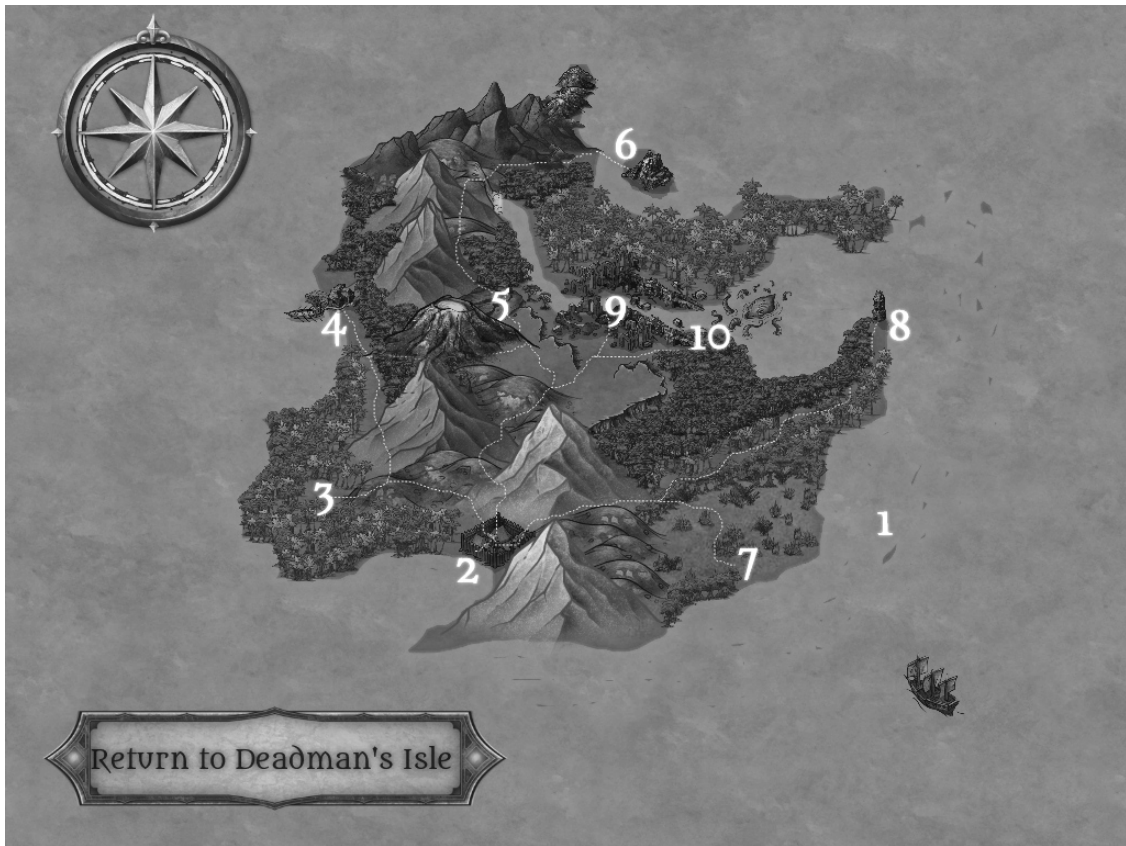
The Hook

Cap'n Redmayne's tyranny went too far! You and the rest of his crew mutinied and took over the ship, Unspoken Grief. Redmayne cursed you for mutineers and jumped overboard to drown. His loyal First Mate Trethig and Bo'sun Jago were put to sea on a boat. Now you mutineers have a ship and Redmayne's map, leading to Deadman's Isle where Redmayne's greatest treasure lies buried. Do you dare seize it for yourself?

Rumours (1d10)

1. *Cap'n Redmayne returned to Deadman's Isle every year and went into the interior alone. He never spoke of what was there. (true)*
2. *Cap'n Redmayne was not always such a tyrant; he was a good and fair leader once but the years embittered him (true)*
3. *Cap'n Redmayne spoke of his "friends" on Deadman's Isle, saying they were cannibals (true but misleading)*
4. *Deadman's Isle features in many strange tales of an ancient civilisation that angered the gods and was destroyed (possibly true)*
5. *It was unwise to put Trethig and Jago to sea like that – they are loyal to Redmayne and will avenge him if they can (true)*
6. *Deadman's Isle is a secret pirate headquarters where sea dogs from across the oceans hide their loot. (false)*
7. *Deadman's Isle is home to a powerful Djinn of the Seas who will grant wishes to travellers to his palace (false)*
8. *Cap'n Redmayne's last words were: "You know me not, you dogs, nor the power that is in me. No tide shall hold me! From hell's heart, I stab at you; for hate's sake, I spit my last breath at you!" (true)*
9. *Cap'n Redmayne once sailed on another ship, Zanzibar, that he only spoke of when deep in the rum (true)*
10. *Redmayne's greatest treasure is an artefact that grants power over all creatures that dwell in and on the sea (false)*

Return to Deadman's Isle



Referee's Notes

The scenario assumes the PCs are former members of Redmayne's crew. The GM can assign them the following motivations (roll 1d6 or choose):

Bitter Hate: *Redmayne plundered and burned your home town, abducting you into his service. You earned his trust, always waiting for the day you would pay him back for his atrocities.*

Lost Love: *You had a sweetheart in a port town and intended to abandon piracy for love. Redmayne found out and murdered your beloved. You secretly vowed revenge.*

Whipping Boy/Girl: *Redmayne bullied you mercilessly but you counted every curse, every slap, every crack of the whip, waiting to revenge yourself on the ogish Captain.*

Partner in Greed: *Redmayne promised you a share in his wealth – then one day confided in you that “my greatest treasure lies on Deadman's Isle and that will I share with no one, nay, not this side of death nor beyond.” Now Redmayne's treasure will at last be yours.*

Kindred Spirit: *Redmayne recognised a viciousness in you that matched his own. He prophesied: “Thou art to be Captain after me, aye, and sail strange seas, but the tides shall devour thee as they shall devour me.” You destroyed Redmayne to become Captain in his place, but the rest of his prophecy now troubles you.*

Loyal Lieutenant: *Redmayne once confided in you that his life had become unbearable: “Only on the other side of the Bitter Tide of Death is there peace for me. When they come for me, join thou with them and see that I die like a Captain.” You have stayed loyal to your Captain by giving him the end he wished for.*

If there are fewer than 6 players, the GM should create NPC mutineers to make the crew up to 6. These NPCs will not venture onto the Island except under duress but can be assigned the other unused motivations.

Names (Male): *Breoch, Jory, Kenver*

Names (Female): *Emblyn, Morwen, Teagan*

The Island

The island can only be safely approached at **2** and **4**; reefs and cliffs make the rest of it inaccessible by sea. Sailing round the entire island uses up 8 full hours but reveals views of the rope bridge/temple (**6**), Buccaneers Cove (**4**) and the lagoon/lighthouse (**10**). Trying to sail into the lagoon causes the ship to hit the reefs and become shipwrecked in the marshes (**7**).

Redmayne's map advises the PCs to make landfall at Rat Bay (**1**).

Once the PCs are on land, moving from one location to another takes 4 hours by trail. Sunset is at 8pm and sunrise at 8am. It is currently 8am so the PCs can make landfall at area **2** at 12 noon. Night-time travel is not possible along mountain trails but torchlit travel between **7/8** and **9/10** is possible.

Rest & Weather

Mosquitoes and heat means that away from shelter sleep is only half effective (8 hours counts as 4, no restful healing for regaining HP or relearning spells).

On the second night a fierce storm blows in. No one gets any sleep at all unless they are sheltered at the Shrine (**6**) or Lost City (**9**). Vessels not in the Lagoon (**10**), Rat Bay (**2**) or Buccaneers Cove (**5**) are dashed against the shore or reef and wrecked. PCs on board must swim for shore, abandoning armour and weapons larger than daggers.

Going off-trail

The scenario assumes PCs follow the trails and the GM rules that off-trail travel is impossible (jungles too dense, cliffs too steep, etc).

Alternatively, off-trail travel between locations takes 8 hours; for complications, roll **2d6**

+1 for mountains

-1 for swamps/jungles

1. **Quicksand:** See area 3.
2. **Giant Entity:** Something massive approaches, demolishing trees and making the earth shake. PCs must hide or be killed. The creature leaves a trail in its passing that leads to a random location (roll 1d6+4) in 4 hours.
3. **Stinging insects:** Each PC either loses 1HP or suffers -2 to attacks/saving throws next day.
4. **Raptors:** These dog-sized dinosaurs attack as a pack but flee from stiff resistance: if PCs stand and fight, each loses 1d4HP; if PCs flee, each loses 1d4-2HP and ends up back where they started.
5. **Ancient ruins:** Shelter for the night (heals HPs, regain spells).
6. **Lost:** 4 hours wasted, back where you started.
7. **Earthquake:** In the jungle or the mountains, take 1d4-2 damage from falling rocks or trees.
8. **Rough terrain:** 12 hours rather than 8 to reach nearest location.
9. **Ancient road:** A paved road emerges from the undergrowth; the PCs can follow it to the nearest location in 4 hours rather than 8.
10. **Pterosaurs:** These winged dinosaurs swoop to steal shiny objects – swords, shields, wands, treasure. Each PC must sacrifice an item or take 1d4-1 damage.
11. **Falling cinders:** See area 4.
12. **Ancient tombs:** Carved into the rocks are vast statues and burial chambers; 4 hours searching will reveal either (50%) a treasure trove of 1d100gp and a magic weapon or (50%) 1d3 undead (zombies).
13. **Volcanic eruption:** Oncoming river of lava must be outraced; PCs must shed metal armour and heavy loads (including two-handed weapons)

1. Treacherous Reefs

Sea travel, 4 hours to explore

Beyond the reefs you can discern a placid lagoon, coastal swamps and distant jungles and, further away, mountains wreathed in smoke. A high headland has some sort of structure, an ancient tower overlooking the lagoon.

If the PCs try to pilot the ship through the reef it will founder and come ashore at 7. Assume the rest of the NPC crew die in the wreck.

2. Rat Bay

Sea travel, 4 hours to arrive here directly

There is a sheltered harbour here among jungle-crowned cliffs and a stockaded settlement. The inhabitants have sighted your ship and assembled on the beach: hairy beast-men, no taller than children, but carrying threatening spears.

The ship can be safely anchored here and the PCs can come ashore by boat. NPC crew will be too frightened to venture ashore unless the Referee wants to assign NPC henchmen.

A stockaded village of Jher-em (Rat-people) lies beyond the beach. The normally peaceful Jher-em have been incited by Redmayne's Revenant (see 9). There are 1d4 Rat-people per PC/NPC, plus an extra 1d4.

Jher-em Rat-people

Rat-people AC7, hp3, DEX11, HD1, AT 1d6

Spear, 1d20cp each

Jher-em tactics

The Jher-ems will attack the PCs on the beach, gaining a free round of combat against PCs wading ashore, but will flee back to the stockade once they take half losses.

It may be possible to parlay with the Jher-em from a position of strength (i.e. after they have fled to their stockade). The Rat-people speak halting Trade Tongue (learned from Redmayne, they refer to all outsiders as 'captains') and have the following information:

- At dawn on the first morning, Elizar Redmayne – or his ghost – waded out of the surf and warned the Jher-em of the PCs' arrival, invoking their ancient friendship to persuade them to attack the mutineers
- Redmayne – or his ghost – took the western (jungle) trail out of the village
- Redmayne first arrived in the village decades ago, wandering out of the interior along the northern (volcano) trail, half dead from hunger and disease
- The Jher-em tended Redmayne and eventually he left them, departing along the eastern trail (which passes through a valley to a big swamp).
- Redmayne returned by ship every year after that, coming ashore by boat and heading into the interior on the northern trail then returning 3 days later.

The Jher-em are descendants of a shipwrecked crew and know nothing about the island beyond the mountains, except a legend of the 'City of the Gods'. They are too timid to accompany anyone further into the island.

Partying with the Rat-people

The PCs might establish friendly relations if they absolutely refrain from retaliating for 2 rounds when the Jher-em attack (or employ a *Sleep* spell or somesuch to end the encounter without fatalities). Jher-bob, the chief, will invite the captains into his stockade for a feast, which takes up 4 hours. If the PCs ask what fine meat they are eating, they will be told it is Jher-bob: it was the chief's honour to feed the guests with his own flesh.

3. Deadly Quicksand

Jungle travel, 4 hours to Rat Bay or Buccaneers Cove

The trail ends in a sandy clearing. The forest around the clearing is full of brilliant butterflies feeding on the petals of the tall shrubs. It is very beautiful. Something sparkles in the undergrowth at the far side of the clearing.

The sandy clearing is really quicksand. All PCs will become trapped unless they made a point of sending a scout ahead.

- Small/slender characters can evade the sand.
- Everyone else sinks 1' per round (half that rate for slender characters like elves; twice for stocky characters like dwarves)
- Those who go under start to drown, losing 1HP on the first round, 2HP on the second, 4HP then 8HP then 16HP.

Escaping from the quicksand

Trapped characters may Save vs Death Ray to grab a vine or branch and try again each round at -1 cumulative penalty. They may then pull themselves out. Freed characters can pull others out using rope with no penalty.

The trail ends here, a dead-end. In the undergrowth is a statue made faceless with age, but with two 100gp sapphires for eyes.

4. Vantage Point

Mountain travel, 4 hours to reach Rat Bay, Buccaneers Cove or other locations

This basalt plateau high above the island is whipped by hot winds. Fiery cinders clatter down from the volcano that looms overhead. When the smoke parts, there is a spectacular panorama of the mountains to the north, the lowlands below and the valley to the west.

This rocky cliff gives a view along the volcanic gorge to Buccaneers Cove (5), to the ruined temple on the island (6), to the Lost City (9) and the Lighthouse (8). From this vantage, two leaning towers at 9 form a clear X.

Optional: Partner in Greed

The GM may give the PC with the 'Partner in Greed' motivation a **promotion** when they see the spot marked with X.

Those who continue to inspect the lagoon (1 in 6) might detect the tentacles of the Luskaa (10).

Raining burning cinders

Every round the volcano rains burning cinders, some of which detonate in fiery explosions. Characters who linger on the cliff longer than one round must save vs Death Ray at the end of every subsequent round or take 1d4 damage from a nearby explosion.

Burning cinders litter the site. If they can somehow be carried (e.g. with the gloves from 6) they smoulder for 1d4 days and can be thrown as grenade-like weapons (2d4 damage on a hit, 1d4 on a miss).

The PCs could catch up with Redmayne's Revenant here, at sunset on the first day when it arrives from 5 and stares out towards the X-symbol in the Lost City (9), heedless of the falling cinders. If approached, he steps off the ledge and vanishes from sight.

5. Buccaneers Cove

Mountain travel, 4 hours to the Vantage Point; jungle travel, 4 hours to Rat Bay

Built on the rocky shoreline is an ancient town, whose stone wharf and jetty are still intact. A rowing boat – the one from Unspoken Grief that Trethig and Jago were cast adrift in – lies moored here.

A ruined port has a stone wharf that allows vessels to dock. Redmayne's loyal lieutenants used this site as a secret base and rowed here after being cast adrift. They have set up a sail on the boat from their provisions here.

Trethig

Fighter AC6, hp15, DEX13, HD3, AT 1d6

Leather armour & shield, scimitar

Trethig has a scimitar that is magical +1, +3 vs beasts

Jago

Cleric AC7, hp10, DEX9, HD3, AT 1d6

Leather armour, warhammer

Jago knows the spells *Curse* and *Cause Fear*

- Jago commands a Brine Zombie (a crewman who died before they arrived at the island)
- Jago possess a scroll with *Resist Fire*

Brine Zombie

Brine Zombie AC8, hp7, DEX4, HD2, AT 1d8

- The slow-moving zombie always loses initiative but takes half damage from blunt weapons

A stone house of ancient construction is their hideout. They have stored 168gp, 1650sp, a storm lantern, 10 flasks of oil, tinder, 6 spears, a suit of man-sized plate armour, 4 portions of Healing Root (heals 1d4).

Redmayne's Revenant visits them at noon then departs eastward towards 4. Following his instructions, they set up a trap on their store house.

Trethig & Jago tactics

The Brine Zombie hides in the storehouse but makes noise by stumbling about and attracts the PCs. When intruders enter, a stone block drops on the first one, dealing 1d6 damage.

The Brine Zombie attacks but, on the next round, Trethig and Jago emerge from the undergrowth to attack the party from behind.

Trethig is a reckless combatant but Jago is more circumspect and will try to flee if his partner is killed – he will join Redmayne's Revenant at 9.

On the second day, Trethig and Jago follow Redmayne to the Lost City (9) (taking the healing roots with them). If the PCs arrive after this they will find only the Brine Zombie guarding the trapped store house.

Optional: The Whipping Boy/Girl

The GM may give the PC with the 'Whipping Boy/Girl' motivation a promotion if they defeat Trethig and Jago.

6. Shrine & Rope-bridge

Mountain travel, 4 hours to Vantage Point

Waves lash at the base of a rocky islet that towers a hundred feet or more above the seas, level with the high cliff on which you stand. A rickety rope bridge connects the islet to the mainland. Jungle trees cling to the sides of the islet but it is crowned by a ruined temple of spires and pillars, now a home to shrieking gulls.

The ancient shrine is atop a tall crag, a hundred feet out to sea. The PCs could sail underneath the bridge but could not reach up to it or scale the cliffs on either side.

Crossing the bridge

Crossing the bridge safely requires a Saving Throw vs Wands or else the character slips. The character must pass another save (or a comrade may pass it for the PC) to avoid falling into the sea (certain death, but allow a third save to survive on 1HP and commence drowning).

The shrine is the remnant of a once-great civilisation, now serene with the silence of centuries. Faded murals tell the story of a sea monster invading the lagoon and bringing ruin upon the city. In the centre of the shrine, a mystical fire burns in a brazier and a pair of metal gloves lie nearby. The murals show messengers of the gods bringing fire to the top of a tall tower by the sea, shedding light across the ocean. A tower resembling the one in the mural is visible through a window, on a headland far to the south-east.

The Brazier

The brazier requires two-hands to carry hanging from chains. Any above-average strong or larger than man-sized character can do this. If swung as a weapon, the brazier can hit every second round for 2d6 fire damage, causing additional 1d4 fire damage on the following round. The fire never goes out.

The Gloves

These make the wearer immune to fire, allowing even man-sized or averagely strong characters to carry the Brazier. Alternatively, the gloves can be used to pick up and carry the burning cinders (see area 4) and either throw them or punch with them (dealing 1d6 damage and 1d3 fire damage on the following round).

The shrine is a sheltered location where PCs can sleep, regain HP and relearn spells normally. Clerical healing performed here always has maximum effectiveness.

7. The Wreck of Zanzibar

Sea travel, 4 hours to land here; land travel, 4 hours to Lighthouse (jungle) or Rat Bay (mountains)

The salt marshes are melancholy and the sea's roar and the cries of gulls are muted. Rising out of the mists is a foundered wreck, a proud ship half sunk in the mud and bearing the name Zanzibar.



This is the wreck of Redmayne's first ship that foundered here over a decade ago. The bones of the dead crew are weighted down with rocks to afford them burial. The Captain's Log identifies the only survivors as 'Sheba' (the captain) and Redmayne as her husband. The log ends with Sheba too sick to write and Redmayne away scouting a ruined city on the other side of the jungle; the final page is a heartfelt love letter from the dying Sheba to Redmayne:

"My Immortal Beloved, I must leave thee and embrace Dark Fate. Love is strong but flesh is weak. Oh, go on loving me — never doubt that I await thee, beyond all Tides, where no breakers break and no gulls cry. My Life — my All — farewell."

Optional: Lost Love

The GM may give the PC with the 'Lost Love' motivation a **promotion** if they read Sheba's love letter.

A young woman dressed in rags and pale with hunger inhabits the wreck. She speaks the Trade Tongue but cannot remember her name, only that she was abandoned here. She adopts the name 'Zanzibar' because it is written on the side of the ship. She will recognise the name 'Sheba' but not know where from.

Sheba's Ghost

Sheba's Ghost appears physical enough and can pick up objects and carry burdens (but is too weak to do so for long). She will plead for the party to take her with them and, although she has no memory, is a good guide off-trail (do not roll, treat as "ancient road"). She cannot leave the island and will disappear if she crosses salt water. She does not radiate magic or evil and is not undead.

Sheba can function as a 'GM's friend' making helpful suggestions when the players are in difficulty.

One of the ship's boats is gone (Redmayne took it when he escaped the island). Another survives intact and is mounted with a powerful harpoon cannon and 5 harpoons.

Using the harpoon

Two characters are needed to operate the harpoon: one to winch and release it and the other to aim. It can be fired every other round. It has a short range of 50', medium 100' and long 200'. It deals 2d10 damage to large opponents, 2d6 to man-sized or smaller.

The boat can be rowed safely along the coast inside the reef, all the way to the Lighthouse (8) or Lagoon (10) in 4 hours.

8. Lighthouse Tower

Jungle travel, 4 hours to the Wreck (7)

On a windy crag, a slim tower rises 50' up, with a narrow staircase winding round the outside to the summit. At the top is an unlit brazier that would once have guided ships through the reef and into the calm lagoon below.

The steps are treacherous.

Treacherous steps

Each character climbing the steps who is not small (like a halfling) or slender (like an elf) has a 1 in 6 chance of slipping. The character may fall into the sea (1d6 damage but attracts the Luskaa from 10) or onto the ground (2d6 damage).

The brazier at the top can be lit by the magical flame from 6 (transferring it from the portable brazier) or by one of the burning cinders from 4 (carried in the magic gloves). If the lighthouse is lit, the Luskaa will emerge from the Lagoon (10) and attack the tower and its occupants, trying to put out the light.

Luskaa vs Lighthouse

If it attacks the Lighthouse, the Luskaa emerges fully from the water so its head can be attacked normally. It deals 10-60 points of damage to the tower each round after the first and when the tower takes 100 damage it collapses and explodes. Any characters still inside the tower die but the Luskaa's Head takes 3d12 points of damage from this.

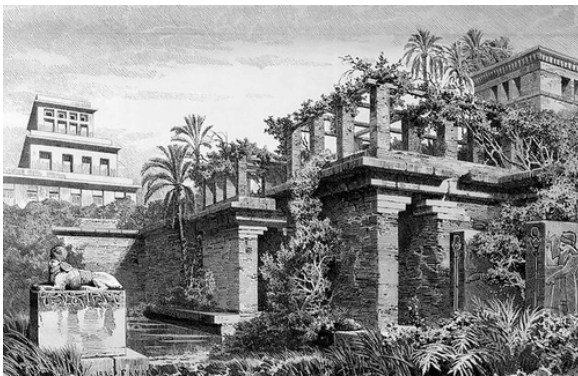
9. The Lost City & Sheba's Grave

Land travel, 4 hours to explore

This was a magnificent city once and it did not fall to war but rather was abandoned so that its plazas and towers, mansions, fountains and bridges stand intact yet empty. It is an eerie place, silent and sad.

Optional: Bitter Hate

The GM may give the PC with the 'Bitter Hate' motivation a **promotion** if they explore this place.



The Lost City is a vast place and 4 hours spent exploring allows a roll on the table (1d12). If a PC succeeds on a test for secret doors (or has Sheba's Ghost advising them), they can roll 1d6+6 instead.

1. **Falling masonry:** save vs Wand or take 1d4 damage
2. **Floor collapses:** save vs Wand or take 1 damage and become trapped until helped out
3. **Poisonous snake:** save vs Poison or take 1d6 damage
4. **Startled by eruption of bats:** drop handheld items
5. **Poison dart trap:** hit by 1d6, save vs Poison for each hit or take 1 damage
6. **Cursed runes:** save vs Spell or be blinded for 4 hours

7. **An enchanted boat** that travels without sails and can leave the island safely if the Lighthouse (8) is relit
8. **Jewellery** of gold and pearls worth 100gp
9. **Trove of ancient gold coins:** 1d6 x 100
10. A quiver of 2d4 **magic +1 arrows**
11. **Boots, a ring or a cloak** conferring the ability to walk on water
12. A **magical +1 weapon** (1d4: 1 short sword, 2 spear, 3 mace, 4 short bow)

Here comes the Luskaa

Every round of noisy activity (combat, bat eruptions or trapped characters calling for help) has a 1 in 6 chance of attracting the Luskaa (10) from the river.

After 4 hours searching, the PCs discover Sheba's Grave, guarded by Redmayne's Revenant. If the PCs are looking for the site under the X created by two leaning towers, they may find this immediately.

Redmayne, as ferocious as he was in life, awaits you beneath two fallen towers. He guards a grave stone erected above a mound of stones planted with bright flowers. It is silent here: there is no sound of the surf nor of gulls.

"For my treasure, is it?" Redmayne snarls. "You would take that from me too, you dogs? But I command otherwise!"

Redmayne's traps

Redmayne might be joined by Trethig and/or Jago (5) if they were not encountered on the first day or survived. He directs them to set traps around the grave: roll 1d6 on the exploration table to determine which traps they create; they set up a trap at every sunset until the PCs arrive.

On each round of combat, a random PC triggers one of the traps.

Redmayne does not fight but is indestructibly undead and cannot be turned.

Redmayne's attacks

Redmayne is obsessed with defending his wife's grave. On the third sunset, he summons the Luskaa and sends it round the coast to destroy Unspoken Grief and the sailboat at 5. If he is alone when the PCs arrive or if Trethig and Jago are defeated, he will summon the Luskaa again (see area 10).

If Redmayne is brought back together with Sheba's Ghost (7), the two are reconciled:

"Hold, beloved," the pale woman calls out. "Does thou not know me, who art thine own, always and only thine?"

Redmayne blinks back hot tears from his dead eyes when his wife appears before him.

"Sheba! Can it be? What trickery –"

"Not trickery, dear love, but Dark Fate. The tide turns at last. Do you not hear it on the shingles? Do the gulls not cry for thee? Art thou ready?"

"Ready?" Redmayne murmurs between kisses.

"Ready for a journey, my love. For I am thy captain once again and a sea wind is calling us from yon far horizon."

"I am ready," Redmayne replies.

The two figures fade from sight.

Optional: The Loyal Lieutenant

The GM may give the PC with the 'Loyal Lieutenant' motivation a **promotion** at this point.

If Redmayne departs, the Monster will retreat to the Lagoon and Trethig and Jago will surrender.

10. The Lagoon of Death

Jungle travel, 4 hours from the Vantage Point or the Lost City

The Lagoon looks serene, but as you watch from the shore the waters churn and a mass of writhing tentacles burst forth.

The Luskaa has an unlimited number of tentacles but will direct 1d4 at each character.

Luskaa Tentacles

AC 7, 6hp, DEX 13, 3HD, AT lash for 1d4 then constrict for 1d6.

After a successful hit, a tentacle deals automatic constriction damage on each subsequent round until 'killed'

Luskaa tactics

A tentacle that takes damage from fire release a victim and retreats into the water

The snaky tentacles can reach deep into the jungle or City and PCs must spend a round fleeing before the tentacles stop attacking.

If all the attacking tentacles are burned/destroyed, the Luskaa will generate more: 1d4+1 per character, then 1d4+2 if all those were defeated, and so on.

Optional: The Kindred Spirit

The GM may give the PC with the 'Kindred Spirit' motivation a **promotion** when the Luskaa attacks him or her.

The Luskaa can only be truly harmed by attacking its head, which is in the water.

Luskaa Head

AC 5, 30hp, 9HD, AT no attack.

The head has no attack of its own but will generate an extra 1d4 tentacles to attack each opponent engaging it in the water.

Luskaa versus Harpoon

If the PCs use the harpoon gun from 7, they can attack the head from a safe distance: over 100' is long range (-1 to hit) but safe from tentacles, only 1d4 tentacles can attack at medium range (50') and 2d4 at short range (harpoon enjoys +1 to hit).

The Epilogue

Several outcomes are possible:

The PCs confront Redmayne then

flee: The PCs realise Redmayne is defending a grave but flee from the Luskaa; they can escape the Island if they get back to Unspoken Grief before the Luskaa destroys the ship.

The PCs resolve Redmayne's grief

then leave: The PCs could reunite Redmayne with Sheba then leave so long as the Luskaa has not already destroyed their ship.

The PCs light the Lighthouse and

kill the Luskaa: The PCs can then leave on their ship (if it hasn't been destroyed) or search the City for the enchanted boat and leave on that.

Both of 2 and 3 above: The PCs will hopefully resolve Redmayne's plotline and deal with the Luskaa before it destroys the Lighthouse. They might find themselves trapped on the Island if their ships were destroyed and the Lighthouse exploded. If Jago and Trethig survive, they could help the PCs navigate Zanzibar's ship's boat across the open sea.



Commentary

The scenario probably has the PCs disembarking at Rat Bay, fighting then making peace with the Jher-em and following Redmayne's Revenant to Buccaneers Cove, where a trap is waiting for them.

But it doesn't have to go down like that. They could disembark at the Cove just as Redmayne leaves it and get the drop on Trethig and Jago. Or they could get shipwrecked alongside the wreck of Zanzibar.

Ideally, the climax occurs in the Lost City, with the PCs confronting Redmayne and learning the true nature of his 'buried treasure' and then being attacked by the Luskaa.

The optimal plan is to re-light the Lighthouse, allow the beast to injure itself tearing the tower down, then finish it off with the harpoon gun on *Zanzibar's* ship's boat.

If the players move quickly, they will resolve the main plot before Redmayne sends the Luskaa to eat their ship.

The PC motivations table offers a way to promote PCs during the scenario based on the RPG you use (typically, advance a level in a class or skill), ensuring PCs have 'levelled up' before confronting the Luskaa. This is an alternative to tracking experience points during the scenario and allows PCs in a one-shot scenario to advance rapidly in power and resilience while at the same time encouraging roleplaying.

If you want to give this scenario an 'Age of Sail' vibe, equip the PCs (and Trethig and Jago) with matchlock pistols (fire every third round for 2d6 damage) and muskets (fire every fifth round for 3d6 damage) with the requirement that powder be kept dry: each PC gets a horn of powder sufficient for 1d4 shots but it will be ruined in the storm on the second night unless the PCs have found shelter (their ship, the Shrine, the City or Buccaneers Cove).

THE VAMPYR'S WEDDING

This is another scenario that begins *in media res*. The vampyr has abducted the Duchess and her retainers have fought their way to the vampyr's gates to win her back. As the last NPC expires, only the PCs are left to battle on. There is a time pressure to this scenario, since the vampyr intended to make the Duchess his undead bride at sunset. If this occurs, the players have failed (although there is always revenge...).

A vampire sounds like a tough proposition for inexperienced adventurers, but remind the players that this is a *vampyr* (with a Y) and that they are attacking him by day, which should weaken him considerably.



Background

The Margrave of Strigovia, a renowned necromancer, has sought the hand of Dajmira the Duchess of Marusz. Furious at being rejected, he has become a vampyr and vowed she will join him as his undead bride.

The Margrave abducted the Duchess before dawn from her carriage as she travelled to court. The PCs might be her elite honour guard or else loyal courtiers keen to rescue her. They could even be mercenaries, hired to bring her back safely.

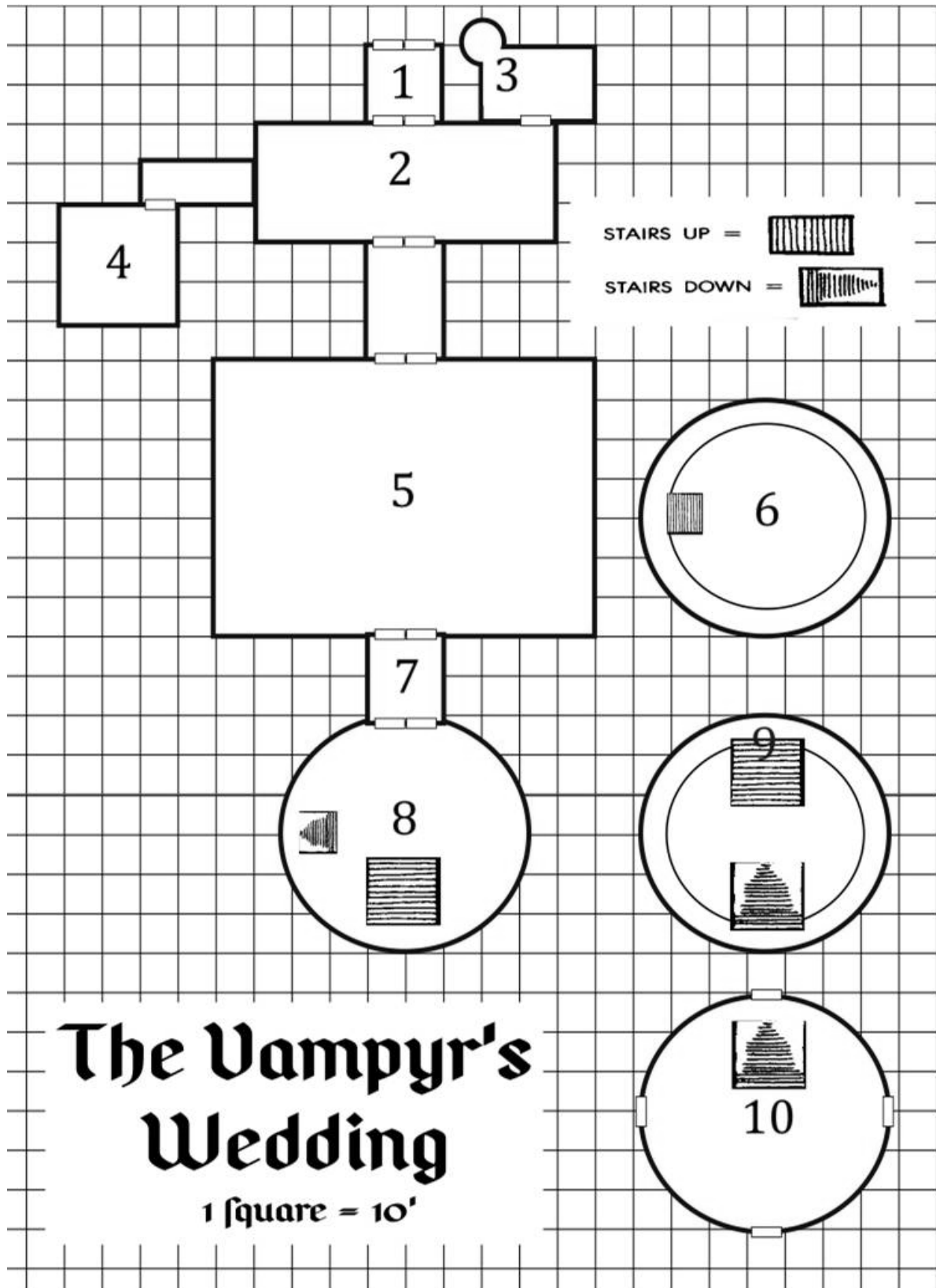
The Margrave's palace is well-known: Castle Carnstein is a nearby fortified tower guarded by his mortal and undead servants. It is assumed that other servants of the Duchess assist in fighting through to the palace gates, but only the PCs remain to complete the mission at the point where the scenario begins.

The Hook

The vampyr Margrave of Strigovia has kidnapped the Duchess from her carriage, slaughtering her royal escort along with her ladies in waiting. He holds the Duchess at his tower and at sunset will consummate their wedding by making her into a vampyr too. Only you can prevent this blasphemous union by storming Castle Carnstein. It is noon and time is running out.

Rumours (1d10)

1. *The Margrave is served by the Stygani, a tribe who are fiercely loyal to his family line. (true)*
2. *The Margrave proposed marriage to the Duchess but was refused for being beneath her station. He turned to vampyrism in his anger and grief. (true)*
3. *Upyrs are vampyrs who can endure the sunlight and are free from the master-vampyr's control. (partially true)*
4. *Ilsa Gellhorn, the Duchess' lady-in-waiting, was also abducted by the Margrave. (true)*
5. *The Margrave does not possess all his undead powers during the daylight hours. (true)*
6. *Anyone who dies in the cursed halls of Carnstein rises again as a vampyr. (false)*
7. *A toadstool that grows in the land of Strigovia contains a cure for vampyrism. (false)*
8. *The Sacred Amulet of Marusz disappeared from the Basilica a month ago; the Margrave stole it for his rituals. (true)*
9. *The Margrave is descended from a line of heroes who used their necromantic powers to fight against the evil undead. (true)*
10. *The Duchess was not really kidnapped: she went willingly with the Margrave because she desires to become a vampyress. (false)*



Referee's Notes

The scenario assumes the PCs are junior members of the Duchess' court: her knights, household guard and friends.

To add opportunities for roleplaying, the GM can assign or randomly roll these backgrounds/motivations:

Rejected suitor: *You too approached the Duchess with an offer of love and were rejected.*

Secret romance: *You have a secret romance with Isla Gellhorn, the lady-in-waiting who disappeared with the Duchess.*

Secret lineage: *You too are descended from the Carnsteins, though you hide it out of shame, now the Margrave has turned to evil.*

Seduced by darkness: *You are obsessed with the immortality of the vampyr and wish to become one yourself.*

Firebrand zealot: *You despise the blasphemy of undeath and wish to exterminate all vampyrs from the world because they are irredeemably evil*

Loyal retainer: *You are of the Duchess' honour guard and burn with shame for having failed her once.*

If there are fewer than 6 players, the GM could assign more than one background to some PCs (e.g. it is possible to be both a rejected suitor and a firebrand zealot) but do not assign any PC two odd or two even numbered backgrounds.

Castle Carnstein

The Castle is vast but ruinous. The PCs arrive at the main gate of the inner keep. They have had to fight their way through the outer battlements; they had a force of soldiers with them but these NPCs are either dead or cut off from them and there is no time to wait for reinforcements.

Assume that any wounds acquired getting this far were treated by a NPC medic immediately prior to the adventure starting, so everyone is on full HP with all their spells.

The players can equip their characters with any adventuring gear they deem needful.

1. The Great Gates

12' high

Castle Carnstein seems to sag under the weight of age and wickedness. Only the Great Tower rises proudly to the noonday sky, but it is surrounded by battlements and courtyards. The Great Gates are imposing but crumble with age: force should break them in. Alas, archers have detected you and fire barbed quarrels from the arrow slits of the gatehouse beside the doors.

It is midday and the sun sets in 7 hours. You have only that time to rescue the Duchess from her foul abductor.

Breaking the gates down is successful if one PC rolls 6 on a d6; two characters can attempt this per round and Strength bonuses apply. The crossbowmen from 3 will fire at characters through the arrow slits, which are 5' above the ground.

Attacked by crossbows

The crossbowmen fire two shots per round, aiming at PCs smashing the doors. These PCs cannot benefit from shields or AC bonuses from Dexterity. Other PCs can try to cover these characters: they can gain shield bonuses but not Dexterity bonuses.

Covering the arrow slits with shields will prevent crossbow fire for one round but the shields will be ruined.

Archers could return fire, but do so at -4 if shooting through the arrow slits.

The corridor beyond has similar gates at the end and more arrow slits, allowing both crossbowmen to continue firing.

2. Guard Room

10' high, lit by lanterns

Tables and chairs are set about for a group of 7 Stygani nomads who serve the Margrave with fanatical loyalty.

Stygani Guards

Fighter, AC 9/7/5/4, 4HP, DEX 11, HD 1, AT scimitar for 1d6

Scimitar, 1d10sp, playing cards or dice and cloves of wild garlic

Readying the guards

They are unarmed and relaxing, but will arm themselves when the PCs start to break down the doors from 1.

If the PCs somehow enter immediately, the guards will be utterly surprised (no armour, waste first round getting weapons).

- If it takes the PCs 1 round to do this, the guards will have their weapons;
- 2 rounds and the guards will be armoured in leather jerkins (AC 7);
- 3 rounds and they will don chainmail (AC 5)
- 4+ rounds and they will have shields (AC -1).

3. Gate House

10' high, lit by narrow windows

Two Stygani guards, Fennix and Leshy, stand sentry at the turret in the corner.

Fennix

Stygani Guard AC7, 4hp, DEX15, HD1, AT 1d6

Leather armour, scimitar, light crossbow, cloves of wild garlic, 9sp

Leshy

Stygani Guard AC7, 4hp, DEX15, HD1, AT 1d6

Leather armour, scimitar, light crossbow, playing cards, holy symbol, 1sp

- Both enjoy Dexterity bonus of +1 to missile attacks

Fennix & Leshy tactics

Armed with crossbows, they will fire on intruders breaking down the doors at 1. If the PCs surprise the guards in 2, these crossbowmen will emerge to fire on the PCs.

Otherwise they will listen to the battle and only join in after 6 rounds and only if the guards have killed a PC. Otherwise, they will hide here and surrender to the PCs.

They are too frightened of the Margrave to venture further into the castle but know there is a female prisoner in 4.

4. Kitchens

10' high, unlit

This room is a kitchen for the Stygani guards and is filthy. A woman sits tied to a wooden chair, gagged. Her clothes are torn and hair disheveled, but she is dressed in finery. She pleads to you with her wide eyes for rescue

This is Ilsa Gellhorn, the Duchess' lady-in-waiting.

Ilsa Gellhorn

Courtier AC 9, 2hp, DEX 13, HD 1, AT, nails for 1 or bite for 1d3

- Dexterity bonus of +1 to missile attacks

She has been stripped of her valuable jewellery and has a vampyr bite on her neck

What Ilsa knows

She bears a vampyr's bite and has been told that she will become undead once the sun sets. She is desperate to prevent this and believes that she will be spared an undead fate if the Margrave dies before the sun sets; as such, she will beg to accompany her rescuers.

Ilsa has no combat skills but is brave and resourceful, if a little bit silly and reckless. Her vampyric infection makes her immune to poison (e.g. the toadstools in 5) and enables her to bite in combat and regain 1HP if she inflicts damage on living targets this way.

Ilsa's love life

A PC with the "secret romance" background gains a **promotion** if Ilsa is rescued.

A PC with the "firebrand zealot" background gains a **promotion** if they successfully persuade the party to execute Ilsa as a vampyr fiend.

The Vampyr's Wedding

Ilsa will conceive a romantic attraction to one PC – not necessarily her former lover, if someone else is the first to speak kindly to her. She demonstrate this by staying close to this PC, trying to hold their hand, asking if they are married and showing excessive concern they are not harmed

5. The Cemetery

Open to the sky

This gloomy courtyard is open to the afternoon sky and lies in the shadow of the Margrave's Tower. Solemn yew trees ring the centre of the cemetery where many graves have been opened – sometimes from within. It is madly overgrown with weeds and bulbous toadstools. There are unburied corpses: the Duchess' unlucky guards and other doomed adventurers.



Searching the corpses will find these useful treasures (roll **1d6**, rolling a duplicate means finding nothing):

1. A **brooch of floating** (useable once per day, allows levitation for 1d10 minutes)
2. A **magic sword +1, +2 vs undead**
3. A **torch that combusts upon command**, causes 1d4 damage in combat, 2d4 vs undead
4. A **key of opening** (opens any non-magical lock, usable once per day)
5. A **holy symbol** that grants the bearer immunity from vampyric infection and undead powers (paralysis, level drain, hypnosis, etc); Ilsa Gellhorn (4) can identify this as **the sacred amulet of Marusz**
6. A **potion of healing** (2 doses, heals 1d6+1hp per dose)

Toxic toadstools

The fumes from the toadstools are a sleeping gas. PCs who search for treasures will succumb as soon as they find something (no saving throw); other PCs who directly cross the courtyard may Save vs Poison at -2 to resist the fumes.

No amount of slapping/shaking will awaken sleeping characters – they will recover slowly if dragged from the cemetery.

Remember that Ilsa Gellhorn (4) is immune to the toadstools.

6. Pit of the Vampyrs

30' high, lit by a single lantern overhead

PCs who succumb to the toadstools in 5 or the trap in 7 wake up here hours later.

You regain consciousness in a dark pit. There is a faint light high overhead that reveals the bodies strewn around you. Corpses? No, they start to move; their eyes gleam with a feral light; their teeth are razor fangs. You reach for your weapons but they are gone. Around you, the fetid cadavers crawl closer, thirsting for your blood.

The PCs have stripped of weapons and drained to 1HP by hungry but decayed vampyrs in the pit: withered men and women, some only children, all mindless with hunger and only able to nibble a small amount of blood at a time. They can be shaken off and kept at bay with weapons for 2d6 minutes (or 1d6+6 using torches), but when they finally attack it will be in overwhelming numbers.

The pit is surrounded by a walkway, 10' overhead, and a staircase rises from the walkway and through the ceiling.

There are four ways for PCs to escape:

If they rescued Ilsa (4) then she was not put in the Pit because she passed herself off as a vampyr serving the Margrave:

"Hello, friends, do not despair!"

*A rope drops down from the walkway overhead.
Ilsa Gellhorn's pale face looks down at you,
delighted with her own cleverness.*

*"It seems I am now your rescuer. Make haste. The
day passes. Do you want to end up like those
creatures?"*

If they spared either Fennix or Leshy (3), the grateful Stygani will come to the PCs' rescue (but will not accompany them further):

"Ho, down there!"

*The light brightens and you see a Stygani face
peering down at you.*

*"Friendly hands wash each other and the Stygani
forget no debts."*

A rope drops down beside you.

If they found the feather brooch in 5, one PC can float up to the walkway and drop a rope for the others.

Thieves might be able to climb out of the pit and Magic-Users might have spells allowing flight; if one character can hold off the vampyrs (or one using a torch), the others could stand on shoulders to reach the ledge

The PCs' weapons can be found piled up on the walkway.

PC Vampyrs

Ask the PCs to volunteer themselves by writing infected or non-infected on a slip of paper and revealing simultaneously (if no one writes infected then ALL the PCs have been infected with vampirism).

A PC with the "seduced by darkness" background gains a **promotion** they become a vampyr.

A PC with the "firebrand zealot" background gains a **promotion** if refuse to become a vampyr themselves and they did not gain one earlier (4).

Vampyr PCs can bite in combat for 1d3 damage and regain 1HP for each successful bite attack on a living target; they can regain 1d4 HP by feeding from targets that die in combat. They cannot benefit from healing magic or be affected by poison.

7. The Gates to Carnstein Tower

12' high, unlit

Climbing the Tower

If enterprising PCs decide to climb the Tower rather than use the doors, they will be shot at by archers from elsewhere in the Castle: a climber takes 1d6-3 damage from arrows each round, +1 per subsequent round, no chance to dodge. Allow a climber to drop down safely when they realise it is too dangerous to continue.

*These doors are stiff and rusty but not locked.
Above the inner door is the Margrave's family
crest (a book and a chalice on either side of a two-
headed eagle) and his family motto:*

*'Learning the Arts of Darkness
To Defeat the Servants of Darkness.'*

Once someone tries to open the inner doors, a pit trap in on the floor drops everyone in the hallway down a chute and into the Pit of Vampyrs (6), inflicting no damage (cushioned by landing on bones and corpses) but leaving them stunned while the vampyrs nibble on them..

Captured PCs

Imprisonment in the Pit of Vampyrs is supposed to be unavoidable: if PCs do not succumb to the toxic toadstools in the cemetery they will fall through the pit in the hallway.

The hallway pit trap is very well-disguised. GMs are within rights to rule that any attempt to detect the trap fails – or identifies only that the door is trapped, not the floor.

If lone PCs somehow evade capture, they can arrive as rescuers (perhaps with Ilsa or the Stygani) in room 6.

8. The Tower – Ground Floor

10' high, lit by lanterns

A stairwell descends to the Pit (6) and a staircase rises to the balcony (9). There are 8 Stygani guards here in the same state of unreadiness as room 2:

Stygani Guards

Fighter AC 9/7/5/4, 4hp, DEX 11, HD 1, AT scimitar for 1d6

Mail, shield, scimitar, 1d10sp, playing cards or dice, garlic

Wild garlic

Vampyr PCs find the garlic revolting and must save vs Poison in order to make a bite attack against someone wearing it.

Paintings on the wall depict the Margrave's ancestors, including his great-great-grandfather Vaclav the Great who slew the Spectre of Strigovia.

PCs with a knowledge of history (or 15+ Intelligence) will understand that the Margraves of Strigovia originally took up necromancy to defeat the undead, not join them.

Secret lineage

A PC with the "secret lineage" background gains a promotion as they take inspiration from their ancestor.

9. The Tower - Balcony

12' high

This circular balcony overlooks the floor below. Casement windows offer views of the evening sky. Evening? Yes, the sun is setting in the west. There are footsteps on the stairs above as two of the Margrave's lieutenants descend from the upper storey: a pair of feral ghouls, one armed with a Strigovian war-scythe.

The PCs spent a long time unconscious in the Pit of Vampyrs. There are now only minutes until sunset. The Margrave's two lieutenants guard the staircase that rises to the top of the tower. They are tough undead upyrs (intelligent undead who can move around in the sunlight) named Radu and Mircea.

Radu

Upyr AC 6, 8hp, DEX 10, 2HD, AT 2 claws for 1d6 each and bite for 1d3

- The upyr's bite (only) paralyses victims for 2d6 rounds if they fail to save vs Touch

Mircea

Upyr AC 6, 10hp, DEX 10, 2HD, AT war scythe for 1d6

- The scythe can attack every other melee round but roll twice for damage and pick the higher roll



The windows

The windows are securely locked and breaking the glass won't create a space large enough to get through. The locks can be picked (or opened with the magic key from 5) allowing a PC to climb onto the outside of the tower and reach the upper storey.

10. The Tower – Upper Floor

12' high

This room has a staircase that descends to the balcony (9).

This room has large windows in the north, east and south walls that are open to the evening sky. The west windows are closed and covered by a heavy drape.

Beside the west window, the Margrave stands in his sable finery besides the Duchess, who seems glassy-eyed with enchantment. A demonic figure stands between them, wreathed in sulphur, pronouncing the marriage rites.

Rejected suitor

A PC with the “rejected suitor” background gains a **promotion** when they see the Duchess about to be wedded to the fiendish Margrave.

The minister is a robed demonic figure conjured from the Netherworld that will not intervene in any battle. The Margrave will attack anyone who interrupts his wedding.

The Vampyr Margrave

Vampyr AC 2, 33hp, DEX 14, 7HD, AT claw or bite for 1d10

- The vampyr regains 1HP every time he deals damage to a living creature
- He can summon/control wolves or bats
- He has no other powers during daylight and suffers -2 to hit targets protected by wild garlic

Vampyr tactics: by day

The Margrave attacks non-vampyrs in the group if possible. He can summon a swarm of bats from the rafters to paralyse anyone who tries to tear down the drapes or lead away the Duchess and he cannot also attack while doing this.

The sun sets after 6 rounds – but deduct one round from this for each PC that had to be nursed back to mobility after being paralysed by the upyrs downstairs.

The glow around the drapes fades. With a cry of triumph, the Margrave flies to the window and tears away the curtain, revealing the ruddy glow of dusk on the western horizon. He takes the Duchess in his arms and bites her, draining the blood from her body.

The vampyr has his full powers now.

- Magical weapons are needed to wound him but the bites of infected vampyrs will harm him too
- He drains 2 levels with a successful attack, instantly killing 1st or 2nd level characters with one and killing 3rd level characters with two
- He regenerates 3HP at the start of each turn and loses his sensitivity to garlic

Vampyr tactics: by night

The Margrave spends one full round draining the Duchess (and he regains 3HP). He then spends a second round embracing her (and regains another 3HP).

On the third round, she rises as an upyr under his control and joins him in battle.

The Upyr Duchess

Upyr, AC 6, 7hp, DEX 10, 2HD, AT 2 claws for 1d6 each and bite for 1d3

- The upyr’s bite (only) paralyses victims for 2d6 rounds if they fail to save vs Touch

Heartbreak and despair

A PC with the “loyal retainer” or “rejected suitor” background is paralysed with grief for 1d3 rounds when the Duchess dies and suffers -2 to hit in combat against her.

The PCs have several options during this battle:

- **Fight the Margrave** and defeat him in the time available
- **Stake the Margrave** through the heart: requires a natural 20 in combat or successful backstabbing and paralyses him for 1d4 rounds.

The Vampyr's Wedding

- **Burn the drapes:** this is difficult because the bats paralyse anyone approaching the drapes, but a fiery missile or spell could set them alight: it takes 1d4 rounds for them to burn away and let the sunlight through.
- **Appeal to the Margrave's honour** by citing his family motto or the reputation of his ancestor Vaclav; if this is done well, the Margrave is paralysed with self-loathing for 1d4 rounds
- **Kill the Duchess:** the heartbroken Margrave will be paralysed with grief for 1d4 rounds

Loyal retainer

A PC with the "loyal retainer" background gains a **promotion** if they intervene (or argue) to prevent killing the Duchess.

Tear down the curtains from outside: PCs with the Climb skill or bearers of the Brooch of Floating (5) could leave by a window (they're not locked upstairs), move round the outside of the tower (takes 1d3 rounds) and enter through the west window, avoiding the bats.

Vampyr tactics: by night

If the Margrave is paralysed for any reason, a PC can tear down the drape and, if this is done in time, the sunlight floods in and transfixes the Margrave, dealing 10HP damage to him immediately and on each subsequent round of daylight.

If you want added roleplaying, incorporate these developments:

Dark entreaty: on the first round of combat, the Margrave does not attack but appeals to vampyric PCs to join him:

"I see you have tasted my power," the Margrave purrs, fixing you with a bold eye. "Drink deeper. I offer sovereignty over the night, mastery over the beasts, freedom and dark wisdom. Join me," he cries then takes in your companions with a sweep of his hand, "and destroy these fools."

The seduction of darkness

A Vampyr PC with the "secret lineage" or any PC with "seduced by darkness" background is paralysed with indecision for 1d3 rounds.

The lady turns: if Ilsa (4) is present, she becomes a vampyric upyr after 1d4 rounds of combat and fights alongside the Margrave:

The Upyr Ilsa

Upyr, AC 6, 6hp, DEX 13, 2HD, AT 2 claws for 1d6 each and bite for 1d3

- The upyr's bite (only) paralyzes victims for 2d6 rounds if they fail to save vs Touch

If Ilsa was equipped with a weapon, she continues to use it rather than her claws and bite

More heartbreak and despair

A PC with the "secret romance" background is paralysed with grief for 1d3 rounds and suffers -2 to hit in combat with upyr-Ilsa.

If Ilsa's object of affection is present and pleads for her loyalty (or she witnesses them be killed by the Margrave), Ilsa will break free of the Margrave's control for 1d4 rounds.

Hell shall judge them: PCs who disengage from combat can appeal to the silent demon minister to halt the wedding.

Negotiating with Hell

The demon minister could break the enchantment on the Duchess and set her free, but the PC would have to offer something more horrible than what's going to happen anyway (the Margrave turning her into a vampyr and killing everyone).

If the PC makes a gruesome offer in keeping with their background/motivation, the GM should allow this outcome:

The minister vanishes with a thunderclap and the Duchess awakes from her trance, taking in her surroundings with swift horror. Decisive to the very last, she turns to the window and leaps through it, plummeting from the tower and tearing the drapes down after her. Sunlight smashes into the room, transfixing the Margrave who reaches after his bride-to-be, but too late to recall her from a sweeter death than the eternal damnation.

The Epilogue

As usual, many outcomes are possible:

The PCs all die: It's a shame, but it happens. If the Margrave is still standing when the sun sets, he becomes almost unstoppable for beginning characters, even if they've enjoyed promotions along the way.

The PCs overwhelm the Margrave and rescue the Duchess: It could happen, especially if no one was paralysed downstairs and PCs aren't paralysed with grief or indecision for too long. Maybe they landed a lucky stake! The rejected suitor gets to marry the Duchess and everyone lives happily after.

The PCs succeed by a cunning stratagem: Maybe someone climbs the Tower and pulls down the drapes. Or sacrifices themselves by jumping through the window!

The PCs succeed but the Duchess dies: Perhaps she sacrificed herself as part of the deal with Hell or perhaps she was killed by the Margrave and her upyr form had to be destroyed by the PCs after they (somehow) finished off the Margrave himself. The PCs will be guests of honour at a massive state funeral.

What about vampyr PCs?: Should non-infected PCs execute their infected comrades? Or let them go free, in the knowledge they will soon turn fully undead?

What about Ilsa?: Perhaps the PCs had to destroy the upyr-Ilsa but maybe she survives – the PCs never brought her to the final showdown, they destroyed the Margrave before she turned or she turned but was redeemed by love. Should the survivors execute the infected Ilsa or let her go out of mercy and gratitude?

Commentary

This is a straightforward "Hammer Horror" scenario (congratulations for spotting the 'Carnstein' reference) that's very linear, but that's the price you pay for creating a clear narrative structure in something this short.

Structurally, this is a two-step scenario. The first act is a fight-and-explore dungeon with some nice magic items and possible allies to discover. Then the PCs end up trapped, must escape and it becomes a race against time. If the PCs choose to become vampyrs then they can feed from the Stygani guards in 8.

The Margrave is a tough opponent and if the sun sets he will overwhelm the PCs easily. The trick is to open the drapes. Potentially, PCs could unlock the casement windows in 9, climb up the outside of the tower and tear down the drapes from the outside, giving them six whole rounds of sunlight to attack the helpless, burning Margrave.

That's optimal. If the PCs rush up the stairs, they have a difficult fight and anyone approaching the drapes gets driven back by bats. PC options are listed in room 10 but the players might come up with others, such as sacrificing themselves by leaping out of the window, taking the Margrave with them. Even once transfixed by sunlight, the Margrave doesn't automatically die and if the sun sets while he's still burning, he becomes a fully empowered vampyr with all his powers. Watch out, after that!

The scenario is designed to offer the players ideas and allies in the first act that they can use in the second. Hopefully, the sunset showdown can be an occasion for dramatic roleplaying as well as dice-rolling.

As with the previous scenario, there are opportunities for promotion during the adventure instead of tracking experience points. 'Promoting' a character means advancing them to the next level in their class or skills.

Promoted characters stand a better chance against the Margrave in the climax and linking this to background/motivations rewards roleplay:

Will the secret Carnstein heir reveal his lineage?

Will the wannabe-vampyr betray her comrades?

What sort of love triangle appears around Ilsa?

Or will the firebrand zealot put her to the stake?

BURY MY TUSKS AT BROKEN JAW

This scenario was well-received on the blog and requires little updating. It's an epic hero-quest in miniature with a few twists. The heroes are all Goblins, long ago conquered by imperialist Elves and confined to reservations. Before the scenario begins, a Goblin Chief and his or her comrades (the PCs) have been evicted from their home and their kinfolk rounded up as slaves. The PCs embark on a mission to bring vengeance on their oppressors but, along the way, rediscover their heritage and heroism.

There are lots of House Rules out there for playing Goblins as PCs in Fantasy RPGs. I favour a version on **Ryan Marsh's** THACORPG blog:

<https://thac0rpg.blogspot.com/2019/12/new-race-as-class-goblin.html>



Background

The goblin kingdom was overthrown by the invading Elves of the Pale Empire ('Foam', as the goblins call them, for their pale skin). After the death of the last Goblin rajjor (king) San Rankill, Goblins were sent to live in Munaan (reservations). One such as Broken Jaw, deep in the swampy Watching Glades. Now the Elves have arrived to evict the goblin chief (Keth) and his sworn-companions, herding the tribe into a stockade where they will be deported to the slave markets.

The Hook

The Elves came in the night on their silent ship to Broken Jaw. Your cousin Botang brought you warning and you escaped the Munan (reservation) on canoes while he sacrificed himself fighting off the Bleach (Elves) and their Mudface (Human) henchmen. Many of your companions died in the Swamp of Ghosts but dawn finds you camped in the Old Boneyard, warming yourself round a feeble fire, while you plot your revenge.

Rumours (1d6±1)

Add +1 for PCs with 15+ Wisdom
Deduct -1 for 6- Wisdom

0. *The Boneyard is a cemetery for the ancient inhabitants of the Glades and is cursed (false)*
1. *The Goblin Greenseer of the Ghost Swamps is a lunatic and a cannibal who consorts with floating-head Penanggouls and other ghosts (false)*
2. *The Ghost Swamps are haunted by floating-head Penanggouls and Cockatrices that turn you to salt with their bite (true)*
3. *Long ago, when San Rankill was king, a causeway allowed travellers to cross the Ghost Swamps in safety but no one knows its location now (true)*
4. *The Boneyard was a place of sanctuary where San Rankill, the last Goblin king, hid weapons to fight the Elvish oppressors (true)*
5. *Bomoch is a wise Goblin Greenseer who lives in the Swamp of Ghosts and knows the secret routes to travel (true)*
6. *A powerful spirit dwells in the Emerald Labyrinth, offering blessings to some and hideous death to others (partially true)*

Referee's Notes

One of the PCs is the **Keth** (chieftain, male or female) of the goblin reservation of Broken Jaw.

The scenario involves his or her attempt to recapture their island home and expel the imperial Elves and their Human mercenaries.

Optionally, allow one PC to be a grizzled Hobgoblin sergeant who trained the young **Keth** in arms. Another PC could be a Bugbear, an old family retainer.

Goblin: 1d6 for Hit Dice, hiding outdoors 90%, hide in dungeons 2 in 6, +1 to hit when ganging up, +2 to saves vs Poison, infravision, saving throws as Thieves, only small weapons.

Bugbear: 1d8 for Hit Dice, hiding outdoors 90%, hide in dungeons 2 in 6, +1 damage, +1 Hit Point per Hit Dice, backstab as Thieves, infravision, saving throws as Fighters.

Hobgoblin: 1d8 for Hit Dice, only surprised 1 in 6, detect pits & secret doors 2 in 6, add +1 to Shield AC for self and allies to either side (non-cumulative), infravision, saving throws as Fighters.

Goblin Shaman: 1d6 for Hit Dice, hiding outdoors 90%, hide in dungeons 2 in 6, +2 to saves vs Poison, infravision, cast spells as Cleric, saving throws as Clerics, only small weapons.

NPC Loved Ones

In addition, each character has left behind a loved one who is now a prisoner of the Elves:

1. Husband, wife or lover
2. Brother or sister
3. Parent
4. Grandparent
5. Child
6. Best friend

Here are some suggested names for NPC Goblins in this setting:

Male: Bambang, Bujang, Chik, Guntur, Jalak, Panjang, Solung, Tenok

Female: Azur, Bung, Dayang, Kahava, Kasih, Masuri, Megat, Teratay

Broken Jaw Reservation

The PCs begin the story having fled in the night and lost many companions to the dangers of the Swamp of Ghosts. They are gathered at the Boneyard, armed only with leather armour and their **krists** (daggers that deal 1d6 damage) and no supplies.

Dawn approaches. Beyond the Old Boneyard, the land drops into the Swamp of Ghosts, its horrors hidden by mists. Further off is Lake Lambanggan and the island that was your home, Broken Jaw. Faithful Botang met his death out there, fighting off the cursed Bleach (Elves).

Away to the east, untouched by sunlight, is the steaming jungle known as the Emerald Labyrinth.

1. The Old Boneyard

Dawn

The PCs can share their Rumours and strategies before setting off into the Swamp of Ghosts. If the players think to search the old graves, they will find caches of ancient weapons; roll 1d6 for each PC (add +1 if Intelligence 15+):

1. A **bow and dozen barbed arrows** that deal +1 damage (reusable only if they hit)
2. A **pot of poison paste** usable on 1d6 edged weapons if applied before the start of one fight; opponents who are hit must Save vs Poison or take 1d6 damage
3. A **long hunting spear** that always wins initiative and adds +1 to the user's AC due to range
4. A horn and teak **compound bow** that adds +1 to hit and +1 damage, plus a dozen arrows
5. A **throwing axe**; if thrown it will stun for 1d4 rounds an enemy it hits if they fail a Save vs Wand
6. A suit of goblin-sized **chain mail**
7. A **scimitar** that adds +1 to hit and causes enemies hit by it to lose 1d4 HP on the following round from blood loss

Which way next?

The Player Map invites the party to go to the Greenseer's Hut (2) but they can also strike out blindly into the Swamp of Ghosts (5).

2. The Greenseer's Hut

Mid-morning

Bomoch the Greenseer lives in a squalid hut of leather tents and woven reeds. All around the hut dead weasels hang from lines and Bomoch keeps many weasels in cages (to keep away Cockatrices, of course). He is a wild-eyed, cackling maniac but he has been expecting the PCs.



"I have been waiting for you, my Keth, waiting all your life. Do not fear the Swamp of Ghosts, for I know of an ancient causeway. Cleave to it and turn not aside, no, neither to the left nor the right. Pay no heed to the voices of loved ones calling from the dank waters: it is the tricks of the Penanggouls who wish to feast on you. Shun the Cockatrices with their feathers and scales, for they turn to salt those they bite."

Bomoch will not expand on this, saying only that the **Keth's** destiny is to cross the Swamp of Ghosts and confront his foes, but there is a more important quest:

"The Jade Queen is waiting for you inside the Emerald Labyrinth. Follow the trail to the old totem post. Taste the fungus that grows on the trees there. Do not fear."

Bomoch offers omens to the other PCs, roll 1d6 for each (+1 if Charisma is above average)

1. *You will die horribly and your severed head will float across the Ghost Swamps with the other Penanggouls*
2. *Someone you love is in peril and only you can save them*
3. *Someone close to you will betray you, indeed, has betrayed you already*
4. *San Rankill is dead but a terrible evil sits on his throne*
5. *Time is slipping away and your kinfolk will be slaves unless you act fast*
6. *You have forgotten your heritage; a great destiny awaits those of the lineage of San Rankill*
7. *The hut of your forefathers is ruined but not empty; a terrible foe and a mighty ally wait for you there.*

Which way next?

Bomoch urges the party to go to the Emerald Labyrinth (3) but they can instead find the causeway through the Swamp of Ghosts (5).

3. The Emerald Labyrinth

Noon

The trail ends before the wall of dense forest. A sinister totem pole carved with faces, known as a klireng to the Goblin-folk, leans across the path. A dark green fungus covers the roots of the nearby trees.

If the PCs consume the fungus growing on the trunks of nearby trees, they will experience a vision.

Bury My Tusks at Broken Jaw

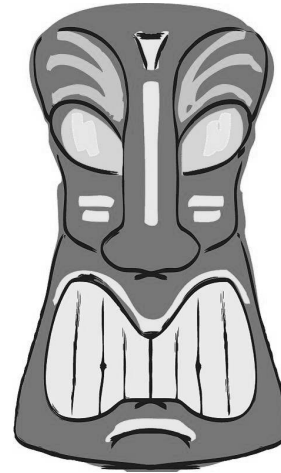
It seems to you that there is a path through the forest where once there was a wall of trees. It is lightless because of the canopy of branches overhead and stifling in the noonday heat. Your feet guide you forwards, into the Emerald Labyrinth.

The GM should add haunting and scary details to the journey or roll/choose for each character:

1. *Desperate screams come from deeper in the forest: a loved one in pain and calling for help.* PCs who leave the trail disappear from the vision and awake with everyone else at the end.
2. *Stealthy footfalls reveal the PC is being followed. Looking back reveals suspicious movement back down the trail.* PCs who go back to investigate disappear as above.
3. The PC is caught in quicksand. Other characters must help them out: 20 combined Strength points are needed but each helper must Save vs Breath Weapon or be caught in quicksand too. Trapped characters sink in 1d4 rounds, disappearing from the vision as above.
4. *Terrifying roars from ahead and crashing footfalls getting closer.* PCs who stand their ground are buffeted by a powerful wind but unharmed; those who try to hide disappear from the vision.
5. *A forest animal leaps to the attack:* 2, bites for 1d6 or 2 claws for 1d3 each, AC as leather armour. The creature attacks one PC for 1d4 rounds then disappears into the forest. If the PC 'dies' they disappear from the vision.
6. Spiders drop onto the PC's back: there are 2d4 spiders, each the size of a fist, and they need to be calmly brushed off. Each PC can brush off one spider per round but the affected PC must Save vs Wand at the end of each round to avoid panicking. If the PC panics, the spiders bite and the PC 'dies' (disappears from the vision).

Halfway through the journey, the PCs arrive at another **klireng** pole.

At a curve in the trail, another klireng lurks in the shadows, grinning. Around its base, previous travelers have left offerings of their weapons: bows and arrows, swords and spears.



The PCs may leave their own weapons here or help themselves (let them choose any number of bows, arrows, short swords and spears).

If everyone fails the tests

PCs will awaken back outside the forest at the end of the trail with all their Hit Points restored, no spells wasted and their possessions intact. It is late afternoon and there is no sign of a route into the Emerald Labyrinth.

4. The Jade Queen's Bower

Dream Time

The vision concludes in a clearing in the heart of the Labyrinth, watched over by a final brooding klireng pole.

If the PCs are still carrying weapons:

Shadowy figures await you in the Jade Queen's Bower. They are faceless but they wear your clothes and carry your weapons, which they draw against you now as they rush to attack.

Passing the Shadow Challenge

PCs with weapons must fight a shadow-duplicate of themselves (same HP, AC, to hit, damage, etc). No one else can assist or intervene. Winners pass their challenge, losers fail: either way, they awake outside the forest with no Hit Points lost or weapons/spells expended. Winners are promoted, gaining a level in their class or skill.

PCs who abandoned their weapons are greeted by the voice of the Jade Queen.

"Welcome to my power, children of San Rankill. Dooms I pronounce, destiny I bestow, listen..."

She offers a challenge to each PC (roll **1d6**; if the **Keth** rolls 6, treat it as 5):

1. *Make an offering of your right eye to the forest.* The PC suffers -2 with missile attacks
2. *Make an offering of your left hand to the forest.* The PC cannot use a shield or string a bow or fight two-handed.
3. *Make an offering of your beauty to the forest.* The PC must scarify themselves, losing 2 points of Charisma
4. *Make an offering of your loved one to the forest.* The PC must nominate a loved NPC (see **6**) to sacrifice.
5. *Make an offering of your dear friend to the forest.* The PC must vow to kill the next person who greets them as a friend.
6. *Make an offering of your life to the forest.* The PC must kill themselves.

Passing the Jade Queen's Challenge

Players can be inventive so the GM must adjudicate if the PC fulfils the spirit of the Jade Queen's Challenge: either way, they awake outside the forest with no Hit Points lost or weapons/spells expended. Those who undertook the Challenge are promoted, gaining a level in their class or skill.

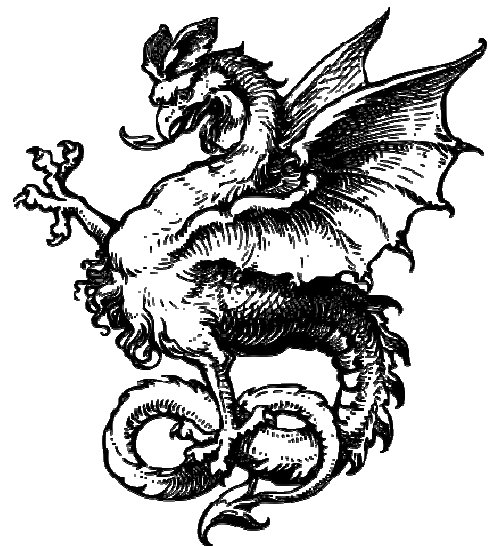
See the **Appendix A** for the implications of the Jade Queen's Challenges.

5. Causeway through the Swamp of Ghosts

Noon or Nightfall

If the PCs did not visit Bomoch (**2**), they will not find the causeway. They will wander for hours in the swamp and find themselves stalked by Cockatrices.

Bomoch will arrive to save them at noon, carrying a weasel in a cage to frighten the Cockatrices away. He will guide them to the safe causeway and accompany them to the Slave Stockade (**6**) at nightfall. In this case, Bomoch will offer his puzzling omens (see **2**) but will not tell PCs about the Jade Queen's quest (**3/4**).



Cockatrices?

The Swamp of Ghosts is littered with lumpen statues of people turned to pillars of salt by the bites of Cockatrices. These creatures are rarely seen, since they hide in the fog, but their bloodcurdling screeches are often heard; when they approach, they fall silent, except for the distinctive rattle of their scales. Goblins dread these monsters but shamans know that Cockatrices flee from weasels!

It is not intended that PCs in this adventure fight Cockatrices – they are here for atmosphere and tension, not combat – but their statistics are in **Appendix B**.

If the PCs took Bomoch's advice, they can find the causeway, lined with salt pillars (petrified victims of the Cockatrices). If the PCs visited the Emerald Labyrinth (3/4) it will be dusk and they will be taunted by Penanggouls, floating heads that call to them with the voices of their loved ones.

Penanggouls?

The Swamp of Ghosts is haunted by gruesome undead monsters that take the form of floating heads of Goblins (or, worse, Elves) that trail their internal organs behind them. They lure travelers into bogs by imitating the voices of allies and family, then drain the victim's blood.

It is not intended that PCs in this adventure fight Penanggouls – they are here for atmosphere – but their statistics are in **Appendix B**.

Half way through the swamp, there is a high mound marked by a totem pole. At night, a scouting party of 10 Human Scouts is camped here; they are servants of the Elves.

Mudface (Human) Scouts

Scout AC 6, 3hp, DEX 10, HD 1, AT sword or javelin for 1d6

Leather armour, shield or torch or weasel, sword, javelins (3)

The humans carry torches (two amongst the ten) and the torchbearers cannot use their shields

- One human carries a weasel in a cage instead of a shield

If the PCs eavesdrop on the Humans they might learn things (roll 1d6 for each):

1. The Elves have sent scouts into the Swamps to find the Goblin **Keth**, who is not among the Goblin prisoners
2. A traitor has advised the Elves how to recognise the **Keth** and his or her companions
3. The Elves imprisoned the Goblins in a stockade beside the Watching Glades and intend to deport them to the slave markets in the morning.

4. Everyone dreads the Watching Glades and feel that something terrible is spying on them from the jungle.
5. The Humans carry a weasel in a cage to keep Cockatrices at bay and believe the **klireng** (totem pole) wards away ghosts. A Goblin advised them about this.
6. The scouts dare not go further into the Swamps; they intend to camp here till dawn then return empty-handed.

Dealing with Humans

Goblins will easily sneak past the scouts by night, but they might want to have fun first. Reward players for staging guerrilla attacks on the scouts or who connive to lure them into battle with the Penanggalans. Remember that the humans lack infravision to see in darkness.

6. Assault on the Stockade

Dusk or Midnight

The Goblins used this area as a timber yard for valuable hardwoods felled in the Watching Glades. Now the Elves have imprisoned the Goblin tribe here and set their Human soldiers to watch over them.

The timber yard has been converted into a prison for the Goblin tribe who have been stripped and now sit about in the mud with their hands over their faces, a gesture of submission. Mudfaces (humans) guard the bridge and man the watchtower, with more standing guard over the prisoners, armed with swords and javelins.

What time is it?

If the PCs visited the Jade Queen (4), they will arrive here in the middle of the night and the Human scouts have been sent into the swamp: halve the numbers of guards.

If the PCs came directly here, it will be sunset, the guards are all here but the PCs have Bomoch with them and he can summon a mist from the swamps to cover this area, so there will be darkness.

There are 20 Humans: 4 guarding the bridge and 4 in the watchtower and another 12 standing guard over the prisoners (halve these numbers at night).

Mudface (Human) Guards

Guard, AC 6, 3hp, DEX 10, HD 1, AT sword or javelin for 1d6

Leather armour, shield, sword, javelins (3)

Assaulting the stockade

Reward any sensible plan to pick off the guards under cover of night or fog – Goblins have excellent stealth abilities for this sort of thing. Bomoch (if present) will not assist beyond creating the fog. Each PC has a loved one to free, so the GM should structure the assault around each player rescuing a significant NPC (although at least one is missing, see below): the remaining guards flee when this is completed.

Across the lake stands your home, the little island of Broken Jaw. A sleek Elven warship lies moored at the island's jetty, lit up with bright lanterns. The Elves on board are celebrating. The island is dark except for a light burning inside the Keth's hut – someone is there tonight, the new ruler of Broken Jaw.

There are two rowboats here that could be used to cross the lake to Broken Jaw Island under cover of night. The freed prisoners make a force of 20 potential combatants; if Bomoch is here he will offer to lead them in an assault on the Elfin ship while the PCs reclaim the island (10).

However, prisoners are missing **including at least one of the NPC loved ones**. There are witnesses to what happened:

"It came at night," one of the Goblins tells you. "It is a demon out of our old tales, the Dreamer in the Dark. It took your loved one in its sharp claws. The Mudfaces fled from it! It flew away to the east, through the Watching Glades. Tonight, it will feed on its prisoners."

The stockade contains a supply of limes (to feed the prisoners). There is a weasel in a cage, a set of torches and tinder, a dozen javelins and a Potion of Healing.

Where to now?

It is not intended that the PCs assault the Elfin warship – leave that to the NPCs. The PCs must either head over to the island to claim back their home (10) or hike along the trail eastwards to rescue the prisoners from the Dreamer in the Dark (7).

7. Through the Watching Glades

Night

If the PCs choose to go in pursuit of the kidnapped prisoners, Bomoch (if he has come this far) will not accompany them. It will be night time and the jungle trail is treacherous.

Roll **1d6** for each PC to find out what happens on the journey:

Irony

Optionally, don't roll a random event: choose the event that matches the encounter the PC experienced in the Emerald Labyrinth (3).

1. **Desperate screams come from deeper in the forest:** a loved one in pain and calling for help. PCs who leave the trail find nothing but must save vs Breath Weapon or take 1d6 damage from a fall into a pit
2. **Stealthy footfalls suggest a pursuer.** PCs who go back will be attacked by the Jembalang's avatar (see 8).
3. **The PC is caught in quicksand.** Other characters must help them out: 20 combined Strength points are needed but each helper must Save vs Breath Weapon or be caught in quicksand too. Characters sink in 1d4 rounds.
4. **Terrifying roars from ahead and crashing footfalls getting closer.** PCs who stand their ground see the Jembalang's avatar rush at them, but it fades away just as it is about to strike.
5. **A forest animal leaps to the attack:** AC 7. 7hp, DEX 14, 2HD, AT bite for 1d6 or 2 claws for 1d3 each. The creature attacks one PC for 1d4 rounds then disappears into the forest.

At the other side of the jungle, stepping stones cross the river and the ruins of the Old Kings sparkle in the moonlight.

6. When the PCs reach the stepping stones, one must make a Saving Throw vs Wands or slip, falling into the river. The PC climbs ashore at 9 and is not present for the encounter at 8.

8. The Ruins of the Old Kings

Midnight or Pre-dawn

What time is it?

If the PCs visited the Jade Queen (4), it will be nearly dawn when they get here. If they wandered in the Swamps instead, it will be midnight.

The jungle has reclaimed much of this grand palace. Who were the Rajjors, the Old Kings that raised such great halls? Their statues are here and it amazes you to discover that they were goblins like yourself. Surely this was the Hall of San Rankill, the last Rajjor! Surely that statue is San Rankill himself, riding a water-naga to bring destruction on his foes.

The throne room is now the lair of a Jemalang. This scaly, bat-winged demon has been awoken by the arrival of the Elves and sends out its avatar (ghost-body) to capture victims to eat.

Jemalang

Jemalang AC 6, 30hp, DEX 12, HD 6, AT 2 claws for 1d4 each and bite for 1d6

The Jemalang stays in a trance while its avatar goes out to fight the PCs

In its physical form, the Jemalang has a hypnotic song: listeners must save vs Spell or go into a trance (extra saving throw if roughly shaken, +4 if taste or smell limes)

Jemalang tactics

While the PCs explore the statue, the avatar will swoop down and attack with surprise. It will flee if it takes more than 10HP damage but can be followed back to the throne room where the true Jemalang awakes.

The Jemalang is surrounded by entranced victims and will sing its song, then attack anyone who is still active. When the Jemalang dies, all its victims awake (including the naga at 9).

The demon breathes its last and its breath restores life and sense to its victims who now stir and blink and turn to you in amazement. Before there can be any reunions, there is a deafening roar that shakes the floor and dislodges slates from the ceiling. Something monstrous has stirred over to the south, where the old stones of Kuala lie beside the lake.

9. To the Old Stones at Kuala

Late night or Dawn

These old stones are the ruins of a wharf and jetty. The Goblins just know them as 'old stones' but respect them because many have **Naga**-symbols on them. Once the Jemalang (8) dies, the entranced Naga wakes and comes to the surface here. A PC who fell from the stepping stones (7) might be present to see the Naga emerge from the waters: other PCs will arrive later and find the Naga waiting for them.

The creature is a serpent with the face of a panther and the eyes of a wise old man. It shakes the slime of the lake from its shining scales and roars with joy. Then the Naga coils around the old stones and waits patiently for its lord to arrive.



The Naga of Kuala

NB: 'Naga' here is a type of Dragon, not the same as the monster in **BLUEHOLME™**.

This is Radiant Pang, an intelligent dragon that faithfully served San Rankill and will serve the new **Keth** too. PCs can ride on Pang's back across the lake and Pang will attack and sink the Elfin ship, forcing the Elves to swim for the dubious safety of the Swamp of Ghosts.

10. Showdown at Broken Jaw

Dusk, Night or Dawn

What time is it?

PCs who did not visit the Jade Queen might arrive here at dusk (if they came directly from the Stockade and ignored the mystery of the kidnapped prisoners).

PCs who fought the Jembalang will arrive at night (probably on the back of the Lake Dragon).

PCs who went to the Emerald Labyrinth first will arrive at night (if they ignore the Jembalang) or dawn (if they destroyed it and freed the Lake Dragon).

The NPC Goblins attack the Elfin warship (and may be doing this unsuccessfully when the Lake Dragon arrives) while the PCs enter the island.

There is little need for stealth as you race through the deserted village, but you pause outside the Keth's Hut for there are raised voices within. One is the voice of your cousin, Botang, whom you believed had died in your defence. The other is the cold sneer of an Elf, Commander Zeng.

Botang: *You make me Keth and leave me to rule over an empty rock?*

Zeng: *Perhaps not even that...*

Botang: *You betrayed me!*

Zeng: *[Angry] You talk of betrayal? To me? Watch what your crooked lips say, Ular*

[Ular means snake but also goblin]

Botang: *[Pleading] But they are my people!*

Zeng: *No, Ular, they are the Pale Emperor's slaves*

The climax

Botang invited the Elves to install him as the new Keth in return for the valuable hardwoods the village harvests, but the Elves have left him as chieftain of an empty island when they took his tribe away to be slaves. When the PCs confront them, Botang will fight beside his new masters (what choice does he have?) unless the PCs make a powerful appeal to his honour.

Zeng will attack any PCs who reveal themselves, calling on Botang to assist him.

Zeng, Elfin Captain

Elf AC 4, 16hp, DEX 13, HD 3, AT sword for 1d6

- Zeng knows spells: *Magic Missile*, *Ventriloquism* and *Mirror Image*

He will cast *Mirror Image* immediately and use *Magic Missile* on any spell-casters he sees

Botang, would-be Keth

Goblin AC 6, 14hp, DEX 13, HD 3, AT krist for 1d6+1, javelins for 1d6

Botang will seek out a duel with his kinsman, the true **Keth**



The Epilogue

If the PCs overcome Zeng, the Elfin ship will be captured (by the freed Goblins) or destroyed (by Pang the Naga).

If the PCs have not visited the Jade Queen's Bower, Bomoch will send them there to be tested by her (see 3 and 4).

If the Jembalang's victims have not been rescued, the PCs could use the ship to visit the ruins at 8 and confront the monster.

At the conclusion, Bomoch will arrive to announce that the **Keth** of Broken Jaw is **Keth** no longer, but the new **Rajor** of the Goblins, for whom a battle of liberation awaits.

Appendix A: Omens Come True

If the PCs undergo the Jade Queen's trials (4), the GM can arrange for them to predict future fates.

Make an offering of your right eye to the forest. Should the PC be reduced to 0HP, they are left on 1HP but lose their eye instead.

Make an offering of your left hand to the forest. Should the PC be reduced to 0HP, they are left on 1HP but lose their left hand instead.

Make an offering of your beauty to the forest. Should the PC be reduced to 0HP, they are left on 1HP but gain horrible scars instead.

Make an offering of your loved one to the forest. This PC's loved one is among those kidnapped by the Jembalang and has already been eaten when the PCs arrive at 8.

Make an offering of your dear friend to the forest. The PC is greeted as "my dear friend" when they rescue their loved one or (if the **Keth** receives this omen) when they confront Botang. If the PC does not kill their 'friend' they are cursed to become a Penanggoul when they die.

Make an offering of your life to the forest. The PC will be the sole target of attacks by either the Jembalang or Zeng.

Appendix B: Monsters

Cockatrices are regular fixtures in many fantasy RPGs but in this setting they are a bit different: rather commonplace in the Swamp of Ghosts, they turn you to salt rather than stone, they do not fly and they are terrified of weasels!

Cockatrice (Swamp of Ghosts variant)

Cockatrice AC 6, 22hp, DEX 8, HD 5, AT bite for 1d6 + turn to salt

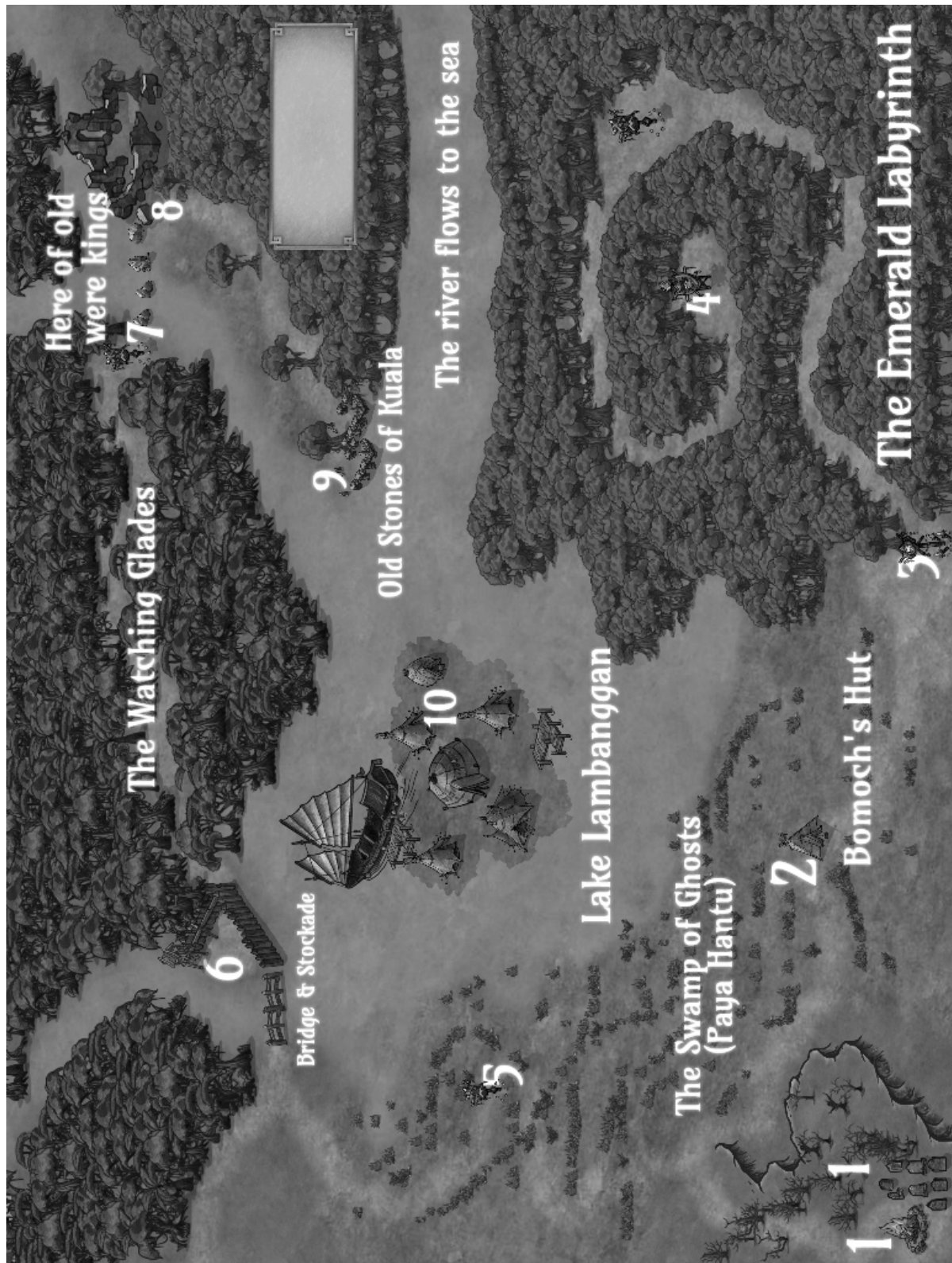
- Save vs Gaze or turn to salt pillar
- Automatically fails morale check vs weasels (which are immune to its bite)

Penanggouls are based on the penanggalan of Malay myth: vampires that detach their heads which float off, trailing their organs behind them! In the Swamp of Ghosts they inhabit pools by day: their faces can be seen looking up at you and they will answer questions but always mix truth with lies. By night, they float abroad looking for prey.

Penanggoul (Swamp of Ghosts)

Floating Head AC 9, 18hp, DEX 9, HD 4, AT bite for 1d6 then drain 1d6

- Imitates voices of loved ones as a trap
- Drains 1d6HP in blood per turn after bite hits
- Turned as a Wraith by Clerics
- Elf-head Penanggouls also know 1d6 spells of level 1d3



Commentary

This is a very linear story, which is necessary for telling an epic tale in miniature. The PCs visit the Greenseer, pass the trials in the Emerald Labyrinth, wage guerrilla war on the Humans, destroy the Jembalang and earn a Dragon retainer then go to their showdown with Zeng and Botang.

Except players never do as they should so there's enough latitude in this scenario for them to vary the 'classic' order.

If the PCs do not visit the Greenseer straight away, they have to tackle the invaders and perhaps the Jembalang without the promotions earned through the Jade Queen's trials – good luck with that, but it is possible. If they go straight from the stockade to the island, they miss out on help from the Lake Dragon, but the Jembalang makes an equally effective climax to the story. Moving the Jade Queen's trials to the end does take away the possibility of them being omens of future fates, however.

A linear story like this stands or falls on the details that make it feel compelling rather than limiting. I hope this tale of down-trodden goblins learning about their royal birthright and rising up against their colonial masters has some resonance. There's some mysticism in the Emerald Labyrinth and I tried to get across a sense of omens being fulfilled.

The whole idea of native 'heroic' goblins and evil 'imperialist' elves turned up in a mini-campaign I ran last year, but there it was a romantic orc confederation being conquered by elves, with their vaguely Aztec human servitors. The routed orcs had to retreat into their swampy heartland and discovered truths about their origins and foundational myths along the way.

I wanted to avoid clumsy Native American comparisons (despite the name alluding to Wounded Knee) and give the goblins a sense of cultural texture, so I located this in a South East Asian (specifically, Malaysian) setting, which is a bit of a departure for Goblins and Elves in most Fantasy RPGs.

Of course, you're free to treat the Elves more conventionally as European-style colonialists. It's fun to see Humans dislodged from that role and here appearing as mere minions of the Elvish antagonists.

There's a lot here that GMs might want to expand: exploring the Swamp of Ghosts, routing the invaders, capturing the warship; each could be a scenario in its own right.

AT THE INN OF THE COLD COMPANION

This scenario was an attempt at something different. It's a sort of Haunted House mystery, with a touch of 'Twilight Zone' about an Inn you cannot leave and a bunch of guests who cannot remember their own names!

I hope the final reveal isn't too obvious. The scenario was criticised on first publication for squandering a fine thematic set-up with an ordinary combat at the conclusion.

Now I don't mind combat as a dramatic conclusion and I think players often enjoy the reward of combat after the sometimes-frustrating business of solving a mystery, but I offer two conclusions this time: one classic (violence!) and the other more metaphysical for people who enjoy roleplaying all the way through to the end.

Background

The Inn is a place in the realm of death where the souls of the dead gather on their way to the Netherworld.

It was once a real Inn that entered the realm of death when the Innkeeper, the original Rosenkrantz, deranged by grief after the death of his wife Ophelia and their stillborn baby Gertrude, burned it down around him.

Dead souls will not rest here long, before the Cold Companion comes to collect them. The Companion is the shade of Rosenkrantz' unborn daughter, Gertrude, now an avatar of Death.

Dead souls do not realise they are dead: they believe they are resting on a long journey but have only hazy ideas about their destination.

They also do not know their names and the only treasure they carry are two silver obols each (the coins to pay for their passage).

In this scenario, the players are members of a party of adventurers who have died in a disastrous dungeon encounter, but meanwhile in the living world their cleric-cum-medic Hecuba is struggling to revive them.

The Hook

You are all bone-weary from travelling and there are still leagues ahead of you, but the last light of a wintry day shows a roadside inn ahead, with a lantern glowing faintly above the door. The creaking sign bears the name 'The Cold Companion' and the unsettling image of a feral child with sparkling eyes.

Your rations are spent and your waterskins empty, but there are a couple of coins jangling in your purses. You enter, looking for rest and warmth and perhaps fellowship from other travelers on this dismal highway.



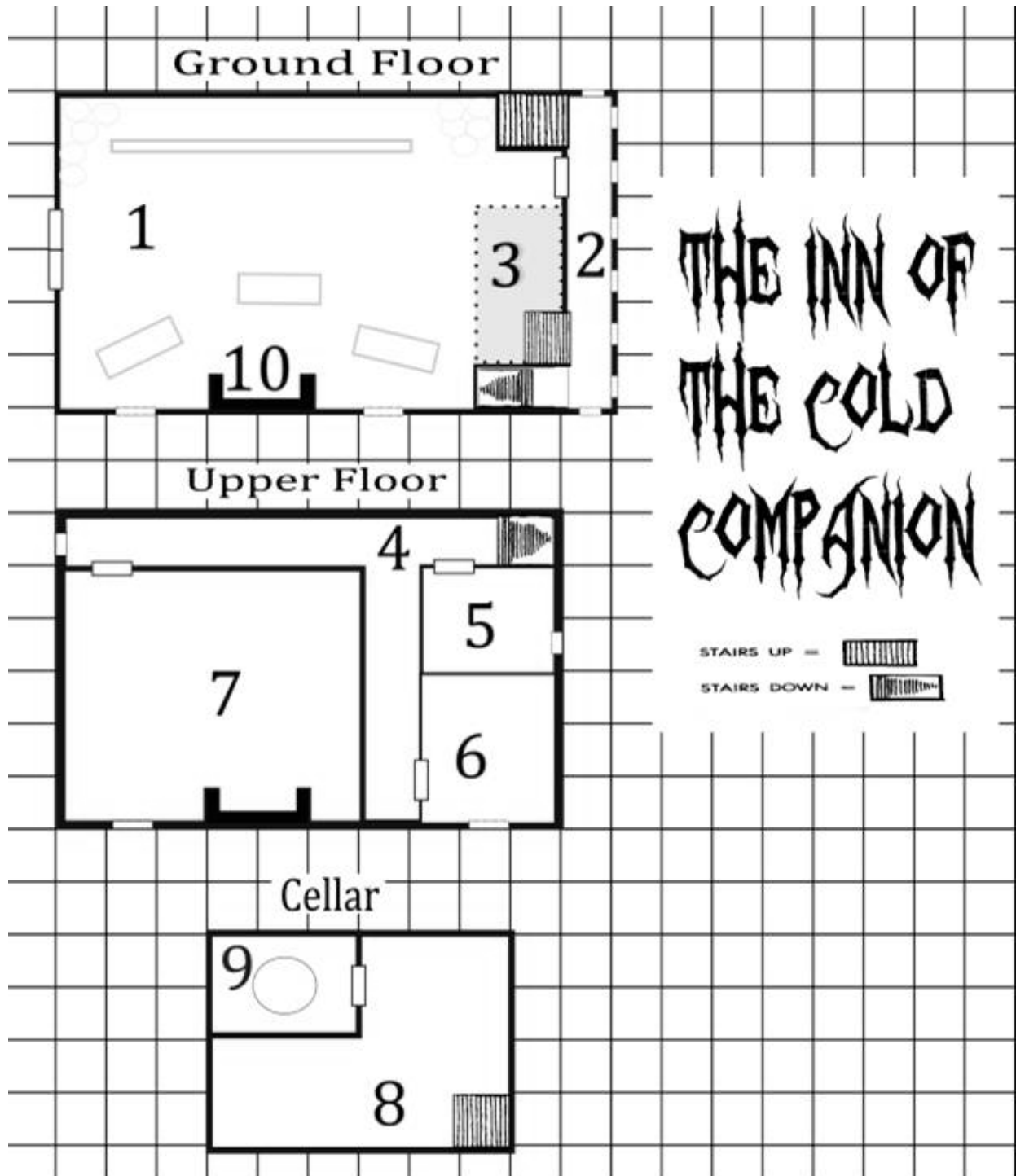
Referee's Notes

In this scenario, characters do not know their Names (see **Appendix A**) when asked and cannot remember each other's names or even think of any names at all. It is as if names have ceased to exist. Players can describe their appearance and origin (but no names of countries or towns) and each other's achievements (famous deeds, reputation, but no specific names of places or enemies) and invent titles for each other based on these (e.g. 'Dwarfy' or 'Goblin-killer'). The only exception is Clerics who will remember the name of their god.

The PCs have no rations (all spoilt), water or wine (spilt or sour). Regardless of initial moneys or treasure from previous adventures, each character carries just 2 silver pieces (obols) on their person.

Allow players to discover these absences and mysteries through play (i.e. when asked their name or when they try to pay for something) but the GM need not offer any explanation

At the Inn of the Cold Companion



The Inn

The Inn appears to be a conventional roadside tavern, except for the absence of other guests. It is freezing cold. Fire cannot be lit in the Inn and magical fire will not cause other objects to burn (exception: room 6).

The rooms are lit by an eerie radiance from the windows. These are smeared with soot and if this is wiped away there is a view of a **Spectral Vista** (see **Appendix C**); shuttered rooms are pitch black until the shutters are opened, giving an immediate view of a Vista and lighting the room with radiance. The Cellar (8) is dark unless Rosenkrantz is there with his candle or magical illumination is used. Infravision is little help in the Inn: everything is freezing cold. The **everburning candle** in 7 will help the PCs a lot.

Leaving the Inn or dying in the Inn causes the PC to experience one of the **Spectral Vistas** then passes out, reawakening in room 5 with any acquired Name now forgotten.

1. The Public Bar

Lit by radiant windows

This is the public bar with three long trestle tables and benches set around a big stone Fireplace (10) which is piled with kindling but unlit and cold.

There is a bar, with shelves behind holding tankards and bottles, and big tuns at either side with spigots for dispensing beer or cider - but everything is utterly tasteless. The room is high-ceilinged (20') and overlooked by a minstrel's gallery (3).

The windows to either side of the fireplace present a **Spectral Vista** as will the front door if PCs try to leave the way they came in.

If the PCs make noise or call for service, Rosenkrantz will appear, pretending to be the innkeeper.

If the players spend too long here or return to this room at a later point, the Undead Patrons (see **Appendix D**) will arrive.

What to do?

Let the PCs settle in. This is a good time for them to discuss their situation and probably discover they've forgotten their own names - take their character sheets off them and cross their names out! They will likely discover each of them has a pair of coins and that all food and drink is spoiled. If they wipe the soot from the windows, they will see their first Spectral Vista (see Appendix C).

Rosenkrantz (**Appendix B**) will appear with his candle and the Innkeeper's Ledger. He will take coins from the PCs and get them to sign their names - which of course, they can't! Rosenkrantz will pretend concern at their amnesia and make unhelpful suggestions ("*Retrace your steps: where were you the last time you used your name?*"). Eventually, he will take the PCs upstairs to the Guest Room (5).

2. Corridor of Windows

Lit by radiant windows

This dark corridor is lit by the soot-smeared windows, which all present the same **Spectral Vista**. There are three staircases: up to the upper floor (4), up to the Minstrels' Gallery (3) and down to the Cellar (8).

When the PCs cross the corridor, skeletal hands break through the windows and attack.

Skeletal Hands

Undead AC 7, 2hp, DEX 7, HD 1, AT grip for 1 + drag outside

- Each PC is attacked by 1d4 hands

Each round, a PC who is grabbed must Save vs Touch (at -2 per additional hand that has grabbed) or be pulled through the window)

Hands may be turned as Skeletons

Pulled outside

PCs who are pulled outside will arrive outside the Inn and re-enter it, with no memory of having been here before and any Name forgotten. The GM decides when to reintroduce them.

The hands will not appear if the PCs are accompanied by Rosenkrantz or are bearing a candle. The next time the PCs return to this corridor, the windows are once again intact.

How many times?

This creepy fright only needs to happen once, but the GM can spring it on players again, especially if a PC is exploring alone.

3. The Minstrel's Gallery

Dark, some light from the Public Bar

This balcony commands a view of the Public Bar (1) 10' below. While PCs are up here, the Undead Patrons will arrive in the Public Bar (see **Appendix D**). There are musical instruments up here (harp, lute, cittern, recorder, violin) and any PC who picks one up will find themselves able to play mournful tunes on them. A character who can sing will find themselves able to recall a sad ballad of the death of a beautiful woman named **OPHELIA**:

*She is dead and gone, my lady best,
My lady's dead and gone,
No green-grass turf grows where she rests,
Above her stands no stone.
She's gone with fire empyreal—
She's gone from earthly strife,
She took with her my baby girl
The flames have took my wife.*

The singer can bestow this Name on one character (including him or herself, see **Appendix A**).

4. The Shadow-Trap

Dark, some light from a radiant window

The only light in this corridor comes from the soot-smeared window at the far end, which presents a **Spectral Vista**.

A dark shadow lies across the floor at the junction and the shadow is a hole in space. Anyone putting their hand into the shadow feels numbing cold and cannot use their arm for 1d12 minutes. Objects placed in the shadow are withdrawn covered in frost.

Anyone stepping on it must Save vs Wand or fall through, disappearing into a magical hole. Any PC falling into the shadow arrives at the front door of the Inn all over again, in the company of anyone dragged through the windows (2), with no recall of being here previously – any Names they have acquired are forgotten and possessions acquired go to room 6.

The shadowy hole temporarily disappears in light: from an everburning candle (in 7 or carried by Rosenkrantz) or magical illumination, but reappears in darkness.

5. Guest Room

Dark, shuttered

This room is unlocked but, if Rosenkrantz shows the PCs to a room, he will bring them here and lock them inside afterwards. The window is shuttered but, if opened, reveals a **Spectral Vista**.

There are six bunk beds and a chest for goods and several weatherstained cloaks on hooks. Scratched on the inside of the door is a message: **THE COLD COMPANION IS COMING**. Under one of the beds is an old pair of boots with a name written inside: **YORICK**; anyone putting on the boots acquires the Name (see **Appendix A**).

Option for small parties

If there are only 3 PCs, remove Yorick's name from the scenario.

Characters who sleep in this room dream of battling against monsters in an underground dungeon; one character hears a voice calling to them over and over and if they follow the voice it is coming from the Well (9) downstairs.

6. Rosenkrantz's Room (The Nursery)

Dark, shuttered

This room is locked and piled with junk: the possessions of former travellers can be determined on the random item table. However, the first PC will automatically discover item 1 (the rattle):

1. A baby's rattle with the Name **GERTRUDE** (see **Appendix A**)
2. Iron tongs
3. Letter opener with parrot design
4. Silk kimono robe
5. Bouquet of dead roses
6. Gold tooth
7. Dozen silver spoons
8. Quill, nib and ink pot
9. Ermine lined cloak
10. Set of playing cards
11. Miniature clockwork dragon
12. Pair of leather gloves
13. Onyx comb
14. Jar of dried sweets
15. Book of goblin poetry
16. Tortoise-shell snuffbox
17. Sheets of vellum
18. Small wooden carving of a cat
19. Glass monocle, cracked
20. Back-scratcher

The room smells of soot and ash. The shuttered windows will reveal a **Spectral Vista #6** (see **Appendix C**). If the walls are cleaned, the room is revealed to be an old nursery.

The room on fire

This is the room where the Innkeeper started the fire that burned the building down. It is the only room in the Inn where fires can be lit, causing 1d6 damage to occupants on the first round, then 2d6, then 3d6, etc, until there is a raging inferno that will not leave the room – unless the Cold Companion is destroyed, in which case the fire bursts out of the door and window and consumes the building in minutes.

Luring the Cold Companion into the burning room might be a tactic for destroying it.



Rosenkrantz keeps the Innkeeper's Ledger here. and bears the Innkeeper's name **ROSENKRANTZ** on the inside cover. The ledger is full of pages where previous guests signed in (as the nameless players must do) with X. The inside cover has an inscription: **ROSENKRANTZ, HIS BOOK, FROM HIS BELOVED WIFE**. Any character holding the book and reading this aloud acquires the name of **ROSENKRANTZ** and the previous 'Rosenkrantz' becomes nameless.

The Ledger

This is an important item. 'Rosenkrantz' stole it from the original Innkeeper, stealing his Name and condemning him to be taken by the Cold Companion. If a PC acquires it, they become 'Rosenkrantz' and the un-named Rosenkrantz will do anything to re-acquire the book. If the Ledger is destroyed or taken out of the Inn, it reappears in the Nursery after 1d4 hours and can be acquired by a new owner.

Under the bed is a sack containing a hoard of silver coins (100 times 1d100): the payments of previous guests.

If the PCs do not summon Rosenkrantz to the Public Bar (1) or discover him in the Cellar (8), he can be found here, counting his coins.

7. The Master Bedroom

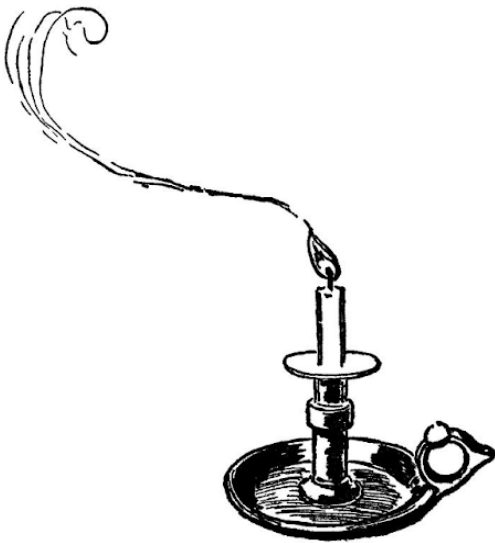
Dark, shuttered

The door is locked and Rosenkrantz does not have a key to it; listening at the door, PCs will hear a man sobbing but if they enter there is no one within. If someone bearing the name of '**OPHELIA**' is present, the door will open for them.

This grandly appointed room has shuttered windows that display a **Spectral Vista** if opened.

The bed is laid for a funeral, with vases of flowers: rosemary, pansies, daisies, violets and rue.

An **ever-burning candle** is set beside the bed.



The Ever-Burning Candle

This is the same as the candle that Rosenkrantz carries with him everywhere. It sheds light in 10' radius, temporarily dispels the shadow trap (4) and can set fire to objects in the Nursery (6). It cannot be extinguished and if destroyed or taken out of the Inn it reappears in the Master Bedroom after 1d4 hours.

There are five paintings on the wall showing:

- (i) the Inn in a busy city street;
- (ii) a portrait of the Innkeeper and his beautiful wife, who is heavily pregnant;
- (iii) a deathbed, clearly in this very room, with the Innkeeper grieving over a blood-soaked bundle in his arms and holding a child's rattle;
- (iv) a terrible fire burning the inn down, the Innkeeper clutching his Ledger can be seen in the window of the Nursery (6).

The final picture (v) shows a creature advancing through the doorway to the Inn: a pale female child with sharp teeth and shining eyes.

The Innkeeper in the paintings is **not** the man the players know as 'Rosenkrantz'.

8. The Cellar

Dark

If the PCs did not summon him to the Public Bar (1) or find him in the Nursery (6), Rosenkrantz is down here, endlessly dragging heavy barrels around while he sings a dreary song over and over.

*"Nameless we're born and then nameless we die,
Pay me your pennies and do not ask why,
But pity the child that is born but not named
Delivered by fire then by Death she is claimed"*

Rosenkrantz's Song

The song is a clue about the identity of the Cold Companion. Anyone acquiring the Name of **ROSENKRANTZ** will know the song and feel compelled to sing it out loud to themselves when not busy with something.

He will offer to show PCs to the Bar while he goes to fetch the Innkeeper's Ledger (6) and then escort them to the Guest Room (5). He will try to stop anyone investigating the Well (9):

9. The Well of Souls

Lit by radiance

The well is a deep shaft in the floor, nearly 10' across. A faint radiance shines from its depths. A voice calls out of it, calling to one of the PCs by name (determine which PC randomly: that PC now knows their true Name, see **Appendix A**). Any character trying to descend into the well falls into darkness and experiences a **Vision**, then wakes up in the Master Bedroom (7).

You wake to find yourself in on a dungeon corridor. Your friends lie beside you, but they are all dead. A woman kneels beside you, holding your hand and praying: "Stay with me! Stay with me!"

She gasps with surprise and delight when you open your eyes.

"You're alive!" she says.

The Vision

The PC has experienced reality: the dungeon corridor is where the party died battling Wandering Monsters; the Cleric is **HECUBA** who is trying to revive them. The PC can utter three words before the Vision ends and they return to the Inn (i.e. they lose consciousness and their spirit returns to the realm of Death). Hecuba can offer her own Name, the Name of the dying PC and any other Names that a three word question could elicit. She knows nothing about the Inn or what the PCs are experiencing there.

After the **Vision**, the fire lights in the Chimney (10) and the Cold Companion will soon appear.

10. The Fireplace

Dark, light from the public bar, later lit by radiant fire

After the **Vision** in the Well (9) or the final **Spectral Vista** occurs, the fireplace erupts with blue flames that give off no heat. This could also happen if Rosenkrantz or a PC with the Ever-Burning Candle (7) lights the fire.

After 2d6 rounds, the **Cold Companion** enters the Inn, seeking out any characters without names to destroy them.

The Climax and Aftermath

The Climax is the confrontation with the Cold Companion (see **Appendix E**).

If 'Rosenkrantz' has lost his name, the Cold Companion will come for him first.

The man who once was 'Rosenkrantz' grovels before the Cold Companion. "Haven't I served you well?" he pleads. "Haven't I brought you many guests? All nameless, just as you are? Aren't we partners? Don't you have a special Name for me?"

The feral creature's eyes sparkle but her face shows neither pity nor curiosity. She reaches out to seize him and the man becomes a flicker of blue flame that the creature then swallows whole. The candle falls extinguished to the floor.

The PCs can battle the Cold Companion, but are unlikely to prevail. Devious players could lure into the Shadow Trap (4) or the burning Nursery (6) or perhaps push it down the Well (9).

The players could try to communicate with the Cold Companion. This will work if they realise that the child is **GERTRUDE**, the daughter of the Innkeeper and his wife **OPHELIA**. See **Appendix E** for ideas.

If the Cold Companion is defeated, remaining PCs will come to their senses in the dungeon corridor with **Hecuba**: they have been revived after a near-death experience. Any PCs killed by the Cold Companion die in the living world.

Appendix A: Names

It is vital the players acquire names; the Cold Companion will come to claim the souls of any un-Named characters in the Inn. PCs might steal **ROSENKRANTZ**'s name from the Ledger (6), acquire **OPHELIA** from performing music (3) or learn their own names or that of **HECUBA** from the Vision in the Well (9); **YORICK** can be discovered in the Guest Room (5).

Clerical faith

Clerics know the name of their god. Advise a clerical PC that they take this name for themselves in a crisis: only once during the scenario and it lasts for 1d6 rounds (they can do this to buy time when the Cold Companion arrives).

There is also the name **GERTRUDE**, found on the baby rattle in 6. This is the name that was to have been given to Ophelia's baby, had she lived: it is therefore the name of the Cold Companion and can be bestowed on her alone (see **Appendix E**).

Remember that PCs who die in the Inn or who leave it will arrive back in room 1, having forgotten any Name they acquired (but they can learn it again if they reacquire the Ledger or Boots or perform the music in the Minstrel Gallery).

Appendix B: Rosenkrantz

This person is a dead soul, a thief, who has been at the Inn for untold ages. When he arrived here, he stole the Innkeeper's Ledger and Name (**ROSENKRANTZ**) so that the Cold Companion took the old Innkeeper instead of him.

Rosenkrantz plays the role of an oily and obsequious Innkeeper, but delights in the players' confusion and enjoys taunting them by asking them for their names on any possible occasion and teasing them with the imminent arrival of the Cold Companion.

He carries a smelly tallow candle at all times that never goes out (an **Everburning Candle**, see 7); he will not share it with guests or let anyone else use it to light the Fireplace (10). He also carries keys to lock rooms 5 and 6.

He has the following information to impart to PCs who show him respect or gratitude:

The Inn is empty at the moment, but guests are always arriving. There is an empty room ready for the PCs if they want to take it.

- *The Inn is a strange place; pay no heed to odd sights beyond the windows.*
- *It is not safe to move around the Inn in darkness – better to call for the Innkeeper and he will guide them with his candlelight.*
- *The Cold Companion is a visitor to the Inn and is expected to arrive very soon. The Cold Companion is not dangerous so long as you introduce yourself politely by name.*

Rosenkrantz cannot be killed except by the Cold Companion or by a fire in room 6. If the players attack him, allow him to run into a shadow, like the one in 4 but instead of being ejected from the Inn he escapes to the Shadow Trap (4) or the Nursery (6). This is a unique power he has learned from spending so long at the Inn.

If the players acquire the Ledger and steal his name, the former-Rosenkrantz will use his candle to light the Fireplace (10) and summon the Cold Companion, hoping to trick the players into giving him back his Name in return for his protection (a lie: he has none to offer).

"The Cold Companion is on her way. She will be here soon, very soon. Give me back the Ledger – give me my Name – and I will intercede on your behalf. The Cold Companion knows me. She owes me many favours. She will listen to me."

Appendix C: Spectral Vistas

Looking out of the Inn (from windows in 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7) reveals a supernatural landscape. Roll 1d6 for each new window that is unshuttered or wiped clear, adding +1 for each previous Vista that has been viewed.

1. *A vast dreary plain under a night sky with utterly unfamiliar stars and constellations*
2. *A raging storm, with rain lashing the panes and lightning striking the ground over and over*
3. *Dense rolling mists through which vast shapes move about*
4. *The Inn perches upon the edge of a precipice which drops away out of sight into a bottomless abyss*
5. *A graveyard stretches away in all directs, with tombstones shining white like teeth under a gibbous moon*
6. *The view is into another room, the mirror of where the PC stands, in which a sobbing man in an Innkeeper's apron spreads oil and kindling around the floor then drops his candle into the midst of it, immolating himself while flames beat against the window*
7. *The outside of the Inn is on fire, with flames rushing up the walls and along the roof*
8. *A landscape of fire in which burning figures stumble screaming through the ash and smoke*

9. *A dungeon corridor in which a party of adventurers lie dead from wounds in battle; the viewer recognises himself and the other PCs among the corpses*
10. *A winding road across a lifeless plain; in the distance a figure approaches: a gaunt and feral child with shining teeth and glittering eyes who sees the PC in the window and breaks into a run. If this result or higher occurs, the Fireplace (10) ignites and the Cold Companion arrives after 2d6 rounds.*

Appendix D: Undead Patrons

This episode takes place when the GM decides: perhaps the players return to the Public Bar (1) or view the bar from the Minstrel Gallery (3).

Two men in leather armour enter the Inn. They are wild-looking and armed with knives and axes. They hammer on the bar, calling out for service. One complains that they have been on the road for an age.

At some point, Rosenkrantz will arrive with his Ledger (assuming the PCs haven't stolen it) and collect four coins from the pair, smirking while they struggle to remember their own names, then he will offer them the Guest Room (5) to lodge with the PCs once they have signed their names with a X in the Ledger.

The nameless men are cheerful and keen to talk and play dice with other guests (the PCs).

"We're grave-paladins," says one.

"What he means is, we hunt down the undead," says the other. "It's dirty work."

"Dangerous too."

"Aye, it is that! Remember that Wight?"

"From the other night? Nasty creature."

"Very nasty," the other continues. "Their wounds are infectious. Then you turn into one yourself."

"That's why we wear the thick leathers," says the first man, "on account of their bites."

He points to his leather shirt but his hand is missing a finger: it has been bitten clean off.

"Now, wherever did that go?" he mutters, suddenly confused.

The other man continues: "We destroyed the Wight and camped by the cemetery, so now we're heading to... to..."

"To... Where are we heading?"

"It doesn't matter," says the second man, but without conviction. He rubs at the wound on his neck, which resembles a bite. "The point is, we survived!"

Undead Infection

Of course, these two adventurers were bitten and infected by an undead monster. They are dead now and will shortly rise from the dead as Wights themselves. The PCs will witness their souls becoming corrupted by the Undead curse.

During the interaction, the Patrons start to change:

- Their language becomes coarser and more aggressive; they forget what words mean and lose trains of thought
- They become ravenously hungry and loudly demand food (but the Inn has none)
- One of them starts smashing furniture in frustration
- Their appearance becomes more feral with serrated teeth, sunken eyes and pallid skin
- Finally, both transform into undead monsters.

Soon-to-be Wights

Proto-Undead AC 5, 10hp each, DEX 8, HD 3, AT claw for 1d6

- Here in the Underworld, they do not drain levels

They will fight for 2d4 rounds then vanish in a flash of heatless blue fire (they have reanimated in the world of the living)

If turned by a Cleric, they vanish, as above.

Appendix E: The Cold Companion

The Cold Companion is an avatar of Death. She visits the Inn to capture the 'guests' with no Names. Anyone she kills transforms into a ball of heatless blue flame which she devours in one round.

The Cold Companion resembles a skinny child, perhaps a girl, but moves with unnatural jerky spasms. Her eyes glitter like jewels and her mouth is lipless, with sharp teeth. She is feral and filthy and advances with her long nails outstretched.

The Cold Companion

Avatar of Death AC 5, 12hp, DEX 15, HD 3, AT claw for 0 damage plus soul drain (see below)

Anyone struck by the Cold Companion is killed and consumed on the next round, unless they have a Name, in which case they instead forget their Name

Only magic weapons, spells and (real) fire can harm the Cold Companion

It cannot be turned by a Cleric

Cold Companion tactics

The Cold Companion ignores characters with Names and rushes after un-Named characters, seeking to seize and destroy then consume them.

She will seek out 'Rosenkrantz' first if he has lost his Name (see **Climax & Aftermath**).

If everyone has a Name, the Cold Companion will stalk restlessly, waiting for the god's Name any Clerics have invoked to wear off.

The Cold Companion could be trapped or destroyed, especially if a PC is willing to sacrifice themselves by pulling it into the Well (9), the Shadow Trap (4) or locking them both in the burning Nursery (6).

Gertrude

Thoughtful players might try to reach out to the Cold Companion's former humanity. The creature will be paralysed for 1d4 rounds by the sight of the baby rattle (6) or the painting of Ophelia (7); use of the name **GERTRUDE** will cause it to pause for a round as will singing Rosenkrantz's song (8). If the song 'Ophelia' (3) is performed or if she is confronted by the flowers from the Master Bedroom (7, especially rue, "for remembrance"), the creature will curl up and weep. If it is shown love during the period that it is helpless, the creature will become Gertrude, Ophelia's stillborn child raised by Death himself, then fade away.

The Cold Companion changes in her grief. You do not see a monster any more, but a little girl who has wandered far from home, loved only by Death who bestows no names. Her hair is tangled and her white cheeks smudged with soot and tears. "Who am I?" she pleads and you know that, if you tell her, her soul will finally find peace.

Commentary

"And they were really dead the whole time!" It's a cliché of TV and film, but it's still a fresh conceit in a roleplaying game. This scenario assumes the PCs have experienced a TPK (Total Party Kill) and start the scenario in the Afterlife (or at least, somewhere Afterlife-adjacent). They're dead people but, as in *The Sixth Sense*, they don't realise it.

If the players create new characters, then the TPK is an aspect of their backstory that they have forgotten. Have fun dropping this scenario in if the players really do experience a TPK!

This was my attempt to create a *Twilight Zone* style dungeon. I hope there's some pleasure for the PCs in figuring out the Inn's mysteries: even if they quickly realise they are dead, there's still the puzzle of Rosenkrantz and the history of why they original Innkeeper destroyed himself and the Inn.

The scenario requires that the GM imposes pacing and structure. The Undead Patrons offer an opportunity for drama and conflict among all the puzzles and there is a timer ticking down created by the Spectral Vistas – and if the PCs visit the Well or steal Rosenkrantz's Ledger then the timer jumps to the end and the Cold Companion's arrival becomes imminent.

Rosenkrantz is intended to be a nuanced NPC. I think he's been at the Inn for centuries and is quite mad. He's a mixture of humble-groveling towards guests and smug-sarcasm, delighting in being mysterious and showing that he knows more about what's going on than he will reveal. He's useful for shepherding the players – at first, away from the Well (to prevent the scenario winding up too quickly) but perhaps triggering the end of the scenario himself when he lights the fireplace.

The Cold Companion is meant to be an eerie, fey sort of psychopomp. She giggles in a high-pitched voice, skitters about the place on slap-slap-slap bare feet and scratches at doors with its horrid nails. Have fun with her.

It's possible for all the remaining PCs to end up with names, especially if someone used their three-word question in the Vision wisely. In this case, they are immune to attacks from the Cold Companion and GMs should not force a battle.

Players might overcome the Companion by showing her kindness or simply a lack of fear. Again, GMs should reward thematic roleplaying. Conquering death doesn't have to involve killing something, after all.

BRING ME THE HEART OF FINBAR FORKBEARD

This is the final scenario and it has a Valentines Day theme. Back in February, a correspondent on social media asked if anyone knew a good Valentines scenario to run with their significant other. There's a distinct lack of romantic plots in Fantasy RPG modules. This is my contribution to that rather niche sub-genre.

Rather than place the PCs in the predicament of romantic lovers, this invites the players to play Cupid to a trio of NPCs. To add to the awkwardness, the NPC lovers are Dwarfs and to add to the comedy, the PCs are disguised as Goblins.

That makes two scenarios in this almanac where you get to play Goblins!

Background

The course of true love never did run smooth. Brigid Rosenbrow is a wealthy unmarried Dwarfish lady who owns an extensive mine in the Mountains of Broddick. She has conceived a powerful romantic interest in a younger Dwarfish adventurer, Finbar Forkbeard.

Finbar, however, thinks only of dungeons (and, indeed, dragons) and has no interest in marriage and even less in Brigid. Brigid has decided she will go adventuring with Finbar and win his love by demonstrating her courage.

To this end, she has reopened an old 'training dungeon' in her mine, where the Rosenbrows used to practise martial skills. She has spread a rumour that a fabled heirloom, the Ring of Broddick, rests in this dungeon.

When Finbar arrives, anxious to retrieve the Ring, Brigid offers to join him. She recruits a group of adventurers (PCs) to play the role of goblin 'monsters' in the dungeon.

There are two complications for Brigid. One is Hildy Heffenhammer, a female Dwarf adventurer and rival for Finbar's affections, who will be joining her party.

The other is Olaf the Black, a Dwarf renegade with his band of real Goblins: Olaf has picked up on the rumour too and is a bitter enemy of Finbar. He and his monsters have penetrated the dungeon by digging down from the mines, discovered the fake Ring and now lie in wait for Finbar.

The Hook

You have been hired by Brigid Rosenbrow to play the role of 'goblins' in her training dungeon. She offers a fabulous fee for a day's work and all the weapons will be 'bated' so no one should get hurt.

Brigid will be accompanying a Dwarfish adventurer named Finbar through the training dungeon. Your job is to fight mock battles against Brigid and Finbar and never to 'break role' as goblins.

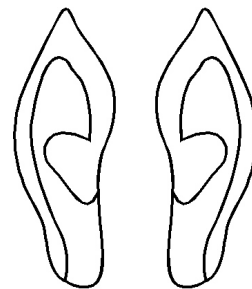
Since Brigid has romantic designs on Finbar, your task is also to make her look good as a warrior in his presence.

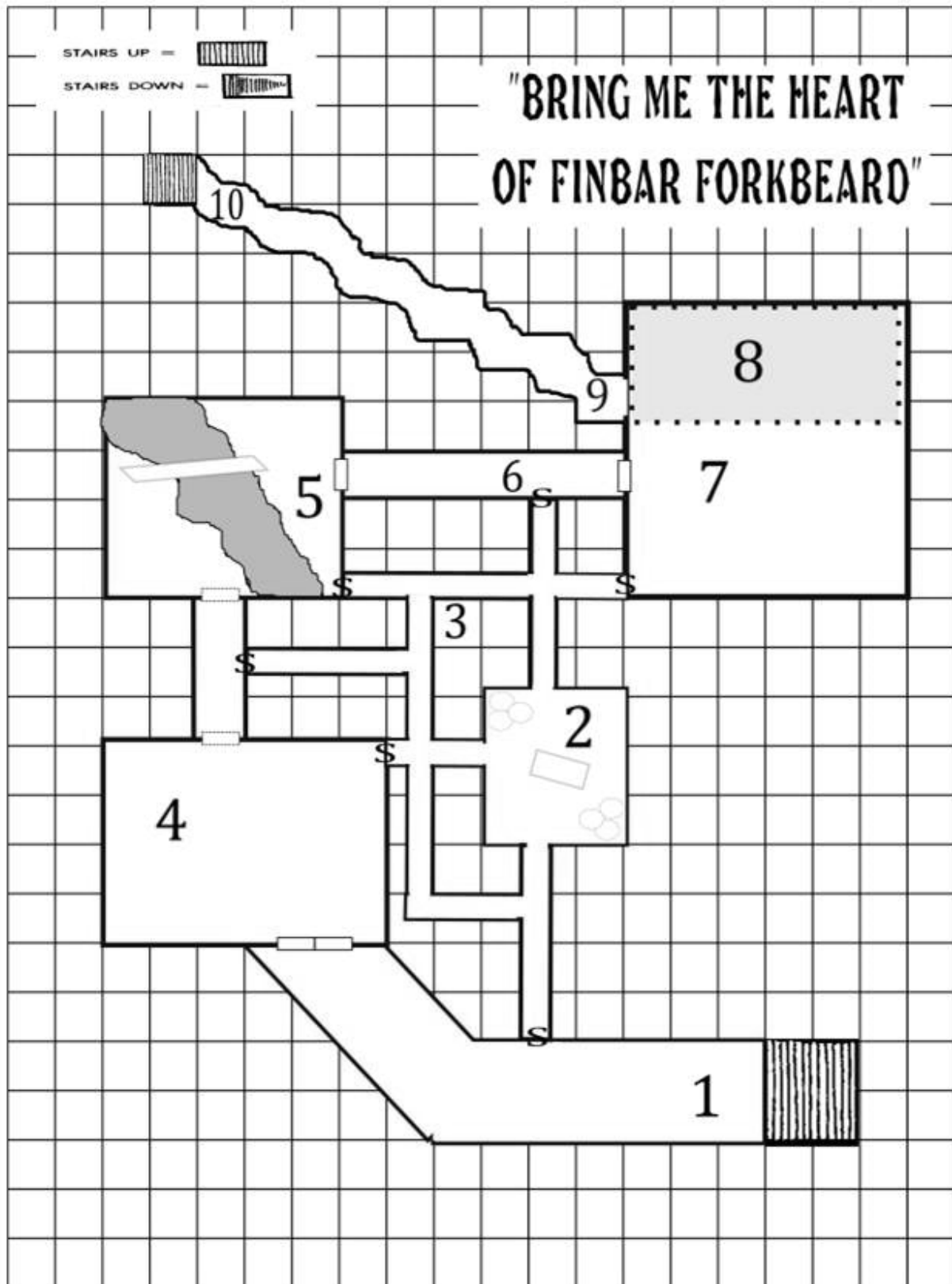
Referee's Notes

Show the players the Player Map of the dungeon and point out the service tunnels.

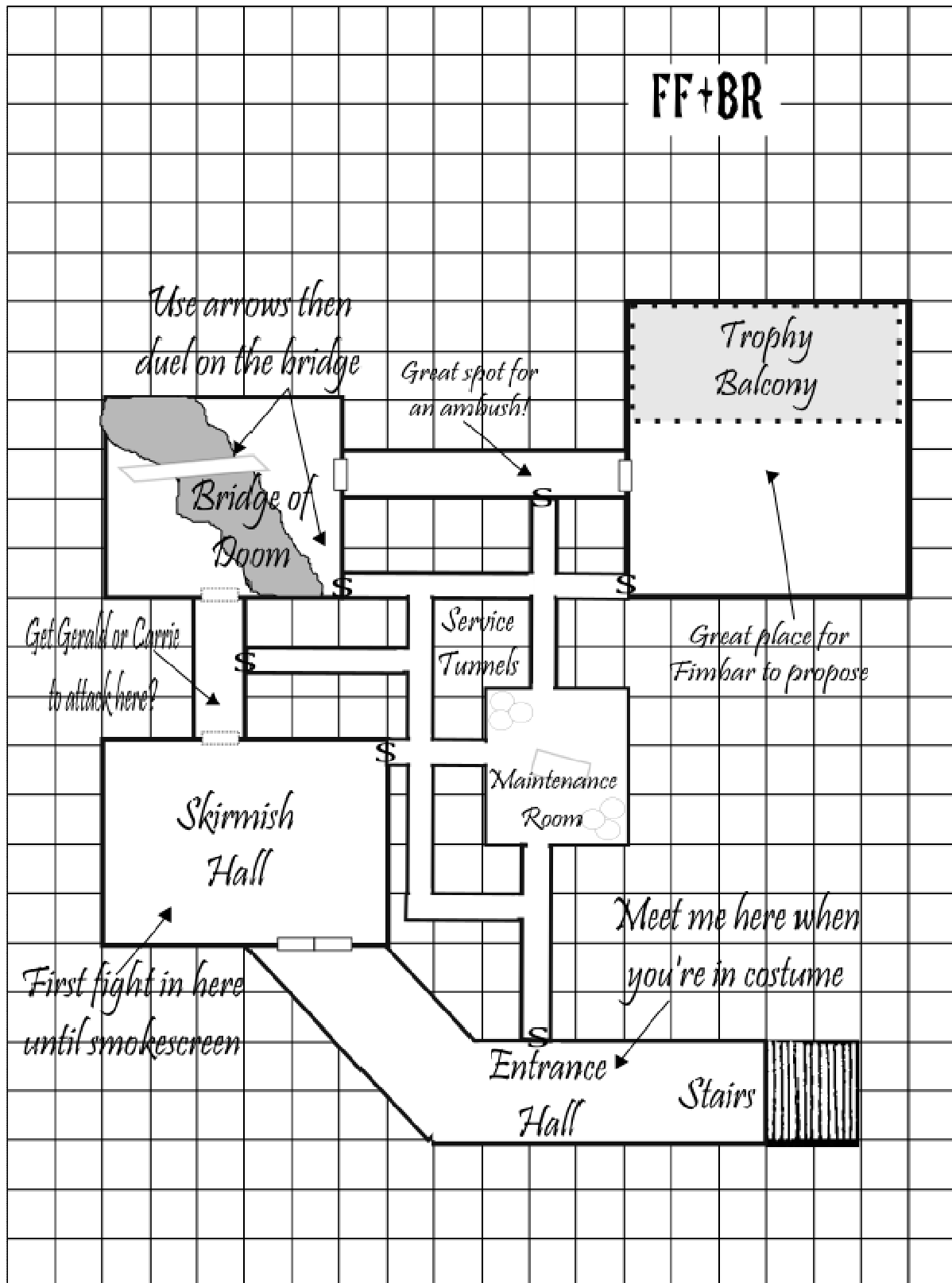
Why not make everyone to wear cardboard goblin ears while their characters are "in disguise"? They will thank you afterwards and lots of kiddy craft websites show you how:

<https://www.makeandtakes.com/little-leprechauns>





Bring Me the Heart of Finbar Forkbeard



The Training Dungeon

Brigid takes the PCs into her confidence (see **Appendix 2, the Chemical Equation**). Brigid shows them how to open the secret doors and warns them about the **Dungeon Cleanup Crew** (see room 2):

Gerald the Gelatinous Cube: *"He's a darling really and very old now. More of an oblong than a cube. He smells a bit and makes these wheezy noises so you should hear him coming. Please don't hurt him."*

Carrie the Cave Creeper: *"She's been in the wars, poor love, and only has three tentacles left and they don't really paralyse much, more a sort of tingling numb feeling. She's very affectionate. Don't overfeed her."*

Brigid issues the PCs with their weapons and arrows which are bated or blunted (**they inflict minimal damage**). She reassures them that her own and Finbar's weapons will be similarly safe and says that there are healing potions, nets, smoke bombs and stuff for controlling the monsters "somewhere in the maintenance room" (see room 2)

The players will be given their Goblin Disguises and they have enough time to familiarise themselves with the Maintenance Room (2) and Service Tunnels (3) but see no sign of Carrie or Gerald at this point. Once they are in costume, must meet Brigid in the Dungeon Entrance (1).

1. The Dungeon Entrance

12' high corridor

Brigid waits here, in mail armour, holding a lantern. She checks the PCs' Goblin Disguises and briefs them on their tasks:

- attack in the Skirmish Room (4) then escape under cover of smoke
- if possible shepherd Gerald or Carrie (see 3) into the corridor between the Skirmish Room (4) and the Bridge (5) and be ready to attack in order to cover the hapless monster's retreat
- attack again in the Bridge Room (5) and stage a mock fight on the bridge then flee
- use nets to ambush Finbar in the final corridor (6) and take him through the service tunnels (2) to the Trophy Room (7) so that Brigid can come to his rescue and win his love

Finbar arrives early. Brigid tells the PCs to pretend to be dead so that she can appear to have defeated them single handed. See **Appendix 2, the Meet-Cute**, for details.

2. The Maintenance Room

7' high

This dirty room is lit by a lamp on the central table. The walls are stacked with barrels and crates. Each time they are in this room, the PCs might notice something useful (1 in 6 for each PC); roll 1d8 to determine what is found:

1. **The Rattle:** a ratchet noisemaker that makes a clacking sound when it is spun around; this will cause Gerald to retreat away from it
2. **Carriion Food Pellets:** a bowl of disgusting slime balls that emit a foul smell: they are food treats for Carrie the Cave Creeper
3. **Crawler Slime:** pots of rancid paste that, if applied to bare skin, makes the character immune to Cave Creeper paralysis for an hour (at the cost of stinking of vinegar)
4. A **potion of healing**
5. A **smoke bomb:** thrown to the floor hard enough, it creates dense smoke for 1d4 rounds in a 5' radius that cannot be seen through.
6. A **flash bomb:** thrown to the floor hard enough, it creates a flash that stuns unprepared onlookers who forfeit their actions in the next round
7. A **net:** a surprised target must Save vs Wand or be trapped in the net for 1d6+1 rounds
8. A box of **2d6 Dwarfish candles:** burns for 20 minutes, light in a 15' radius and ignites automatically when you blow on the wick.

3. Service Tunnels

5' high

These 5' wide tunnels are sized for Dwarfs: man-sized characters will be cramped here (-2 to attacks and saves). The secret doors have spy-holes and the acoustics allow PCs in the tunnel to hear perfectly what is going on in the room or corridor beyond. The doors can be locked from inside the shaft to prevent pursuit.

The 'Wandering Monsters' in the shafts are Gerald and Carrie. Roll **1d12** every time the PCs pass through the shafts after the adventure has started.

- 1-3 Gerald the Gelatinous Cube (HP 10)
- 4-6 Carrie the Cave Creeper (HP 8)
- 7-12 Nothing but the distant sound of Gerald's wheezing

Gerald the Cube

Old Gelatinous Cube AC 8, 8hp, DEX 5, HD 2, AT smother for 1d4 + paralysation

- Surprises on 1-3 (d6)
- Save vs Poison at +2 (due to Gerald's age) or be paralysed for 2d4 rounds

Gerald tactics

Gerald is very decrepit. He's not very transparent any more, makes a wheezing sound when he moves (at half speed) and is accompanied by the smell of curdled milk. He will retreat away from the Rattle (above) and can be shepherded towards an ambush point quite easily. He has the personality of an old, blind, smelly dog that moves towards noise but is easily startled. If he paralyses all the PCs or NPCs he will not eat them but instead creep away, shivering with anxiety.

Carrie the Crawler

Cave Creeper AC 7, 9hp, DEX 10, HD 3, AT tentacles for 0 damage + paralysation

- Save vs Poison or be paralysed for 2d4 rounds

Carrie tactics

Carrie only has 3 tentacles and the personality of a playful puppy with limited attention span. She will bound towards PCs, caressing them with her tentacles, then wander off. She will chase after her food pellets. If fed more than 3, she will curl up in a corridor (blocking it) and go to sleep for 10-60 minutes: nothing can wake her.

Getting either monster to Brigid's ambush point is quite easy. Neither of them is aggressive and they will both try to run away if injured. Brigid would like the PCs to intervene to stop any harm coming to them (they have to spend a round being attacked and can then retreat through the secret door).

4. Skirmish Room

15' high

Vents in the floor squirt rolling smoke into this room, to ankle-height. This is the scene for the first battle between the PCs (as 'Goblins') and Brigid, Finbar and Hildy. The PCs will learn that Hildy's weapons are NOT bated: she inflicts normal damage with her enthusiastic whacks.

Brigid Rosenbrow

Dwarf AC 4, 5hp, DEX 10, HD 1, AT spear for 1d6 (bated, minimal damage)

Chainmail, shield, bated spear, potion of healing, lantern

Brigid tactics

Brigid will rush into the attack with loud whoops, targeting the largest PC.

Finbar Forkbeard

Dwarf AC 4, 16hp, DEX 15, HD 3, AT axe for 1d6 (bated, minimal damage)

Chainmail, shield, bated axe

- +1 bonus to missiles from high Dexterity

Finbar tactics

Finbar is a tactical fighter and targets the weakest-looking PC (i.e. the smallest).



Hildy Heffenhammer

Dwarf AC 3, 10hp, DEX 13, HD 2, AT warhammer for 1d6 or light crossbow for 1d6 (both deal normal damage)

Platemail, warhammer, crossbow, magic rod of fiery smiting (see 5)

- +1 bonus to missiles from high Dexterity

Hildy tactics

Hildy stays close to Finbar, attacking an adjacent PC or the same PC.

Finbar enjoys the fight, bellowing: "These Goblins are a sorry lot. I barely feel their pitiful blows!"

Hildy calls back: "In truth, dear one, they are daunted by your battle prowess - see how this one quails as I smite him!"

After one round of melee, there's a hissing sound and the smoke in the room rises. The smoke rises by 0-3 (1d4-1) feet at the end of each subsequent round. Once the smoke is 5' high the Dwarves are blinded and the PCs can retreat freely.

The Fog of Love

Of course, if the PCs are Dwarfs, Halflings or other small folk, they will be blinded too. Have fun with characters bumping into each other, mistaking themselves for each other: let Hildy or Brigid (or both) throw herself at a PC, believing them to be Finbar.

In the confusion, Finbar blunders back out of the room but Brigid and Hildy quarrel (see **Appendix 2, A Sexy Complication**).

Brigid's new plan

If the Dwarfs get dangerously low on Hit Points (ie Brigid on 2HP, Finbar on single figures, Hildy on less than 5), Brigid will use her healing potion to cure them. While Hildy goes looking for Finbar, Brigid uses the secret door to find the PCs and suggest a new plan (see **Appendix 2, the Hook**). Alternatively, she will do this after the Gerald/Carrie ambush in the next corridor, should the other Dwarfs become paralysed.

5. The Bridge Room

20' high

This high chamber has a chasm dividing it in two, bridged by a 3' wide plank. This is the second combat encounter (unless the PCs staged an ambush involving Gerald or Carrie in the corridor outside). Finbar, Hildy and Brigid emerge on one side of the chasm, the PC 'Goblins' on the other.

Finbar and Hildy will open fire with crossbows (Hildy's quarrels are NOT blunted) and the PCs can return fire while Brigid heads to the Bridge for a mock fight with one of the PCs.

After 1d4 rounds of this, Hildy pulls out her **Rod of Fiery Smiting** and uses it to bathe the ledge where the PCs are standing in flames. At least the fire and smoke will cover their retreat!

Hildy's Rod of Fiery Smiting

The Rod sends out a funnel of flame, setting fire to everything in front of it in an area 30' deep and 30' wide at the end. Creatures in the target zone must Save vs Wands or catch fire. Characters on fire take 1HP damage every round until they can leave the scorched zone and roll on the floor for a round, beating at the flames. The Rod has 5 uses left.

After the fight, Finbar is intrigued by Hildy's item and inspects it closely.

"A fascinating device, my dear," says Finbar, frowning as he considers the fiery rod.

Hildy blushes and simpers with delight.

"Elfs make such cunning toys!" Finbar adds with a sniff, dismissing the artefact.

Brigid allows herself a broad and shameless grin at Hildy's dismay.

6. The Abduction Point

10' high

This is the location where Brigid wants the PCs to abduct Finbar so that she can rescue him.

After the events of the Hook, Brigid instructs the PCs to abduct Hildy instead (and after the Bridge incident they will probably be only too glad to).

The Abduction

The secret door is silent, allowing for total surprise. A smoke bomb, net (see room 2) or the paralysing powers of Carrie or Gerald could bring this about. If the players come up with a good plan, it will automatically succeed: don't let it fail just for a bad roll.

If the PCs succeed in this, they will overhear Finbar confess his feelings for Brigid (see **Appendix 2, the Swivel**).

7. Trophy Hall

20' high

This big chamber has a 20' high ceiling and the far end of it is dominated by a raised platform (10' high) on which the trophies of the Rosenbrow dungeon cadets are displayed – along with the fake **Ring of Broddick**. A ladder allows people to climb to the platform.

The PCs are supposed to bring the captured Hildy here and put up a mock fight so that Brigid and Finbar can rescue her. However, it is likely that Brigid and Finbar will get here before the PCs can make it round the service tunnels to the secret door.

It sounds like a fight has already broken out in the Trophy Room. Inside you can see Goblins – real ones! – surrounding Brigid and Finbar. Some of them capture Finbar in a weighted net and drag him to the big platform, where he is hauled up by an evil-looking Dwarf who seems to command the Goblins. Brigid cries out in alarm, but she is beset on all sides by attackers and her blunted weapon cannot cut through them to rescue Finbar.

Player Character responses

Obviously, someone needs to go to Brigid's aid. If Hildy is conscious, she will join in but remember that the PCs are disguised as Goblins, so the fight can have comedy misunderstandings until they take off those fake ears! If the PCs have Gerald or Carrie nearby, this would be a good time for someone to round the monsters up and direct them against the Goblins.

The Goblins are equal in number to the PCs, plus three.

Real Goblins

Goblins AC 6, 3hp, DEX 10, HD 1, AT pickaxes for 1d6

Goblin tactics

With Finbar captured, the Goblins fight to stop anyone reaching the ladder to **9**. The fight lasts for 1d4 melee rounds before the events on the Platform (**8**) take place.

8. Display Platform

Raised 10', 10' height

Earlier that day, the (fake) **Ring of Broddick** rests on a wooden pedestal, covered with a half-globe of glass. The back wall collapses and Black Olaf enters with his Goblins. He seizes the Ring and his Goblins descend to the room below (7) to explore.

Now, with Finbar in his power, Olaf exults over his captive:

"I have you now, Forkbeard!" the evil-looking Dwarf roars, standing over his captive. "Do you remember me? I see by the fear in your eyes you have not forgotten Black Olaf! I possess the Ring of Broddick," he adds, flourishing the ring on his left hand, "and tortures vile await you. Say farewell to your loved one! And to your life!!!!"

With that, Olaf kicks away the ladder and bundles Finbar into the tunnel (9).

Goblin responses

When Olaf escapes the Goblins will wail and rush to the platform, scrabbling (and failing) to climb up after him; they will ignore the PCs for 1d3 rounds. Hildy's **Rod of Fire Smiting** might be useful against them.

9. The Dark Tunnel

5' wide and 5' high

This tunnel is an old mining seam, widened by Black Olaf's pick-wielding Goblins. When the PCs get here, Olaf has fled ahead into the darkness.

If Hildy is present, the PCs will need to explain themselves (their Goblin Disguises won't bear close scrutiny). Hildy could react in different ways:

Furious at the deception, she curses Brigid for a trickster and an elfling and storms out – too full of her own wounded pride to think of Finbar (and, if reminded of his plight, she sneers that he deserves what he gets for dallying with a traitress and a liar like Brigid)

Reconciled to the deception, she doesn't dare enter the Tunnel, because Olaf's reputation as a warrior is too daunting.

Hildy calls down the tunnel: "Have heart, my sweetling, for I shall return with allies strong and sergeants-at-mace to deliver you!" Then she leaves in a hurry.

Other Hildy responses

These responses depict Hildy as unworthy of Finbar's love, which is as it should be. However, the players might need assistance at this point so the GM could allow Hildy to accompany them (with very bad grace).

The final confrontation is down to Brigid and the PCs, with their bated weapons. However, they might think to retrieve pickaxes from the Goblins. See **Appendix 2, The Dark Moment**.

10. The Showdown on the Staircase

5' high

Olaf drags the struggling Finbar to the staircase that connects with the mines. He starts dragging Finbar up the steps but the PCs arrive at this point.

Olaf the Black

Dwarf AC 2, 25hp, DEX 16, HD 3, AT axe for 1d6

Plate mail, shield, axe, fake Ring of Broddick

Olaf tactics

Olaf has high ground on the steps (+1 to hit) and man-sized opponents are restricted in the tunnel (-2 to hit and no shields). Two PCs can engage Olaf in melee combat and one other could fire missiles at him.

After he first takes damage, Olaf wastes a round pointing the (fake) Ring of Broddick at his enemies.

"By the Power of Broddick, die you peasants!"

You wince, but the magical ring does nothing at all. In a fury, Olaf plucks it from his finger and stamps on it.

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After dropping to single-figure HP, Olaf seizes Finbar and threatens to slit his throat with a knife.

Olaf places the cruel knife against Finbar's throat.

"I'll wash you in this fool's blood if you don't step back. Good! Further back!"

Brigid Rosenbrow lays down her weapon, saying:

"I am a lady of note in these halls, a wealthy inheritance rests upon me: much will my kinfolk pay for my ransom. Take me instead."

Seeing Finbar's furious resistance to this idea, Olaf throws the bound dwarf down the steps and seizes Brigid. Brigid struggles with him and he stabs her.

Player responses

The PCs can take advantage of the confusion to attack Olaf at +2, ignoring his shield.

If Olaf survives this round of melee, he will break free and rush up the steps into the mines. PCs can pursue or let him go; he's not important any more. Brigid needs treatment – a Healing Potion, such as the one she carries or one from the Maintenance Room (2), will revive her.

The PCs will witness a tender scene between Finbar and Brigid (see **Appendix 2, Joyful Defeat**).

Appendix 1: The Revenge of Gerald

Gerald and Carrie make useful allies in the fight against the Goblins, since it is likely the PCs are very weakened. If Gerald paralyses/kills a Goblin, he will feed on the creature, with dramatic results.

Gerald absorbs the hapless Goblin and his lumpy shape quivers as it suffuses with a deep red colour. He starts to grow, filling out into 10' by 10' cubic shape. The red hue fades leaving Gerald translucent and almost invisible, except for the dissolving bones of the Goblin floating in the midst.

The rejuvenated Gerald attacks as **4HD monster** and **doubles his Hit Points**; his poison now inflicts **2d4 damage** and **paralyses with normal effectiveness** (for half an hour). This Gerald is much more aggressive (including towards the PCs) and is only directed by the Rattle if he fails a Save vs Spells.

Appendix 2: Romantic Beats

Billy Mernit (*Writing the Romantic Comedy, 2001*) offers 7 'beats' for classic romantic comedy. In terms of the famous Freytag model of dramatic structure, beats 1-2 make up Act I (Rising), beats 3-5 form Act II (Climax), and beats 5-7 create Act III (Sinking or Return).

Here are some scenes to insert constructed around Mernit's template:

Beat 1: The Chemical Equation

Brigid Rosenbrow takes the PCs into her confidence:

"Do you know of a dwarf named Finbar Forkbeard? But of course you do; he's famous, isn't he? He slew the wyrm of Bodach Fen, stole the Necklace of the Grebbings, hunted the Wolf of Glenfarg, so many adventures. And of course, that beard..."

Brigid Rosenbrow's cheeks have become very rosy indeed, but she recovers herself.

"I am a woman of means, an heiress, and I intend to take a husband, but why would a hero like Finbar Forkbeard look with affection upon such as me? No, his warrior soul can only love a warrior-maid. And thus shall I prove myself to him. Help me," she pleads, eyes glistening, "in a noble deception, a pantomime of love, if you please. I have circulated a rumour of a treasure, the Ring of Broddick, and Finbar and I shall quest for it together."

"My family's training dungeon shall pass for the Ring's hiding place and you, my friends, shall disguise yourselves as goblin-folk. There can be no danger, for all our weapons shall be blunted, but Finbar will be deceived by our mock battles only to be undeceived when he looks upon me and sees that I have a warrior's heart. Then, I hope, I pray, he will love me."

"Will you do this for me, for the love I bear for Finbar Forkbeard – or if not for love, then for a princely reward, for my coffers are rich and my gratitude is boundless?"

Beat 2: The Meet-Cute

Brigid Rosenbrow and Finbar Forkbeard meet and Hildy Heffenhammer arrives:

"Quickly," Brigid Rosenbrow whispers, "lie down and pretend to be dead and that I slew you."

You lie yourselves across the floor and Brigid stands in your midst, holding her lantern and spear. Finbar Forkbeard descends the steps.

"Ho there," his voice booms, "what is this? A battle? Goblins, by my father's beard! And a warrior maid standing proud amongst the fallen! Name yourself, bold lady, for I am Finbar called Forkbeard."

"Finbar Forkbeard, I have been expecting you," Brigid replies, "for I am Brigid Rosenbrow and, while I waited for you here, these wandering monsters chanced upon me. More the worse for them, for my spear thirsted and they have slaked its thirst with their blood."

"Not that much blood," Finbar mutters and nudges one of you with his boot. "This one doesn't look quite dead yet. I shall chop off its head."

"No need, no need," says Brigid quickly, "better to let the nasty creature die a slow death, don't you think?"

"By all that glitters," exclaims Finbar in admiration, "but you have a sharp blade for a soul."

"She certainly does," says a new voice, a woman's voice, "and we shall be shield-maidens together in this day's great deeds."

"This," says Finbar, introducing the newcomer, "is Hildy Heffenhammer, an adventuring lady, my companion in valour."

Brigid greets this unexpected addition to her party. "Charmed I'm sure," she says, in a voice like frozen milk. "What a pleasant surprise to have another woman join our party."

"I am sure we shall be best of friends," replies Hildy, with no more warmth. "You have certainly made a fine start at depopulating this dungeon. Although this one isn't quite dead yet..."

"Never mind that," says Brigid, drawing the other two Dwarves away down the corridor, "we must press on. I'm sure there are plenty more enemies to face up ahead."

Once the Dwarves turn the corner, their voices fade and you can all sit up and breathe deeply.

Beat 3: A Sexy Complication

While Finbar explores, Brigid and Hildy quarrel:

The two Dwarf ladies call out to each other through the shifting smoke cloud.

"He's a fine warrior, don't you think?" says Hildy Heffenhammer. "So vigorous, such clean sword-strokes...!"

"That beard!" sighs Brigid.

"What's that?" cries Hildy, from further off.

"Nothing. A cough! This smoke!"

"Yes, curse this smoke! What do you think of his beard?"

"His beard?" says Brigid. "I hadn't noticed it."

"We are well-suited, he and I, don't you think?"

Brigid doesn't reply.

"You will have noticed," continues Hildy, "that there is an understanding between us, he and I."

"An understanding?" says Brigid, her voice faint.

Bring Me the Heart of Finbar Forkbeard

"Yes. An unspoken promise, you could say. You will have seen the way he looks at me. The proposal cannot be far off now. You will attend the wedding, will you not? For I feel we are sisters-in-battle, dear Brigid, and that will make you his sister-in-law? Is that not a merry jest? Why do you not answer, dear Brigid? And what is that horrid sobbing sound?"

"The smoke," Brigid replies at last, "is getting in my eyes."

Beat 4: The Hook

Brigid turns to the PCs with a new plan:

You hear Brigid Rosenbrow calling for you in the service tunnels and meet her in the maintenance room.

"There's a new plan," she says grimly. "The Heffenhammer woman has to go."

You are inclined to agree, but wonder what she intends.

"You remember how I intended for you to ambush Finbar and take him to the Trophy Room, for me to rescue him? I want you to abduct Hildy instead."

That doesn't sound easy, since Hildy's weapons are very real.

"There is a net in here somewhere -- over there, in the crates. Smoke and flash bombs too. Have you found them yet? After the Bridge of Doom, there's a silent secret door. Jump out, flash-bang, in the net with her and drag her away. Maybe get Carrie to keep her quiet."

That sounds better, but what will Brigid do?

"I just need some time alone with Finbar, to find out if he really is promised to her. Then we can rescue Hildy in the Trophy Room - or just find her abandoned there, if you have bruises enough for this day's work. Do this for me, my friends. A Dwarf's love is like a river of lava: slow but inexorable and consuming every obstacle!"

Beat 5: Swivel

Finbar admits feelings for Brigid:

"Be not dismayed, Finbar Forkbeard," says Brigid, "we shall rescue your fair companion!"

"By my father's beard," exclaims Finbar, "you are as resolute as iron."

"I know how much she means to you."

"Resolute, aye," says Finbar in a softer tone, "and as true as silver. Can a maiden as brave and noble as you lack for a host of suitors?"

Brigid replies in a breathless voice, "Not all men see me as you do, sir."

"Then I am the prospector who has found the seam of gold, which the other miners overlooked."

There is a long pause.

Brigid asks, "Have you not promised yourself to Mistress Heffenhammer?"

"Nay, lady. A bachelor adventurer I have been and so thought to remain, until I met with you. Hildy is..."

"Just a friend?"

He replies, "Aye. And no more than that."

Brigid laughs with delight. "Then I know where your friend may be found and unharmed too, I shall warrant. Let us go together and rescue her. The Ring of Broddick means nothing to me now."

"Nor to me, brave lady," Finbar answers, "though when this quest is done, I shall have gentle use of a ring for you, if you are minded to accept it."

Brigid is too overcome to reply.

Beat 6: The Dark Moment

Finbar has been captured and Brigid prepares to go after him.

"Friends," she says, "you have done all and more that I have asked and been well paid in bruises and indignities. I cannot ask more of you. Peril and death await up yonder passage, for Olaf the Black is a mighty opponent and vigorous in his hate. Yet I must go after my love, a true warrior at last, if only to die under Olaf's axe. Must a maiden go into such dark places alone?"

In this moment, lamp in one hand and spear in the other, Brigid looks every inch the warrior-lady she has only play-acted so far.

"Let us go together then," she says. "A Dwarf's love is like the trembling mountain, that spends itself in fire and ash, then falls cold and silent for ever after."

Beat 7: Joyful Defeat

Finbar and Brigid are united at last:

Finbar bends over Brigid, whose rosy face is now as pale as milk. He gently takes away her helm and her unbound hair falls across her cheeks. His tears fall upon her closed eyes.

"Never was a maiden braver, nor a heart more true. Live, sweet warrior, live and be only mine and let Death remain a bachelor in my place."

Brigid's eyes flutter open.

"If you command me, then live I shall. It is the first of many duties I shall discharge for you, my loving friend."

"Say not friend, but rather husband, servant, life-long companion, slave and fool."

"Husband," Brigid replies and smiles, "is a very fine name indeed."

Finbar kisses the tresses of her hair and she the braids of his beard and you onlookers, at last, retreat, that the couple might enjoy the first of many private felicities in the long life of the Dwarfs.

Commentary

In order to tell a coherent story, it's necessary that this be a linear dungeon. The players are on rails and move from one set-piece scene to another. The benefit of this is that a strong narrative emerges.

The disadvantage is the lack of player freedom and autonomy.

There are some choices for the players to make in the middle act, especially with rounding up Gerald or Cassie to stage the 'wandering monster attack'.

They might also use these monsters to help abduct Hildy or even to pursue Black Olaf.

Don't discourage this sort of creativity - there's little enough opportunity for it in a scenario like this - but remember that speed is important in pursuing Olaf. If someone heads back into the service tunnels to find one of the monsters or retrieve bombs from the Maintenance Room, the rest must pursue Olaf and the absent PC (and the monster) can rejoin the showdown after some time has passed (say, 1d6+4 rounds).

Brigid has many opportunities to sneak away from her party and interact with the players, if only by whispering through the spyholes in the secret doors. As a GM, roleplaying her emotional rollercoaster is part of the fun of the story.

The PCs might capture Hildy at an earlier stage of the story. In this case, allow her to break free from her net or recover from paralysis to rejoin Finbar and Brigid at an opportune moment (e.g. on the Bridge, wielding her Rod of Fiery Smiting). Beat #5 (Swivel) can be inserted at a different moment if need be.

If the PCs are very weakened, Hildy doesn't have to depart at the end and could join them for the showdown. It's important that she demonstrates the hardness of her character and shallowness of her affections, perhaps by sneering at Finbar for getting captured and making it clear she is only pursuing Olaf for her own glorious reputation.

Gerald and Carrie are comedy interludes and a possible resource in the showdown. Don't employ them as 'wandering monsters' and force the players to fight them. Gerald might become a weapon the players can direct at Olaf. Don't let the monsters steal the show. If the PCs direct Gerald or Carrie at Olaf, he will use Finbar as a shield against the monster or hold a knife to the Dwarf as a bargaining chip, prompting Brigid to offer herself in exchange.

The romantic 'beats' are intended to be read aloud, but confident GMs might prefer to roleplay Brigid, Hildy and Finbar more naturally, ignoring the scripted dialogue to present the story in their own way. For less ambitious GMs, the scripted beats help structure the story.

AFTERWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These scenarios are offered to readers with several hopes. Firstly, that they might be useful. Long-running campaigns are incredibly fulfilling, but we often find ourselves coming together, hoping to roleplay, but without a scenario ready to use. Old School Fantasy RPGs allow characters to be created swiftly and these scenarios should all be completed in a single sitting.

Secondly, that they might prompt reflection. Tristan Tanner's '30 Minute Dungeon' is a wonderful creative discipline and I hope these scenarios showcase what can be done with the medium. They are not the best or the most ambitious scenarios that can be delivered in a single session, but I believe they represent a wide range of genres, structures and tones and offer ideas that other GMs will adapt to their own games.

My thanks to Michael Thomas of **Dreamscape Design** who proofread the document and suggested edits to make it compatible with **BLUEHOLME™**.

The text is entirely my own and the images are all in the public domain. Interior maps were created using Inkscape and regional maps using Inkarnate Pro. The cover image is taken from William Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea* (1819-20).

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