

# CASTLES & CRUSADES



## THE LURE OF DELUSION

STEPHEN CHENAULT





# THE LURE OF DELUSION

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This module is designed  
for 6-8 characters with  
a challenge level of 2-4.  
Overland.



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This adventure begins in the town of Lead Hill in the Neighbor's Mill Inn. Here the characters learn that someone or something has kidnapped several local children from the outlying farmsteads and taken them into the Darkenfold forest. The town sheriff, spying the adventurers need for food, comfort, and even supplies offers to pay them handsomely to track the perpetrators down, kill, or apprehend them, and bring the children back safely. The ensuing pursuit brings the adventurers into the very southern edges of the Darkenfold Forest, specifically into the Elkhorn Deepes. Once in the eaves they must track the kidnappers and rescue the children.

The adventure is a mid level adventure. There should be 6-8 characters of 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> level. The level spread should reflect the number of characters. If there are four characters, they should be 5th level. If there are six characters they should be 4th level. Though it is not necessary having a ranger in the party, it is highly advantageous. There are two rangers supplied with the pre-generated characters at the end of this book.

This adventure was play tested in TLG's weekly C&C game and written for the Castles & Crusades® tournament adventure run by John Wright and Eric Piper at GenCon 2009.

## INTRODUCTION

Lead Hill is a small coastal town built in an inlet upon the shores of the Bay of Brand. The inlet protects the town from the ravages of the deep waters of the sea, though on occasion hurricanes and other violent storms flood the area, causing the locals all manner of problems. The town is sandwiched between the waters of the inlet and a large bluff, one of the only areas of the coast that rises to any height. Beyond the town the ground rises in a gentle but constant slope on and into the valleys of the deepes of the Darkenfold Forest. The first trees, noticeable in the distance, are little more than a haze upon the northern horizon. These are the Elkhorn Deepes and they mark the southernmost portion of the great Darkenfold forest. The Elkhorn Deepes are not far enough to make wood cutting a difficult profession, and are not close enough to allow the denizens of the forest to molest the town. The trees are old, growing in the rough broken ground. The underbrush is sparse and the whole area is generously supplied with water through countless small streams and brooks.

Lead Hill boasts a wall, about 12 feet high and 3 feet high at the base, all of relatively new construction. It has six watch towers unevenly distributed around the town. Each of these towers sits upon the wall itself, or rather; they are part of the wall. There are four gates, one opening upon the harbor while the others face the north-east, north, and south-west. The local authority, the Sheriff, Dereck Meackon, closes the gates every night on his rounds, making certain the town is secure from whatever may creep down from the forest.

Most people in the area live within the walls, making their living in one trade or another. There are about 3000 people in all. Some however live outside the walls of Lead Hill, farmers, herdsman, wood cutters, and the like. Their fortified farm houses dot the countryside as do several small thorps. The thorps boast wooden palisades. The most notable resident who dwells beyond

the walls is the mage Andru, whose tower sits upon the bluff, overlooking the town.

In all its dangerous country, for all manner of creatures live within the Elkhorn Deepes. Most notable are several clans of evil fey and creatures of a magical nature. Few venture out at night. Fewer still brave the forest. Only the experienced wood cutters and rangers will do so.

Recently however the walls and fortified houses have proved insufficient to keep the townsfolk safe. Several murders have occurred and an evil hag recently driven from the town. In this particular incident the hag bewitched the wizard and bound him to her for a great long while. When a passing group of adventurers took the job to investigate the wizard's disappearance they uncovered the truth and drove the hag into the forest, where they presume she still dwells.

For awhile things were quiet, but the town was shocked from its comfort when a local hunter went missing. Some of his friends found his body several days later. If that wasn't shocking enough, someone kidnapped two children from their home in one of the outlying thorps.

The townsfolk are desperate for their return for they fear that if too much time passes, whatever kidnapped and killed the hunter will do the same for the children. The few rangers have been sent into the forest, but to no avail and time is running short. The Sheriff is desperate to find someone to take up the task of hunting these children and as soon as he sees the characters he offers them the job.

## FOR THE CASTLE KEEPER

If you are a player character or intend to play in this adventure read no further. Not knowing the nature of the kidnappers encapsulates much of the adventure's enjoyment. So, in short, **READ NO FURTHER**, unless you are a Castle Keeper or the CK's appointed representative.

Recently a lamia has moved into the area. A troop of stalwart Halflings drove her from her home in the northern forests, and she has settled in the Elkhorn Deepes. Gone now are her lush gardens and the palace where she lived, replaced with a rough camp in the dark, damp wood. Much of her menagerie is gone as well, lost to the Halflings, either freed or killed. She managed only to keep a few choice pieces, and these she has imprisoned in rude cages, with chains and ropes in her encampment. She is as enraged over the destruction of her collection.

She is desperate to build a new home, but more than that she is desperate to replace the missing pieces of her collection. To this end she has been watching the town of Lead Hill, looking for choice creatures to ensnare and kidnap. These she plans on using to build her new home and to people her collection. She has managed, through both gold and her charm ability, to enlist the services of a bartender in the Neighbor Mill. Old Nat Hobbs is bitter and lives much of his life in pain as his numerous wounds have healed irregularly over the years and left him with too much joint pain. He gladly accepts the pay of the lamia and feeds her information on the locals.

She first kidnapped a local woodsman, through her charm spells she gleaned what information she could from him. She learned of Lead Hill and the folk who lived in the surround area. Afterwards she determined he was too crass for her entourage. Slaying him, she left him for the townsfolk to find.

The night previous to the character's arrival in town the lamia took the paladin, one of her more powerful servants, to serve as her guard, as well as a satyr and a harpy. They were to kidnap the children. She ventured to one of the small outlying thorps. The satyr rode upon her back, the paladin walked and the harpy flew. They gathered outside the palisade. The harpy flew over the wall with the satyr, landed upon the roof of the victim's house. There she lowered the satyr to the ground and laying flat on her stomach opened the window latch. In doing all this she scratched the roof tiles, dislodged a few, and left a few foul smelling feathers in the tile-work. The satyr then jumped into the window, playing a soft, bewitching tune that woke only the children. His enticing music led the two small children from the house.

Alex, 9 years old, and his sister, Lianna, 7, climbed out the window and followed the satyr, completely charmed. The harpy bore them over the wall to the waiting lamia and together the whole party fled the scene. They have entered the forest where they are presently resting and regrouping. Their movement is slow as the paladin is heavily armed.

## PLAYING IN THE TOURNEY [2]

This adventure is designed in four parts and should be playable in one solid 5 hour game session. Each part should take just over an hour or so to play through. Of course the time must vary from group to group. The players should not be allowed to debate endlessly about what they have learned from who or where. The Castle Keeper must move the adventure along, cutting off debate where it needed. It frequently rains in the Darkenfold, and the constant threat of rain and the destruction of the lamia's tracks should supply the CK with sufficient fodder to keep the party moving.

It is important that the characters are kept guessing about the nature of what they are pursuing, because the trap set by the lamia at the end only works if they do not suspect a centaur-like creature. The confusion of the lamia's tracks (see below) along with the satyr's supply perfect misdirection.

Misdirection is critical to the fun of the adventure. The players should stay in the dark, guessing what they are encountering to the very end as eventually the lamia lays a careful trap for the party (see below). The CK must curb the characters' natural suspicion to any and all occurrences if the encounter is to come off as designed. This misdirection is relatively simple to do through the use of the Siege Mechanic.

Even novice players are going to know what attribute checks are, when they make them. Experienced players are going to attempt to figure out exactly why they are making the checks. So at the game's beginning, have everyone make an intelligence save. Allow them to dutifully report this number and write it down. The save is for the final encounter, when they see the lamia lying upon the ground with a *hallucinatory terrain* spell about her. It's a very

difficult check to make (see below) and even if they see through it, it may not impact their actions. Keep this number tucked away for the end of the game. The reason to make this check now is to keep the characters from becoming instantly suspicious when they enter the encampment where they would be forced to make a check. Every so often have the characters make a check, pretend to record it. This keeps them jumping for when they have to make actual attributes.

## PART I BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure begins in the Neighbor's Mill Inn. The characters have only recently arrived and have just finished a large mid-morning breakfast of roasted venison, bread, and topped the whole meal off with a round of mead. They have settled into the early morning malaise and very soon cannot help but overhear the locals, many of whom are gathered around one long table or leaning in toward it. The previous evening's events dominate the conversation; the townsfolk mention a kidnapping, murder and something being drug into the woods.

If the characters engage the townsfolk, the people recount what they know with gusto. They are not shy about bringing the strangers into the conversation. There are many travelers in these parts and it is not uncommon to see well armed and equipped mercenaries and the like hunting the Elkhorn Deeps for treasure and glory. When and if the characters become engaged in the conversation it begins to attract everyone in the tavern. Barkeepers wander over as do all the patrons. The mere hope that the strangers might attempt a rescue encourages everyone.

The conversation invariably leads to the hag that bewitched Andru the mage last winter. The creature charmed the mage and led him to believe she was a beautiful maiden, but she imprisoned him in his tower and left him there to rot. Another party of adventurers eventually drove her into the forest.

## LAWMAN

Whether the characters actively join the conversation or not, the Sheriff, Bardulf Layoman, notices them in the tavern and recognizes them for what they are, adventurers. He engages them about the evening's events and offers them a bounty if they hunt down the kidnappers and bring back the children (dead or alive he whispers). But he wants the creature or creatures that committed the crime destroyed. He offers them 500gp each, and the ability to equip themselves reasonably with food and traveling gear from the town's supplies. If asked why he does not send someone or do it himself he explains that the authorities in Brindisium (the overlords of the region) forbid him to venture from the town on official business without express permission. It would take weeks to gain such permission and by that time the children would be dead or the trail to cold too follow.

The villagers attempt to convince the characters as well.

**BARDULF LAYOMAN** (*He is a lawful good, 8th level fighter whose vital stats are HP 61 and AC 17. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and charisma. He wears +2 chainmail and carries a +2 longsword, dagger, and 300gp in coin and jewelry.*)



## SHIFTING EYES

Only a few within were not participating in the event. A dark cowed figure in the corner brooding over his drink ignores the conversation, as did a few clever looking merchants, and one of the bartenders, the elderly Nat Hobbs.

Astute characters might take notice of these exceptions. They are easy to see and even a casual glance reveals these men keeping quiet. If the players do not look around, have each roll a wisdom check (CL 4) to see if they notice.

Each of these men has their own reasons for not participating in the conversations.

The cowed figure is a wizard, Inine McKay, who has traveled up the long coast by himself and only lately arrived to town, some three days ago. He has come to town seeking to fulfill a vendetta against Andru the Mage who lives in the tower above. The two knew each other many years ago and it is Inine's belief that Andru stole some of his family heir looms, sold them to pay for his apprenticeship. Inine has harbored this grudge and only recently come to town to avenge it. He does not talk to anyone and keeps to himself.

Obviously, Inine has nothing to do with the missing children, though he remains very tight lipped about why he has come, who he is, and where he is going. If the characters question him he answers in vague half truths, trying to misdirect them. Of course if at any point they attempt to press the information out of him by force he reveals that he is an old friend of Andru's here to settle a score.

Inine McKay (He is a chaotic neutral 4th level wizard whose vital stats are HP 14 and AC 16. His primary attributes are dexterity, intelligence, and wisdom. His significant attributes are intelligence 17, constitution 15, and dexterity 18. He wears a +3 ring of protection, a ring of damage absorption that absorbs 1-3 hit points of damage per blow per round, and carries two healing potions, a potion of haste, and a wand of magic missiles with 33 charges. He has 500gp in coin and finery.)

The two merchants are smugglers. The forests of the Darkenfold hold many such people as they are safe from most law enforcement. They have lately arrived by ship and come to town to see what perspective markets there are in the region. Their ship, the Barrow, lies at anchor off the coast. They have only arrived this afternoon. They of course have no knowledge of anything that is going on in the town and can reveal nothing to the players.

If pressed the two men will explain that they are in the market to sell exotic goods and in turn they press the characters to come to their ship and shop for whatever they need. They do have a good store of standard equipment, weapons, and household goods. Nothing particularly exotic is on the Barrow, other than a very old monkey named Turnkey. They will sell it if the price is right, that being about 50gp.

Nat Hobbs is stand offish as well, as he suspects that the creature that has been paying him kidnapped the children. Now, he is just fearful that someone might make a connection between him and

the kidnappings. Thus, he is staying as far from the discussion as he can.

If the character's question him, he is visibly nervous and very stand offish. He attempts to put the characters off by changing the subject. However if pressure is put on him, and the Sheriff allows it, then Nat gets real surly. He becomes agitated and snaps back his answers as much as anything.

Sadly, he really knows very little having only met the creature a few times. He doesn't know the creature's real purpose, only assuming it was here to rob various people of their valuables. He explains the following:

"I don't know much sirs, really. I'm just a poor old man with little life left and less sight. I can't see well in the day, much less the dark. It was a creature most ugly, that witch that charmed our mage maybe. It was that foul and evil tempered. Seemed to be riding some beast with claws on its feet. I don't know. She bewitched me, bewitched me I tell you. Oh the horror!"

At this point Hobbs pretends to break down and weeps begging for mercy. He falls to his knees in front of one of the characters begging for his life. He then pulls a knife out and attempts to gut the character. While doing so he calls for his friends to aid him.

**NAT HOBBS** (This 4th level neutral evil, human fighter's vital stats are AC 12, HP 33. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity, and constitution. His significant attributes are strength 15 and dexterity 16. He fights with his fists or a boot dagger, or any weapon that comes to hand be it a chair, rock, or anything else.)

**TOUGHS x 4** (These neutral evil 0 level human thug's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 15, HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with clubs for 1d6 and daggers for 1d4 points of damage. They wear or carry studded leather armor, clubs, and daggers. They each have 2gp.)

The bar fight that follows soon includes the whole bar as Nat does have some friends about, but most try to stay clear. The sheriff keeps the fight from being too bloody.

The lamia actually met Hobbs in the forest while he was chopping wood. She cast hallucinatory terrain around her so that he could not see her true nature, hiding as she was in the brush. She attempted to charm him, but failing that, offered him gold for information. Hobbs being a disreputable sort took the coin and has left her messages in the forest, written on small scraps of paper. These contain the layout of the town, the various thorps, who lives where and other pieces of information.

Nat has nothing of value other than the gold the lamia has paid him over the last several weeks. This is in a small sack, under the floor boards of his room in the Neighbor's Mill. Searching the room does not easily reveal the hidden compartment (CL 10). If someone actively looks on the floor for a hidden chamber, there is a much greater chance of discovery (CL 3). There is 62 gold pieces in the sack. Next to it is a small box with 30 odd sheets of paper, an ink bottle, and quill. There are several diagrams of the town's wall and some scribbled notes about house occupants on the parchment.

## 4 CASTLES & CRUSADES

If they turn Hobbs over to the Sheriff he takes him off to the jail. The Sheriff is very pleased with the work the characters have done and the owner of the Neighbor's Mill offers them free room and board for the next several weeks.

When the characters take up the task, the Sheriff offers them a guide to take them to the Thorpe where the kidnappings occurred.

## PART II: THE THORPE AND MISSING CHILDREN

The guide takes the characters out of town and heads west. It is several miles to the scene of the crime. The day is warm, the sky is blue. The ground is very moist due to a great deal of rain in the past few weeks. It's perfect for tracking.

The journey to the Thorpe takes only a few hours, however, the party must cross through a small wooded area and over a slow running stream. This wooded area is an offshoot of the Elkhorn Deeps; the trees are very old, covered in moss with wide broad canopies. The path leads through the dozen or so acres. Going around is a possibility but the guide remarks that the road should be more than safe.

Entering the forest, the characters come to the stream. Where the path crosses the stream, the water is only about 6 to 12 inches deep. It moves very slow, tumbling and babbling over the host of rocks in the stream's bed. The stream's origins lie north in the Elkhorn.

As they approach the stream an unexpected sight greets them.

The path leads over a small rise and through the wood. As you top the rise and begin the gentle walk down you see the stream in front of you. Its gentle babbling denotes a peaceful scene. But upon the water's edge you see a fair maiden. She is crouching with a wooden canteen in hand, filling it with water. Her loose shirt spills around her waist, covering a dress of some type. The muted colors of her clothing are lost in the light chain shirt she wears. Her short dark hair hardly touches her shoulders. Across her back and shoulders, hand on the hilt, she holds a long bastard sword. She is looking up at you, beneath a furrowed brow. The hint of a smile plays across her face.

Ryanna Chris is an illusionist, somewhat famous in her own right. She's more mischievous than evil, though she does take a great delight in waylaying strangers. She has heard what has happened and was hoping to catch the sheriff in route to the Thorpe but is even more pleased with the group of characters. It is her intent to extort money for their passage and cause a general melee. She commands 12 goblins, very war-like, and hungry for plunder. They range around the small ford, 6 on either side of the stream. They are about 100 yards off, hidden in deep foliage. There is little chance of seeing the goblins unless someone actively breaks from the party and enters the trees.

When the characters approach she hails them in a most friendly manner. As she does this and listens for their response she casts a *message* spell at any one of the characters. In it she says "Beware your dreams do not betray you!" Her hope is to confuse that one character if only a little.

She attempts to engage them in conversation, mentioning the children by name, hinting that she knows where they might be. Of course she doesn't. While she is talking she approaches them, but only if they are not approaching her. Her intent is to get within 25 feet of the party.

Her goal is to make certain the goblins have enough time to move forward and attack the party from the rear and flanks. This move takes 2 full melee rounds in which time the goblins must make a hide check (+6 as they are very familiar with the ground). She waits only two rounds, assuming her crew is in place. Then without further warning she casts *dragon bite* at the strongest party member.

As she casts her spell, the goblins come out from the trees behind her and attack. As soon as the party is engaged in the creek bed the goblins behind them rise up and attack as well.

Allow the party a surprise roll.

**RYANNA CHRIS** (This multi-class 2nd level fighter 5th level illusionist's vital stats are HP 18, AC 17. Her primary attributes are strength, intelligence, and dexterity. Her significant attributes are strength 15, intelligence 18, and dexterity 16. She wears a +1 magical chain shirt in battle. She carries a +3 bastard sword elf slayer (acts as a dragon slayer, only against elves). Her spells are as follows: 0 level arcane mark, dragon mark, first aid, ghost sound, light, message; 1st level dragon armor, dragon image, faerie's glamour, head fog, illusionary hounds; 2nd level dragon bite, misdirection, ward's temporary invisibility; 3rd level displaced image, dragon mount.)

**GOBLINS** (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 13, HP 4. Their primary attributes are physical. They are equipped with light crossbows, short swords, studded leather armor, and 1-10sp.)

Ryanna does not fight to the death. She has no intention of getting herself killed. She fights so long as she thinks she can win then flees into the forest. To this end, she saves her dragon mount spell for her escape. Nor does she openly slay the party, hoping to capture at least some of them to ransom back to the town.

She has no treasure other than what is on her back. She hid her equipment and spell books in the Elkhorn Deeps, a day's trek by foot.

## THE THORPE

The Thorpe itself consists of a low 10 foot high wooden palisade and five different houses, and a half dozen sheds and barns. The whole area is quiet.

If the characters take time to investigate the crime scene, they are very likely to find any number of clues about what happened to the children. The information comes either from the villagers or through tracking and checking out the house.

## THE VILLAGERS

The villagers have sealed themselves in their houses, per order of the Sheriff, and only Roderick Lana is about. He is the father of the two missing children.

Roderick is obviously upset, but welcomes the characters with a relieved smile. When and if queried, he explains that he was sleeping soundly in his bed and he didn't hear or see nothing. He awoke early in the morning, before the sun came up, to discover his children missing. The window was open and some tiles knocked from the roof. He immediately sent for help in Lead Hill and the Sheriff arrived as the sun was rising. The missing children are Alex and Lianna.

Questioning the villagers might reveal valuable information. Though the adventure does not detail each villager they openly help the characters by explaining the layout of the land, what's in the forest, and any other useful information. All of them speak of having very comforting dreams wherein they heard hauntingly beautiful music.

The most information comes from old Rory Newsham. This old-timer settled in the area before Lead Hill's founding. He's hunted, cut wood and farmed here for decades. He says the following if asked anything about anything (the CK should read aloud):

"Well now I didn't hear much of nothing last night, but like ever-one else I shore did dream me up some nice night thoughts. Music including with no extra charge for it don't ya know. But this I can tell yers, whatever did steelt them childs from Roderick's house came from the forest for sure. And there aren't too many paths it can take in and out of the woods if you get my meaning, the Elk hereabouts is thick with huckleberry bush and them thorns this time a year is thick as momma's gravy . . . course momma is all up and dead now adays so I guess her gravy aint so thick as it used to be, on accounting she can't make no gravy, being dead and all . . . now what was I on about?"

Oh course. Yeah. There's only a few paths that lead through them briars and the most ready one is just due north. You walk right out there, around the stick fence and from that point," he motions to an area directly across from Roderick's house, "you can look north and head right to the path. Follow it up into the woods a ways and you'll come to a true ridgeline with some old ruins on it. Beyond them ruins is some deep country, but once you pass through it you'll come to a small river, or large krick, whichever you like to call it. My guess is them kids is in that country somewhere."

The area outside the palisade that he notes as facing the trail head is the very area where the lamia and paladin stood the previous evening. The trail head is of course the one the lamia took, and the river is where her camp is set up.

## TRACKING

Of course the most direct route to information about the evening's events is to track. It is important to note what actually happened the previous evening before the Castle Keeper can give out various clues to the characters.

The events are as follows: the harpy flew over the palisade carrying the satyr in her claws. Both are of course bewitched slaves of the lamia and are only working toward her evil purposes. The harpy dropped the satyr upon the roof. The satyr's hooves slipped and he fell, dislodging several of the shingles which slid off

the roof and landed on the grass. The harpy landed upon the roof, scratching and clawing for purchase. She scratched up several tiles and lost a few feathers here and there, stuck in between the tiles. She then lay down upon the roof and lowered the satyr to the window below. He jimmied the latch, looked in, and began playing his tune. When the children came out they climbed out of the window, bewitched, and stood on the soft turf. The harpy flew the satyr and the children over the wall in three trips. The harpy set the children upon the backs of the lamia and then the group retreated from the area.

Each area noted below has clues to the event and should lead the characters on something that is more than a wild goose chase.

If there is a ranger in the group then tracking is much easier. There are many impressions on the wet ground, claw marks on the roof, and loose shingles on the ground. A ranger gains a +1 to any track check they make. The ranger can also determine the amount of time passed, and other nuances such as how many were standing at and around the window or on the trail.

If there is not a ranger in the party tracking will be more difficult and reveal far less, the nature of the creatures involved is complete guess work, the amount of time they spent at the window is impossible to determine as are any other nuances. Allow the player to roll the necessary check but add +10 to it, disallowing all the information just listed. In short if they make a successful check they can determine only the direction in which the creatures fled or other information noted below.

## WINDOW TRACKS

The most obvious signs lie upon the ground around the window. Three shingles lie upon the ground and what appear to be two separate sets of footprints.

A ranger, with a successful track check, will note the footprints are of two children, small, and barefoot. The footprints resemble those of someone who jumped from a short height, caught their balance, and stood still. A second successful track check reveals that the footprints do not lead anywhere. They are simply there. A third successful track check reveals a black feather, foul smelling and dirty laying in the grass not far from the footprints.

Any non-ranger must guess, but can only see that something did stand there. Where it led they cannot determine.

## ROOF TOP SIGNS

The roof reveals less signs of passage but something did definitely dislodge the shingles the previous evening.

A ranger, with a successful track check discovers a few foul smelling feathers, scratch marks and a noticeable odor. The scratch marks are the satyr's hooves, but for a ranger to determine that hooves made the marks requires a second track check (CL 7). The most noticeable sign is the smell. It permeates the whole area over the window and reeks horribly. A close examination (CL 5) reveals a little oil on the shingles, residue of the harpy's body filth. The oil is foul smelling and a bit nauseating. Any non-ranger can discover the feather and be aware of the overwhelming smell but nothing more.



## TELL-TALE SIGNS

As it is important to not allow the ranger to dominate the game it is advisable to allow other characters to discover clues as well.

Any character who casts detect magic discovers that the feathers are magical out right. However a faint aura reveals a magical residue in and around the window frame. This aura is the remnants of the satyr's magic from his pan flutes. The magic of it remains for several days.

Not only does the magic remain but the sound of it does as well. The magical notes resonate in the area directly around the window as a faint echo. Allow all characters who take a moment to listen or study the clues in earnest, to roll an intelligence check (CL 4). If successful they hear the faint music. Though they cannot pick up on its notes, they certainly know it was played recently and what they are hearing is an echo.

Similarly a detect evil, detect alignment or any similar spell reveals the feathers to permeate evil and the area around the roof to reek of it. Whatever was there the previous evening stank of more than foul feathers.

Any character on the roof or outside the palisade that takes the time to look on the horizon's north end to the Elkhorn Deep, must make a wisdom check (CL 0). If successful they see a glint of light in a clearing, on a hill in the distance. This light is actually the paladin's armor, catching the rays of the sun as he moves across the clearing. Continued observation reveals that the paladin is moving.

## THE TRAIL

The trail outside is as obvious as the one next to the window. Here there are two clear sets of tracks. Both are very heavy, one booted.

A ranger, with a successful track check determines that two figures stood here for at least half an hour. One was bipedal and wore boots. The indentations are very deep, indicating that the figure is heavy, and stood roughly six feet tall. Whether the weight is through armor or body mass, the ranger cannot determine. The second figure is a quadruped, standing on four unshod feet. The feet are wide and clawed. Upon a second successful track check (CL 5), the ranger determines that the creature possessed some type of padded feet, something like a cat's.

As noted, the creatures stood for about a half hour and then turned and left the way they came. A further check (CL 0 with a +4 bonus to the roll) reveals the trail going north to the forest.

Any non-ranger determines that there are indeed footprints that might lead north to the forest.

## PART III: THE CHASE

Once the party crosses the mile or so between the Thorpe and the tree line, discovering the main trail head is not difficult to do. The brush is thick and as the old man mentioned, filled with thorn-covered huckleberry bushes. The trees too are old with thick, low-hanging canopies. An obvious trail leads into the forest deep. The ranger cannot help but note the tracks that lead up the trail.



During the chase, which should take about two days, allow for some wandering monsters. Consult the charts on pages 11-12. Be careful to tailor any encounter for the size and strength of the party.

The lamia has placed the harpy not far from the trail head to keep an eye on possible pursuit. The beast stays well hidden in the forest until after dark and then quits her post. If the characters venture forth from the Thorpe toward the trail head she notices them, gets a count of their number and armaments and then flies north in search of her mistress.

There is almost no chance that the characters see her as she quits her post, but allow each an intelligence check (CL 12) to see if they spot her.

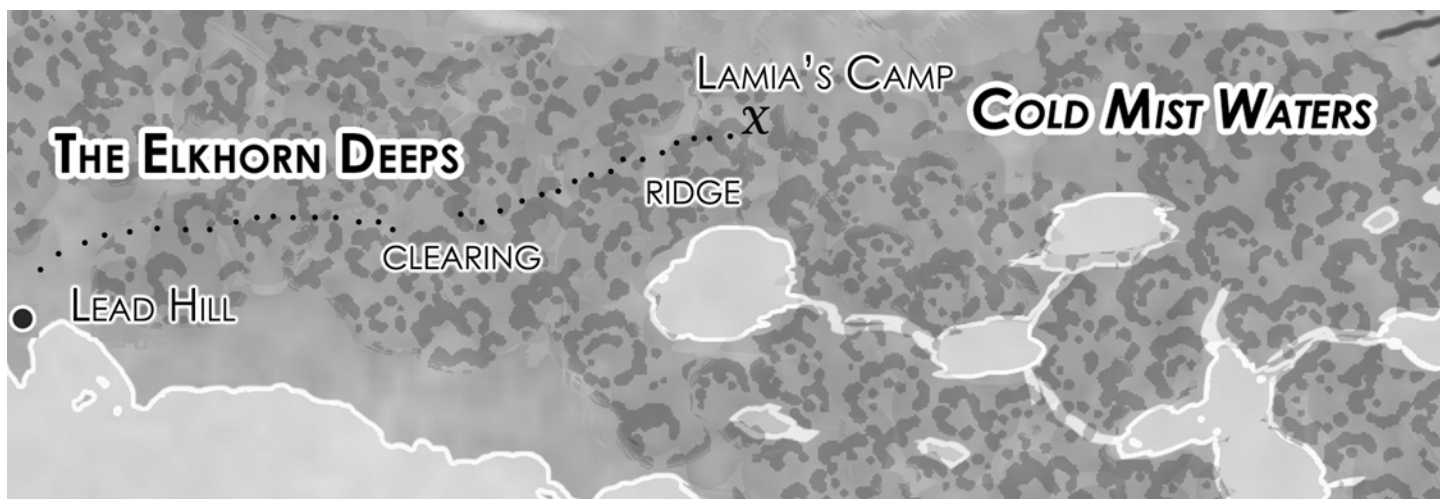
By the time the harpy informs the lamia of the party's pursuit, it should be very late in the afternoon. The time the party spent tracking and investigating took several hours, as did their travel and the harpy's actual trek to the lamia. As it is a two day trek to the encampment, the lamia is in the process of bedding down for the night.

As soon as she learns of the pursuit, she slips into the forest to lay the first of her traps. She sends the satyr on with the children to the main camp and she and the harpy remain in hiding to attack the party. The paladin she posts next to the camp fire with the instruction to defend the camp against any interlopers.

## ENCOUNTER IN THE WOODS

The camp is set under a large, tree covered ledge within a clearing about 100 yards wide and 75 yards deep. There are stunted trees everywhere around the clearing and the area is obviously a camping site for more than just these travelers. The forest is thick allowing the characters opportunity to sneak up on the camp (+5 to all hide checks). Of course, this thick forest covering gives the lamia a perfect chance to hide as well.





The lamia and harpy are about 200 yards out, hiding in some thick cover, where they can see the clearing. She carries her bow, an arrow knocked. She watches the fight, hoping that the paladin is able to destroy their pursuers. If one or more of the characters should swing wide of the clearing in an attempt to sneak up on the paladin, they run the chance of colliding with her. If so, she attempts to charm them with her magical abilities. If unsuccessful, she attacks them with the bow and arrow, hoping to slay them or drive them off into the wood. She pursues those driven off if the opportunity presents itself.

Gunshoff is waiting, with his back to the ledge, watching the forest. As soon as the characters enter the camp, assuming they give him the chance, Gunshoff instructs them in no uncertain terms to withdraw.

“Leave off and well enough alone. I do not want to kill you, but unless you turn around and return home, I shall.”

**GUNSHOFF THE PALADIN** (This lawful good 4th level paladin's vital stats are HP 42, AC 16. His primary attributes are strength, wisdom, and charisma. His significant attributes are strength 15, dexterity 14, constitution 12, wisdom 17, intelligence 14, and charisma 18. He carries a +2 dragon slayer, longsword and a +1 dirk. He also has a mace. His armor is +1 chainmail, though he has neither shield nor helm. He has all the special abilities of a 4th level paladin.)

Gunshoff looks to be in his early 40s, though in fact he is only 31. His hair is long and tangled his whole person unkempt. His armor is magical, so it retains its value but is in poor shape and dirty. Gunshoff's long beard is as tangled as his hair. He has huge hands and thick arms.

Gunshoff fights as best as he can, defending the campsite against the interlopers as the lamia instructed. The charm spell the lamia cast is a powerful one, and he cannot overcome it unless the task at hand becomes life threatening. In this case, as soon as he has received 15 points of damage the charm person spell weakens, allowing him to make a charisma save against the spell. He makes the save against the lamia's hit dice (CL 9). Allow him his full complement of bonuses of course (+4 for level and +3 for attribute, and +2 for divine aura). Make this save every round unless the party slays him or he breaks free of the charm.

As soon as the spell is broken, Gunshoff awakens to find himself in a life or death struggle with a band of mercenaries. It does not take him a moment to realize that something is amiss and he calls for quarter. If they give it to him he asks them why they are attacking him, who they are, and whose camp it is that they are fighting in.

It is obvious to even the most unobservant of characters that the paladin has just woken from a trance. Assuming they spare him he first expresses confusion, then gratitude, but happily tells them whatever they wish to know.

The lamia charmed Gunshoff a little over 7 years ago. He has almost no memory of what has happened during those seven years, nor does he know how many years have passed. The last year he remembers was 1192 (it is now 1199). He can remember being a young paladin in the employ of the House of Erlangen and his dwelling in the Castle Lieven. He himself comes from noble lineage, the Lord Meintor being his father.

## A RED HERRING

His memories of the creature that captured him are fuzzy. He remembers only a few things. Foremost he remembers some horrid witch-like creature whose stench lingers with him. Secondly he remembers being bound by a chain and made to sleep with other animals, or man like animals. This third memory sparks his final remembrance. He explains that there are “some centaurs” in a cage with other creatures.

This last piece of information is very important as it sets the characters up with the belief that they are rescuing more than just children, that at least one if not more centaurs are in a cage somewhere. The CK should use the paladin to whatever end is necessary, allowing the paladin to divulge enough information to get the party on the hook, but cutting the information off when they become too suspicious. He of course is a lawful good NPC and does not do anything to overtly confuse or trap the characters, that does not however preclude the CK from using him to that end.

The paladin happily offers to join the party, despite his wounds and his present condition. His armor is old and in horrid need of repair, his hair long and matted etc.

## 8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

## A DREAMING

As soon as the lamia sees that her paladin has surrendered, she calls off her own attack and shifts her focus to sorcery. Lamia are able to send messages via dreams and she intends to do just that. She waits to see who takes the first watch, and chooses her victim. Then she leaves.

In the early hours of the morning she halts and casts her dreaming spell. The chosen recipient dreams the following:

You see yourself moving over some open ground, coming to the bank of slow moving shallow stream. All about you are trees, huge, heavy with spring growth. A slight fog hangs in the air, but even as you focus on it, it gives way and you see an encampment. A ramshackle pavilion built between four trees with piles of gear beneath it; some type of horse tied to a guide rope between two trees; a thick looking dwarf chained to a big rock; a pool with some fish-like creature moving about within, only its backside viewable; a low lying cage with something dark within it; and a tall sturdy cage with two centaurs within. The centaurs are horribly treated, bound, gagged and showing obvious signs of torture. One appears to be dead, a female it seems. The other, a male is looking right at you, his eyes cutting through your dream and he says in clear tones: "Save me. Please I beg you. Save me and my mate before it is too late."

The dream's recipient wakes up, certain that the centaur called to them in the dream.

## PAN FLUTES AND DIRTY FEATHERS

The following day, about half way between the encampment and the clearing where the paladin battle occurred, the lamia sets another trap. She sends the satyr back out to join the harpy and instructs them to attack the party and destroy them. They find a narrow part of the trail and set up a trap, intending to charm the party without attacking them, and convincing them if possible to flee whence they came.

**HARPY** (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 23, AC 13. Her primary attributes are physical. She attacks with two claws for 1d3 points of damage or with her battle axe for 1d8 points of damage. She is also able to employ a captivating song and charm her opponents.)

**SATYR** (This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 21, AC 15. His prime attributes are mental. He attacks with a head butt, doing 2d4 HP of damage. His pipes require a charisma save or they effect listeners as a charm or fear spell. His spell resistance is 6.)

Both the harpy and the satyr are under a charm spell even as was Gunshoff. Allow them to make charisma saves as soon as they suffer 30% of their hit points in damage. They may make these saves every round. If they break the charm the harpy goes insane and attacks the party to the death, the satyr, attempts to flee into the forest. Like the paladin, they have little or no memory of what imprisoned them.

## PART IV: RESCUE AND REDEMPTION

The trail continues beyond the encounter with the harpy and satyr. It takes the characters deep into the Elkhorn for the rest of that morning. A little while into the afternoon, the trail ends at a bluff that runs east-west. It's several hundred feet tall, covered in loose vegetation, boulders, shell rock, and the like. The trail plainly leads up the side of this cliff. Whatever went this way has an uncanny ability to climb.

This route proved difficult for the lamia but she hoped to shake her pursuers by the use of it.

Climbing the bluff is not an easy task, but certainly not impossible. Rangers and classes with outdoor climbing ability may scale the bluff without making attribute checks. It takes the better part of an hour to get to the top. Everyone else must make a dexterity check (CL 7) ever 20 feet or risk falling. Failing the check means the characters fall 10 feet before they are able to catch themselves or a ledge, rock, outgrowth, or something similar stops their fall. Each fall results in 1d6 points of damage.

If the characters take time to investigate the bluff, they may notice the small ruins that lie at the top of the bluff. These consist of a wall, broken and in bad use and one small part of a stair that rises above the wall. Spotting the ruins requires a successful wisdom check (CL 7). The stair is all that remains of the tower and clearly juts up from the ground. Following the line of the stair down the characters may notice some broken masonry in the bluff's face, denoting some type of structure in the bluff itself.

In fact the stair goes all the way to the bottom of the bluff where it ends in a small chamber, the entrance to which is located at the foot of the bluff. It served as an escape route to whoever lived in the tower so many years ago. If the characters actively look for anything at the bottom of the bluff they have a decent chance of finding it (CL 3).

The secret entrance, located behind a lone boulder, opens to a short hallway and then stairs leading up. Some minor debris that has fallen over the years fills the staircase, but otherwise is in good shape. It leads to the top of the bluff and into the ruined structure up there.

The lamia of course has no idea that this exists.

The party can use the stair to safely top the bluff and there pick up the trail that leads on and into the valley beyond.

## RIVER HOME

The lamia has built her encampment on the north bank of the small stream. The characters are naturally approaching, via the trail, from the south. They see the following situation.

The trail opens up before before them, ending it seems in a clearing. Here the trees are wide spaced, tall, with canopies high above the ground. A stream is a few hundred feet from them, babbling in its slow moving course as it tumbles over rocks and other debris. All about the clearing however are signs of occupation. To the right, on the far side of the stream is a large pavilion, bound up between several trees. Piles of gear lie haphazardly beneath the pavilion.



Beyond that is what appears to be a hippogriff, tied on a lead rope between two trees. To the left of the pavilion, immediately in front of the trail, but again across the stream is a low, dark cage. They cannot see what, if anything is in it.

Beyond that it appears that the creek has been diverted into a shallow pool. Something moves in the pool, but at this distance they cannot make it out. Further to the left, but on your side of the stream stands a dwarf, dirty, bruised, tired, and chained to and sitting on a rock, blankly staring forward. Beyond him, and across the stream, is the largest of the structures. A huge kennel, banged up, but secure. Within the kennel are two creatures, one is lying on the soft grass, seemingly unmoving; the other is standing, leaning against the cage. It too seems unmoving. These last two are horribly battered and bruised. They are two centaurs. Even as they look at them, the one lying down raises her head and looks at you.

The lamia has disguised herself as one of the centaurs. She set aside her gear and entered the cage. She killed the centaur in the cage and covered herself with the foulness within to disguise herself. She then cast hallucinatory terrain, slipped her feet beneath the offal and made it look as if there was nothing amiss.

The spell is very simple and plays into the terrain, making the lock seem locked when in fact it is not. She has disguised her three bladed +2 spear as a stick lying on the ground. She also uses this spell as a diversion. If someone sees through the spell, they see the same thing that is there, making it appear as if the area itself is slightly enchanted. She hopes in this way to misdirect their attention from her feet, and/or alignment if they should investigate. There is no way they can determine the lock is unlocked unless they actively pick at it.

Her plan is to be 'rescued' by the party, get into their midst and strike with whatever weapon is at hand. She attempts to have them remove her from the cage, use the "stick" as a crutch, and attack with it. If not, she attacks with her claws leaping for

whatever weapon she can.

As soon as the party enters the area she calls out, in a broken voice, "help me, please, before the harpies come back. Please help me." From this point the CK must play her as a wounded and entirely helpless centaur whose mate has been destroyed. Her only desire is to escape the pin and she pleads with the party to make this happen, paying particular attention to the one that received the dreaming spell. If queried, she explains her husband was a wizard of sorts and taught her a message spell.

As soon as she is in a good position she lashes out, first striking the strongest, or if possible one of the spell casters. Whomever she believes is the most dangerous.

She fights until the whole party falls or they kill her. She has not cast her *dream*, *suggestion*, or *charm person* spell today.

**LAMIA** (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 9d10, HP 69, AC 18. Her primary attributes are mental. She attacks with a +2 three bladed spear for 1d8+3 points of damage or with two claw attacks for 1d4 points of damage. She also has spell-like abilities and is able to drain wisdom upon a successful claw attack. Her entourage consists of all the members of the encampment, though they do not fight for her.)

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE [2]

Having slain the creature, the characters are able to free the lamia's menagerie. The gear piled up beneath the pavilion does not include any creature's gear except that of the ungern's as the lamia captured this beast recently. All the other gear is treasure she rescued from her previous home. Award the party appropriately for treating the liberated creatures kindly. For instance the hippogriff set free into the wild, the dwarf allowed to go his way, the mermaid brought back to the sea, etc.

For his part, Gunshoff offers his +2 dragon slayer to the party for his rescue.

The dwarf marks them as dwarf friends by placing very small tattoos on their arms. If they ever find themselves in his lands of Norgorad-Kam, they can present these marks and will find a welcome unmatched in the halls of men.

The mermaid cannot aid in her own escape and eventual return to the sea, but she knows that the lamia kept a potion that allowed her to change shape. It has but one drink left, if the characters offer this to her in order to get her to the sea she offers them the eternal gratitude of the mer-folk.

The lamia kept the children in a small cage near the hippogriff. She told them to be very quiet, or she would feed them to the beast. In any respect they are tired, hungry, and terrified. If the party succeeds in rescuing them and returns them to the village, they successfully conclude the adventure.

**TREASURE** (Beneath the canopy placed in and amidst the variety of equipment are the following treasures: 112gp, 750gp, 1200sp; 4 100gp gems, 1 200gp gem; 1500gp worth of exotic equipment and antiques; 1 potion of polymorph (1 drink left), a rod of python, staff of healing, boots of the elvenkind, +2 large iron shield, 14 +1 arrows, and a +2 battle axe.)



## UNGERN

**NO. APPEARING:** 1-8, 10-100

**SIZE:** Medium

**HD:** 2d8

**MOVE:** 30 ft.

**AC** 14

**ATTACKS:** 2 Claw (1-2), or Gore (1-6+2), or by Weapon (weapon)

**SPECIAL:** Twilight Vision, Spell Resistance 2, Camouflage, Cold Immunity

**SAVES:** P

**INT:** Average

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Evil

**TREASURE:** 1

**XP:** 46

The ungern are spawn of the Horned God and their form reflects his own. They have dark brown or red skin, are largely hairless but for a short mane that stretches the length of their spine and shocks of it around their cloven feet. Their hands are clawed, feet are hooves and their legs have triple joints. They have wolf-like heads with long tooth filled snouts. They stand about six feet tall, and though they are rather thin, they are powerfully built creatures. Their lean muscles are like corded iron. Their torso and back are shaped like beaten metal. Their necks are thick, with bands of iron muscle stretching into their broad shoulders and backs, all this to support their great horned heads. Sprouting from the creatures backside are great horns and these range in shape, size and form. Some rise directly from the spine and are more like a ridge from head to tail, others rise from the upper back and sprout above the head like a set of antlers and yet still others grow up and through the skull and rise - like their masters - like great horned crowns.

These horns are the most distinguishing marks the ungern carry and generally the greater and more ornate the horns, the greater the ungern. These horns grow with age and require much trimming and care and they are often decorated with all manner of jewelry, studs and the like. The ungern are fond of growing their manes to great lengths and braiding them and decorating them with bits and pieces of jewelry. They often travel without clothing, carrying only their weapons, but they are wickedly intelligent beasts and don shields and plates of iron for war. Their armor is always ornate with glyphs and runes carved throughout. They are able smiths and forge their own weapons and armor, build their own war machines, or at least instruct their slaves how to do this.

The ungern are well groomed and rather social in their own circles, but when in the company of lesser races, such as orcs, goblins or the like they display a tremendous amount of unbridled rage and cruelty. They have no particular hatreds for anyone, but complete disdain for all living things that do not serve their master. And most of those that do are tolerated only for the sake of their service to the Horned God. Only the Mogrl command respect from the ungern and they serve them loyally and without question. They

are highly organized and work together in all things. They are not migratory, and rarely move once they have taken a castle or refuge as their own. Their culture is one of power and violence. Strength and intelligence are prized above all things and the greater ungern usually have both properties in abundance.

When away from their master's dens, they live in tight social groups of several hundred to a thousand. They do not build their own homes but rather settle in someone else's. They do not do menial tasks themselves, but utilize slaves, often stolen from villages, caravans or bred in their dens. They do not mate, but rather spawn like reptiles. Females, who are utterly unrecognizable from males, lay huge clutches of fertilized eggs in mounds of wet, sodden earth. The young hatch several weeks later, crawling from the mounds with tremendous appetites. They are largely on their own, forced to steal food from the other ungern until they are large enough to force their way to the community board and hunt with the others. The young are fierce and their boldness is rewarded by the adult ungern, who largely ignore the small creatures. In this way, they are taught that boldness of action is always rewarded. The pups do not suffer a high mortality rate, only the mewling weak are left to die, and thus the ungern communities, when left unchecked, grow quickly.

In war, ungern travel in organized units ranging from 10-100. For every 10 encountered, there is at least one sub-chief with maximum hit points and an AC of 15. If two or more of these captains are encountered, there is always a chief with 4d8 hit points (minimum 18 hit points) and an AC of 16. If 100 are encountered, there is an ungern battle lord with 56 hit points, AC 18 whose weapon does 2-12 points of damage. They fight using tactics and are generally able tacticians.

The ungern live in any clime, but prefer the colder latitudes to the warmer ones. They possess a natural affinity to the cold and do not suffer, as do other races. They prefer to dwell in large fortified towns, castles or cities and only when they are on the march do they live in tents or yurts. They seek the rule of law, particularly that of their master. They do not understand chaos and seek to destroy it in all its guises, good or evil. They take great pleasure in one on one combats, following a vague code of ethics and honor in such battles. Though often if an outsider defeats an ungern in single combat, that person is killed by the collective group.

**Combat:** In battle, the ungern almost always dress in armor, helms and shields. They wield axes and other heavy cleaving weapons such as bardiches or halberds. Their archers are famed for using great horned bows, and though they can only fire one arrow every other round the damage they do, 2-16, more than makes up for it. If there are more than one, they always fight as a unit, speaking their own guttural language to communicate actions.

**Cold Immunity:** Ungern suffer half damage from cold-based attacks if they succeed at their saving throw, regardless of the source. If they fail their save, they take full damage.

**Camouflage:** Ungern are able to take advantage of most of their environments. When in wilderness settings they are able to conceal themselves. When concealed, they have a +1 bonus to hide checks, and a +2 bonus to surprise rolls.



## The Ungern in Aihilde

Before the forges of Klarglich were made, before the hounds of darkness issued forth from Austrag and long before the mogrl were crafted in the Pits of Woe, Unklar fashioned the ungern. When first he came through the portal, Unklar slew the high priest Nectanebo. After that, he fell upon the Emperor's Guard and the God-Emperor himself. All fell to the Horned God with an ease that made that beastly creature forever after hold great disdain for the folk of the All Father's fashioning. So immediately he gathered to him the substance of the Void and with the languages of his Father, he crafted the ungern, the "black spawn." Some say that they were born of a union between the dark fey and wild evil men enslaved in Unklar's service. But this is not so; they are of the Val-Austlich, those creatures forged from the Language of Creation and the Val-Eahrakun, of which Unklar was the greatest. The Judgement of Corthain does not bind them and the ungern move freely about the planes as few other creatures can.

In the black days of the Winter Dark when the Horned God, Unklar, ruled the land, the ungern issued forth from the fortress of Aufstrag. They served Unklar as soldiers and captains, and spread his evil throughout the lands. They were the battle lords that destroyed Kayomar, drove the elves of the Shelves of the Mist into ruin and plundered the dwarf halls. Their numbers were great

and they led the armies in countless battles, ever in the service of their dark master. They filled the holds of Aufstrag with their evil and their numbers grew beyond scope. But during the Winter Dark Wars they suffered greatly. In the great battle of Logn-Kor where the Lord of Sorrow led over 90,000 of his folk, many of them ungern, into the Valley of the Sun, they met their first great calamity. The floods destroyed them all, with only the Lord of Sorrow and a few servants escaping that calamity. Later that year, at Gokstead Deep several tens of thousands more were destroyed by the ravages of the northmen. And beyond in a myriad number of battles their numbers were wasted away. When at last Unklar was driven from the plane, they fell into disarray and fled to distant parts.

Since those days, they have recovered some. They live now in scattered holds all about the world of Aihilde, but most frequently in the east near the Grunliche Mountains, Aufstrag and the Grausumlands. In the west they are found in the Darkenfold and the wilds north of Kayomar and south of the Gottland where they contend with the fierce hobgoblins of those lands.

They ever search the dark parts of the heavens, looking for their master to whom they continue to make dark sacrifice.



# CASTLES & CRUSADES

A 2009 GENCON TOURNAMENT ADVENTURE

Upon the edge of the world, beneath the eves of the Darkenfold forest, lie the Elkhorn Deeps. Here, where men eek out a living in the shadows of the forest, lies the small berg of Lead Hill. With stone walls and stout towers Lead Hill is a sanctuary or sorts, where travelers may lower their guard and relax. For beyond those walls are the wilds, and the Darkenfold is an unkind place, peopled by dark forces, fey, eldritch powers, and creatures long dead who still wander the earth.

Of all the dangers the people of Lead Hill face, the most horrifying has come to pass. Two children, too young to know the world, vanished from their home, carried off into the forest by some foul minded creatures. Faeries love to torment the lives of men through their suffering children, so few are surprised. Though none know who did it, why, or how. They left only tell tale signs behind.



Of late a hag haunted the area, pestering Lead Hill's mage and its citizens, but they drove her into the forests. Harpies dwell in the woods not far and some have encountered the tree folk in the deeps. Other creatures abound and stalk the edge of the wild, hunting for human prey. So none can say what has happened to the children, though all want them returned, or at the very least, those who lifted them, cast down and slain.

Enter the Elkhorn Deeps and attempt a rescue of the missing children! But be wary for things are not always as they seem and where allies and enemies work in tandem, great dangers often dwell. But above all, beware the lure of delusions.



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