

KEO6-01

Like a Leech

A One-Round D&D® LIVING GREYHAWK™ Keoland Regional Adventure

Version 1.2

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Hold on as if you belong. A Keoland regional adventure for APLs 2-8.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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For questions specific to this document and your region, please e-mail your triad point of contact (POC) at KeolandPlots@hotmail.com. For LIVING GREYHAWK campaign questions email rpgahq@wizards.com.

RPGA SANCTIONED PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA even from the RPGA website, or you received it from your senior gamemaster. To play this adventure as part of the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in the GREYHAWK setting—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a HERALD-LEVEL gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table Dungeon Master (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a HERALD-LEVEL GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First it is an official game, and you can use the AR to advance your LIVING GREYHAWK character. Second player and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth two (2) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA-sanctioned play on December 31, 2007.

To learn more about the LIVING GREYHAWK character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at www.rpga.com.

PLAYERS READ NO FARTHER

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*.

Throughout this adventure, text in ***bold italics*** provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on

running the adventure. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in the Appendices.

Along with this adventure you'll find a RPGA Table Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play. You'll also find a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure Record (AR).

LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportionate to the modified average character level of the PCs participating in the adventure. To determine this modified Average Party Level (APL) follow the steps below:

1. Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts) or the warhorse of a character with the Mounted Combat feat, use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum of step one. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.
3. Sum the results of step 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round to the nearest whole number.
4. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC can gain at the end of the adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that character receives only one-half of the experience points and gold for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Furthermore, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure.

Mundane Animals Effect on APL		# of Animals			
		1	2	3	4
CR of Animal	1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
	1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
	1	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4	5
	3	3	4	5	6
	4	4	6	7	8
	5	5	7	8	9
	6	6	8	9	10
	7	7	9	10	11

LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1st-level characters may find the challenge of an APL 2 adventure difficult. Suggest the following to these groups to help increase their chances of success:

1. Enlist a sixth player.
2. Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them.

TIME UNITS AND UPKEEP

This is a standard one-round Regional adventure, set in Keoland. Characters native to Keoland pay one Time Unit per round, all others pay two Time Units per round.

Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12gp per Time Unit. Rich Upkeep costs 50gp per Time Unit. Luxury Upkeep costs 100gp per Time Unit. Characters that fail to pay at least Standard Upkeep will retain temporary ability damage until the next adventure, must buy new spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may suffer other in-game penalties (or possibly gain in-game benefits) as may be detailed in this adventure.

A character who does not pay for at least Standard Upkeep may also avoid the above-described penalties by living off the wild. If the character possesses four or more ranks in the Survival skill and succeeds at a Survival check (DC 20), the character will heal temporary ability damage as if he or she paid for Standard Upkeep, may refill spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may restock up to 20 arrows or bolts if the character has at least four ranks in Craft (bowmaking). The player is allowed to Take 10 on this roll.

More information about Lifestyle and Upkeep can be found in the "Lifestyle and Upkeep" section of Chapter 3 of the LIVING GREYHAWK Campaign Sourcebook.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Warren Syn'Andolyn rules the Earldom of Gand in Keoland. A noble of the purest Suel ancestry, it has been rumored in the past that he has secretly aided the Scarlet Brotherhood in some of its less dangerous exercises. Earl Syn'Andolyn is a strong proponent of maintaining a Suel culture amongst the aristocracy and ensuring the longevity of the Suel people as a whole. He has been known for his seemingly irrational hatred of 'lesser' bloodlines. Despite his shortcomings, there has been no doubt that Earl Syn'Andolyn has been a strong force for stability in Gand since the untimely death of his father. For as long as many of the common folk can remember, Earl Syn'Andolyn has ruled Gand and the realm has prospered.

The issue that escapes much public notice is precisely how long Earl Syn'Andolyn actually has ruled Gand. The answer would cause much surprise and fear amongst the commoners if it were known, for the Earl has lived for far longer than one mortal should. Other nobles throughout Keoland have put down the Earl's unnatural longevity to perhaps a trace of elven blood running through his veins. After all, the bigot hates himself most of all, does he not?

The truth of the matter is quite different: the Earl labors under a curse he brought upon himself in his younger days, before he became Earl and before he became more radical and pro-Suel.

As a young man, the Warren Syn'Andolyn fell in love with an exotic young traveler passing through Keoland. A mix of Touv, Flan and Baklun ancestries, the young traveler easily stood out amongst the Keogh and Suel of the region. The traveler was named Iskyla and was a druidic devotee out to see the world. Normally the people of Keoland would have been suspicious of any outsider, but Iskyla quickly warmed to the peoples of the region and settled in for a supply restock at the small river town of Hawkins' Crossing. It was there that fate stepped in.

Warren Syn'Andolyn and his Diakra were in the small town, passing through with their families on the way to the family estates. The brother and sister were playing at a bend in the river when a raiding party of troglodytes attacked the town. The Earl's guards quickly repulsed the attack with no loss of life, except for Diakra, who was kidnapped despite the efforts of her brother to save her. When Iskyla discovered what happened, she revealed the extent of her druidic powers to the Earl and offered to lead his guards out to retrieve Diakra. Wasting no time, Iskyla shifted into the shape of a wolf outside of town and led the Earl's mounted guards on a frantic chase down the shallow river after the fleeing raiders.

The contingent arrived at a deeper part of the river, near a series of small waterfalls, and discovered an entire troglodyte village. Soon, the entire village was destroyed and the troglodytes were dead or driven off. Young Diakra was found, suffering from a grievous wound to her chest. Near death, the Warren and the guardsmen could only watch as Diakra slowly passed the mortal coil in front of them. Again, Iskyla stepped in. Calling upon the powers of nature, she bound the wounds Diakra carried and saved her life. Overjoyed, everyone returned to Hawkins' Crossing and Iskyla was treated as a savior should be.

After a day to rest and recuperate, the Earl and his family moved on to the family estate, and Iskyla accepted their invitation to travel with them. At the estate, several feasts were held in Iskyla's honor and she was offered a position at the manor as a teacher to the younger children. Finally, she was also rewarded a tract of land by the Earl to develop as she sees fit. The nature of her druidic ties is kept a secret but rumors quickly filter out to the common man, and many consider this a good sign. Several years pass in relative peace and calm, with Diakra taking up the mantle of a druidic initiate and Iskyla and Warren becoming romantically linked during that time. Their wedding announcement came as little surprise to many in the realm, and was touted as a return to the ways of old. However, this was not to be a "Happily ever after" story.

On the night before the wedding tragedy, or rather, evil struck. A large force of troglodytes forced their way into Iskyla's grove, where Iskyla and Diakra were spending the evening in purification rituals. The troglodytes took the druids unawares and captured them. Led by a shaman of the troglodyte deity, Laogzed, lord of gluttony and devouring, the troglodytes feasted on the druids – while they were still alive.

The tortures would surely have gone on the entire length of the night had Warren not broken the evil deeds by sneaking into the grove to see his beloved before the wedding. What he saw was pure carnage. Enraged, Warren single handedly charged the troglodytes, determined to live long enough to put his beloved out of her misery. When the blood stopped flowing, the Earl-to-be stood and the troglodytes were dead, one and all. Bereaved when he saw Iskyla lying in the mud missing an arm, he thought she had died.

Sobbing, he collapsed to his knees and clutched Iskyla and Diakra to him. Covered in their blood he swore an oath to the deity Wee Jas that he would see all troglodytes in his lands slain before he died. At those words, Iskyla regained consciousness and her wounds closed, but did not mend. Missing an arm and with a horribly disfigured face, she lived. There was no saving Diakra.

The wedding was postponed as the finest healers in the land attempted to bring Diakra back to life and heal Iskyla. Neither course of action bore fruit. The young

Warren tried to continue with the wedding once Iskyla was moving about again, but found his heart curiously turned. Where once he saw her beauty, all he saw now was his own failure in protecting the ones he loved. Love turned into its first cousin, hate, when Iskyla refused to move forward with the wedding. She could see the beginning of the Warren's emotions turning and believed it was due to her loss of physical beauty. Torn down by outside events beyond their control and a lack of communication, the love between the two faltered and eventually disappeared. Iskyla returned to her grove, and Warren grew into lord of the land.

For many years Warren Syn'Andolyn did carry out his word, and drove the troglodytes on his land before his forces like so many roaches scurrying from light. Finally, the new Earl found a new love and married her, and his old hatred went to the wayside, a job unfinished. The wedding was lavish and magnificent, everything it should have been. Iskyla watched it all from a tree, in the form of a bird with one clipped wing. Saddened to the point of pure anger, she called upon the deities of her youth, beseeching them to allow her to live to see the Earl humbled and brought low.

The lesson here, mortals, is that sometimes you get what you ask for.

Years passed, the Earl aged and aged, and Iskyla did not. Each had their prayers answered, but not in ways they expected.

At this point, the Earl has been held from his release by his oath to Wee Jas. He has gained the look not of a man who fears a task will be completed after he dies, but of a man who fears that he will not die until the task is completed. He is entirely correct.

Iskyla's grove has become dark and foreboding, a mirror of her own poisoned heart. Her prayers, too, are sustaining her. When the earl dies, her time will come as well.

The final pieces to this drama are the Earl's heirs. He has three sons, Argal, Bethor, and Falen. In the manner of most families, Argal was destined to become the new Earl, Bethor went into the priesthood, and Falen was left to his own designs. However, the Earl has yet to declare his heir and Falen has seized upon a chance to rise in power and has challenged his brother Argal for the earldom when their father passes. Horrified at the decay of his house, Bethor has beseeched his deities for an answer to the problems plaguing him and is rewarded with the heroes.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins on the road near Caer Andolyn where it runs through the Wyrwood, a place reputed to be the home of several druids. The heroes are traveling as part of an honor guard for a delegation from Niole Dra,

sent to honor the betrothal announcement of Argal, scion of house Syn'Andolyn.

The heroes and their retinue hear sounds of screaming, and round a bend in the road in time to see a man dressed in priestly vestments be hoisted into the air by a gigantic spider perched in a tree. The man is swiftly cocooned and the spider places the cocoon on its back, when it sees the heroes.

After defeating the spider and releasing its captive, they are introduced to Bethor Syn'Andolyn, second son of Earl Warren and priestly devotee of Bralm, Suel deity of Insects and Industriousness.

Gushing thanks and talking of divine providence, Bethor takes the heroes and the delegation to Caer Andolyn, babbling the entire way in the manner of the intelligent but unwise.

The heroes and the delegation arrive at Caer Andolyn and are given accommodations for the night, and Bethor will attempt to hire them as men-at-arms for a short period. He will explain some of the troubles between the three brothers as well as his father's fading health. He will ask that the heroes attend the betrothal announcement of his older brother and then speak to his father.

The heroes attend the announcement ceremony, where they are introduced to a webwork of important merchants and minor nobility. Gossip and minor intrigue abound, and after a suitable period the Earl Warren Syn'Andolyn and his family are introduced. A feast is laid out, and the announcement of the betrothal is prepared. Argal Syn'Andolyn then calls for attention and makes his announcement: he is betrothed to maiden Kalla, druidic devotee.

At this, Earl Warren thunders and yells. He forbids his son to marry any "dabbler in the unnatural" and calls an end to the proceedings. He stalks off to the confusion of the gathered people.

Eventually the heroes gather that the Earl has past history with the druids of the realm, and the high druidess in particular. Bethor asks the heroes to travel into the Wyrwood, and gives them a token to carry that is supposed to guide them to the druids within.

The heroes travel to the grove, and are followed by Falen, third son of Earl Warren. The heroes come to the druid's grove, a series of cottages set along the trees in the forest. After several minutes the Druid Iskyla will meet them and she will talk to the heroes and relate the story of the Earl's past and her history with the Earl. Iskyla reveals that the Earl's lifetime is unnaturally prolonged, that he is cursed by his own word, and that he will continue descending into madness and infirmity without death's release until his word is met.

Iskyla offers to lead the heroes to a troglodyte barrow, the nexus of the troglodyte presence in the Earldom. If the heroes can infiltrate the den, slay the

shaman of Laogzed inside, and return with the blasphemous idol they worship, Iskyla says she can end the troglodyte presence in Gand as well as the curse laid upon the Earl. Falen and his men follow the group.

Iskyla leads the heroes to the same waterfall area near Hawkins' crossing where she saved the life of the Earl's sister so many years ago. The troglodytes have returned, in a swarming colony. Using Druidic magic, Iskyla opens a passage into the cliff face that meets with the troglodyte tunnel complex. The heroes travel through the complex and confront the shaman of Laogzed and retrieve the idol the troglodytes worship, which turns out to be Iskyla's arm, half eaten and mummified.

As the heroes leave, they find the troglodytes fled and no sign of Iskyla. Instead, they find Falen and a small force of men-at-arms. He demands they turn over the idol and leave Gand by the most direct means, under penalty of death. Falen will not fight but will send his men-at-arms to divest the heroes of the idol. The heroes tread a thin line as they must decide between following the direct order of a noble and the good of the Earldom.

If the heroes return to Caer Andolyn, Iskyla will meet with them and they will all meet with Earl Warren. Iskyla and the Earl will have an interesting reunion, and Iskyla will tell the Earl that she can release them both from their curses, but that to do so the troglodytes must suffer a painful death. If the heroes will agree to shoulder a metaphysical debt to balance the books, then Iskyla can create a ritual that uses her mummified arm as a focus. This ritual will cause all the troglodytes in Gand to die of starvation. The Earl will have fulfilled his word and can die, which will allow Iskyla to die as well.

In Encounter 1, the heroes meet with Bethor and save him from the clutches of a giant spider. He requests their aid in Caer Andolyn.

In Encounter 2, the heroes arrive at Caer Andolyn and meet with some of the more interesting NPCs of the region.

In Encounter 3, the heroes will attend the betrothal announcement of Argal. This will be a roleplaying intensive encounter.

In Encounter 4, the heroes travel to the druids grove in the Wyrwood and meet with Iskyla. She explains much of the mystery surrounding Gand and offers to lead the heroes to a solution.

In Encounter 5, the heroes journey beneath the riverbed in an effort to find and defeat a troglodyte shaman of Laogzed and take his idol of power.

In Encounter 6, Falen, third son of Earl Warren, confronts the heroes. He demands they leave the Earldom and surrender the troglodyte idol.

In Encounter 7, the heroes and Iskyla meet with Earl Warren and have the opportunity to end the curses

surrounding both of them, at a potential cost to the heroes.

PREPERATION FOR PLAY

Be sure to review *DM Aid: Roleplaying Notes*, a series of sheets detailing important NPCs and their roleplaying notes. It is essential to prepare with those notes before running this adventure.

INTRODUCTION

The adventure begins in Niolen Dra as the heroes are approached for a rather mundane task. Harlan Hammerforge is a dwarven armorer of no small renown who is seeking to travel to the Earldom of Gand with his daughter Briella and his young human apprentice Cienna. They are traveling to Caer Andolyn to attend the betrothal announcement of Argal Syn'Andolyn, son of Earl Warren Syn'Andolyn. The Earl and Harlan are longtime friends and Harlan has no desire to miss the announcement. However, the Earldom of Gand has long been known as a haven for less savory humanoids, and so Harlan and his entourage require protective services. Enter the heroes.

Provide the players with *Player Handout #1*. It is a piece of parchment located on a signboard advertising the need for traveling guards.

Harlan and his daughter Briella are atypical dwarves. They are friendly, jovial and outgoing. Perhaps that serves to explain why Harlan has chosen to make his home in Niolen Dra rather than return to his dwarven enclave.

Harlan's young apprentice is a human girl named Cienna. Orphaned at a young age, she is a ward of a small brotherhood of friars who worship Fharlanghan. Realizing that she would need a trade in life they attempted to set her up as an apprentice weaver and when that failed, as an apprentice jeweler. Harlan offered to be her master when he saw the interest the young girl took in some of his works. So far the girl has taken to the apprenticeship admirably. Cienna is about sixteen winters old and Harlan is very protective of her, though he understands that human children mature faster than dwarven.

Allow the PCs to introduce themselves to Harlan and give the players an opportunity to do some short roleplaying with Harlan and the girls as they travel if they are so inclined.

Treasure: They will be offered payment commensurate with their abilities (as reflected in the Treasure Summary).

ENCOUNTER 1: JUST BLESS ME

This encounter begins as the trip to Caer Andolyn is coming to a close. The heroes are traveling along the forest road, which cuts through the Wyrwood. The Wyrwood is generally considered a safe place, as it is reputedly home to a druidic grove. The occasional bandit band takes up residence there but because of its proximity to Caer Andolyn those bands do not tend to last long. This encounter takes place towards dusk, with Harlan pushing the group on in an effort to make Caer Andolyn by nightfall.

Traveling the forest road through the Wyrwood is fast and easy. Tall trees line both sides of the road heavily, making it difficult for anything larger than a deer to traverse the landscape. Overhead the trees form a multicolored canopy above the road, filtering much of the sunlight out even during highsun. The sounds of nature bombard you from all sides. Birds and insects call out and squirrels leap from branch to branch high above as the sun sweeps downward.


Suddenly, a deep throated shriek pieces through the forest and the forest creatures go silent and still. Seconds later you hear another yell, this one obviously of pain, and cut short. The cries appear to have come from ahead of you on the road.

Bethor, second son of Earl Syn'Andolyn, has been set upon by a giant forest spider. Bethor is a devotee of Bralm, an obscure Suel deity who covers the realm of insects and industriousness. Bethor recently beseeched Bralm for divine aid to his houses' problems and was led from his chambers by a swarm of insects. Unfortunately for Bethor, followers of spider deities sure do love to eat followers of insect deities.

Bethor and the spider(s) are 130 ft. in front of the heroes at the start of the encounter, but out of sight due to a bend in the road. The heroes have several courses of approach to the encounter. Have the heroes make a Spot check (DC 10 + APL) to see a game trail that crosses the road and appears to hook back towards the road. Alternately the heroes can push through the trees on either side of the road. All squares on the map that are not the main road are considered rubble due to the thick ground cover and extensive root system. Standard movement rules apply.

The spider(s) will wait in the road, carefully cocooning Bethor in preparation for a meal. In the unlikely event that ten rounds pass before the heroes intervene, Bethor will be hauled off by the spider(s). If this occurs, proceed to Conclusion: Bethor Taken.

APL 2 (EL 5)

 **Monstrous Spider, Huge:** hp 60, see *Monster Manual*, page 289.

APL 4 (EL 7)

🕷 **Monstrous Spiders, Huge (2):** hp 60 each, see *Monster Manual*, page 289.

APL 6 (EL 9)

🕷 **Monstrous Spiders, Huge (4):** hp 60 each, see *Monster Manual*, page 289.

APL 8 (EL 11)

🕷 **Monstrous Spiders, Huge (8):** hp 60 each, see *Monster Manual*, page 289.

After being saved and uncocooned, Bethor will be quite gracious and welcoming to the heroes. Bethor is not a typical clergyman. He appears a bit addled and lost, but quite intelligent in his own way. If it weren't for his bad luck at being born a second son and having been essentially forced by his father to follow the path of a clergy, he would have made a fine scholar.

Finally unwrapped from his untimely cocoon, a young man sits up, gasping for air. His skin is pale and through it you can faintly see a fine tracery of veins throbbing as his heart hammers. He raises his hands, ink stained and uncalled, to his mouth, where he removes a piece of webbing. Close cropped blonde hair mats the top of his head and deep blue eyes regard you as he speaks.

"Ah, Bralm be praised! I fear'd for meself badly there. Thankya for saving me from that awful creature. I'm Bethor Syn'Andolyn and you are..."

Suddenly his eyes flash.

"You are sent to me! Bralm has seen fit to answer my humble prayers! Please, this is not the place for portents. Come with me to my home and stay for the night."

If informed that they cannot go because they are going to Caer Andolyn, Bethor will clap his hands in glee and tell them that it is his home, and will start walking the road calmly, completely forgetting that he was just nearly spider food.

It is about another forty minute travel time to Caer Andolyn, during which Bethor will prattle on about everything possible except what he thinks the heroes were sent to him for. He will ask questions about Niole Dra, having never been there. If any sort of comment or question on his faith is raised, he will be more than happy to oblige a conversation and touch on the major points of his faith. Bralm favors industry and Bethor strives to bring the Earldom of Gand into the forefront of the kingdom by presenting new ideas to grow food, export textiles faster and generally be more efficient. He doesn't really like insects all that much, but he admires how they all work towards a common goal, for the betterment of the colony. He doesn't "worship bugs", but rather the concept behind them, that total communalism can be a successful system. Bethor will be more than happy to get

into a theological discussion with any hero willing to do so.

ENCOUNTER 2: TWO-SIDED TIME

This encounter takes place at Caer Syn'Andolyn. The Caer is actually a fairly impressive structure, built by human hands but from dwarven design. The forest runs almost all the way to the eastern wall of the castle. Obvious attempts to keep the forest cleared back to provide a defensible perimeter are ongoing, but it appears as though the forest grows very quickly.

The heroes will be very quickly ushered inside the castle, which obviously fears no attack since the gates are open wide and the guards are relaxed even though night is rapidly approaching. The heroes have their mounts stabled and Bethor leads them through the quiet halls of Caer Andolyn. Harlan and his charges are given a fine set of quarters and Bethor tells the heroes that they will be quartered in a different wing of the castle. As he leads them to their quarters:

Candelabra held high, Bethor leads you through the hallways of Caer Andolyn. The passages seem cramped and dusty in the light of the dying sun. You pass several suits of armor cut in archaic styles and emblazoned with the Syn'Andolyn coat of arms, a blue raven on a white field, clutching a bunch of thorny roses in its talons.

Moving down a corridor tainted red by the fading sunlight; Bethor comes to a sudden halt. Looking past him you see a man of slight stature. Long blonde hair falls in three braids from his head and bright blue eyes peer over your group searchingly. He wears clothes of the finest silk, dyed in the colors of the household. He bears more than a passing resemblance to Bethor. His features are strong and refined, and he carries himself with a manner that indicates he knows exactly how fine a figure he cuts.

"Heh, there you are, Brother mine. I heard from the stable boys that you had returned from your constitutional. Who are our guests? You DID intend on introducing them to father, did you not?"

Bethor flushes a bit.

"I'd planned to do that in the morn, Argal. We both know Father needs his rest more and more these days."

Bethor indicates you all with a sweep of his arm.

"I'd like to introduce you all to Argal, brother mine and scion of the house of Syn'Andolyn."

Argal smiles warmly at all of you, a smile that never touches his eyes.

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintances. I do not mean to be rude. You all look dreadfully peaked. Perhaps some rest will do you all well. I will leave you with Bethor."

Unless interrupted with questions or otherwise stopped, Argal will walk past the heroes, smelling faintly of cologne. He will accept any pleasantries with the dignity of the first son of the house and will offer such in return in accordance to the station of the person addressing him. If any players are nobles, Keoish or otherwise, and they make their title known, he will seem a bit warmer to them and will engage them in small talk about their realm and travels.

If any player is knighted and makes that fact known to Argal upon introduction, he will seem genuinely interested in their order and will make a point of asking to speak with the hero later. Argal has been denied the chance to squire into a knighthood through his life and though he is older now, he desires the opportunity to do so. He may never get an opportunity to do so but he enjoys conversing with knights and being seen with them, so as to shine by reflection.

After Argal leaves:

Bethor whispers back to you.

"First son of the house, Earl to be if...well...we'll talk more shortly."

As the heroes walk, have them make a Spot check (DC 14 + APL). Success indicates that that hero sees a sparrow perched in the window that takes flight when seen. It flutters away awkwardly and the hero can see that one of its wings is clipped.

Bethor and the heroes finish the trip to their quarters, which appear to be in a lesser used wing of the castle. Bethor lets the heroes get settled in to the series of suites, three rooms in all, then asks to speak to them candidly. Bethor will be suitably embarrassed while he airs his troubles to the heroes.

Bethor will tell the heroes that he fears for his father. Earl Warren has been stricken with a sickness that appears to slowly be eating away at him. A similar plague went through the commoners a year ago and it appears to Bethor that his father somehow contracted the plague. The real problem here is that everyone who contracted the plague died within a week, and Earl Warren appears to have had the plague for well over a year, but he is not contagious. Bethor tells the heroes that his attempts for magical healing on his father were not answered by Bralm. When he went to cast the spell, it simply failed, and echo of words without power.

Bethor will confess that he is at his wits end. In his desperation he got incredibly drunk off the house vintage and begged for Bralm to intervene. He cried out to his deity that his father had to be cured, that this untenable situation had gone on for too long. Bethor prayed and told Bralm that the Earldom was stagnating,

that progress was being retarded because of the declining health of the Earl. He begged for aid. He wept and begged for the opportunity to end the horror his father was undergoing. Then he passed out, stone drunk.

When he awoke, it was earlier this afternoon. He was lying on the floor in his room, and he was awoken by a fly buzzing in his ear. Sitting up he saw that his room was awash in insects of all types and that they poured over him in a wave. Just as suddenly as they appeared, they were gone, except for a single horsefly that alit on his arm and bit him.

Staggering to his feet, Bethor watched the horsefly leave the room and he followed it. It buzzed in front of his face and led him onto the forest road, where he was attacked by the spider and the heroes rescued him.

Bethor will tell the heroes that he is convinced that they are the answer to what ails his father, although he knows not how.

"Please, I feel that things are coming to a head here. On the morrow my brother Argal will announce his betrothal, to whom not even I know. As you know, it is quite an event, attracting more than a few people from throughout the Kingdom. Ever since it was announced, I have had a feeling of foreboding, as if the day that comes will bring calamity."

I ask that you humor me. I ask that you attend the reception as guests of mine and watch for any signs of trouble. Perhaps it is true what my brothers whisper about me and that I cannot see the forest for the trees. A man can be excused for being blind to his own faults, can he not?"

Bethor is at this point a man humbled. He knows that if he were somehow **BETTER** that he could have done something to help the situation but for the life of him he cannot see how. He wishes he could have found that way but is willing to swallow his pride as long as it helps his family.

"Please, meet with my father tomorrow, see his condition for yourself. He should not be here any longer, but something keeps him from shedding the mortal coil. Though I love him dearly, this must end."

Treasure: Bethor will offer the heroes a monetary reward, as well as the favor of his house (see Conclusion and Treasure Summary).

As the heroes are bedding down to sleep, have them make a Spot check (DC 12 + APL). Elven and half-elven characters are considered to automatically succeed on this check. If successful, the hero will see a three legged squirrel sitting on a tree branch outside the window of their room. The squirrel will bolt down the tree after being noticed.

ENCOUNTER 3: THE WORTH OF WATER

This encounter takes place the next day, and encompasses a lengthy part of the day. In *DM Aid: Roleplaying Notes* you will find a series of sheets detailing important NPCs and their roleplaying notes.

In Introductions, you should introduce the important NPCs, including Earl Warren, Falen, Dame Elwen Syn'Andolyn, and have the heroes interact with them. The Announcement should occur when the roleplaying has calmed down a bit and you feel the plot needs to move along. The Aftermath comes rapidly on the heels of the developments of The Announcement and allows the heroes to do some more roleplaying as well as investigative work and decide on a course of action.

INTRODUCTIONS

After the heroes are suitably prepared to hobnob with some minor nobles in a backwater of Keoland, let them find their way to the feast hall of Caer Andolyn.

The feasting hall is by far the most impressive room you have seen in Caer Andolyn. Several heavy oaken tables sit in rows in the hall, with chairs enough to seat at least sixty people. The room is about half full when Bethor ushers you in. Interspersed through the room are fifteen to twenty suits of armor, all decorated with the Syn'Andolyn crest of arms. You can immediately see Harlan and his charges, speaking to a younger man in finely cut clothes in the colors of the house.

At one end of the feast hall is a raised platform that runs the width of the room. On it are a pair of high backed chairs which are currently empty. A quartet of minstrels play their instruments on the platform, facing the gathering crowds. The room quickly fills with the buzz of conversation as friends and vassals of the house fill in.

Have the players make Knowledge (nobility and royalty) checks (DC 8 + APL). Success indicates that the heroes note and recognize the various banners hanging from the walls. The Keoish lion is present, as are the arms of the Barony of Riverwatch, the Earldom of Linth, the Barony of Sayre, and the Barony of Raya. These are all of the Keoish provinces that border the Earldom of Gand, with the exception of the Duchy of Gradsul. Also on the walls are a pair of banners from the non-human groups. A red fist on a black field is the symbol of the Ironwatch mercenary company, a noted Dwarven clan and it hangs next to a banner with a gold leaf on a green field, the banner of the Outriders of Fall, an Elven trading and mercenary house. Finally, in a place of honor above one of the fireplaces are a pair of broken lances crossed over a torn black banner with a red eye set in the middle. This last banner is unrecognizable as belonging to any particular group.

After the heroes have settled in, have Falen approach the heroes. He is the last of the three Syn'Andolyn brothers, and comes off as quite affable and charming. He is possessed of a store of ditties and dirty jokes that he will immediately start telling if the heroes warm up to him. Detailed notes on Falen are in *DM Aid: Roleplaying Notes*.

While the heroes are conversing with Falen, a minor gaffe will occur.

Suddenly there is a great baying of hounds and one of the service doors bangs open. The hounds of the castle pour into the hall in a wave, all but wiping out the poor houndsmaster who tried to stop them. The dogs immediately go about the business of greeting everyone warmly and looking for food. The music comes to a halt as one of the larger wolfhounds latches onto the leg of one of the minstrels.

The hall breaks into laughter and chaos. Argal starts yelling for the houndsmaster to get the dogs out, while the dogs make a nuisance of themselves. Any hero who helps is easily capable of rounding up a dog or two, as all the hounds are friendly and just looking for a little bit of attention. And maybe some cheese, too.

It takes a few minutes for Argal and the houndsmaster to round up the most rambunctious dogs. A few dogs immediately go find comfortable spots near the hearths and start going to sleep. Argal and the houndsmaster let sleeping dogs lie and usher the other dogs back into the yards. As the dogs are herded out:

The houndsmaster bows low. "Master Argal, I'm terribly sorry. I don't know what go into them. They just all rushed this way suddenly, like they were on the hunt."

Argal nods and claps the man on the back, then returns to his guests.

Have the heroes make a Spot check (DC 10 + APL). Success indicates that they note that one of the three dogs that remains in the room limps when it walks, and that it is missing about half of its right forepaw. It quickly curls into a ball by the fire and starts snoring.

This is indeed the Druid Iskyla here to see the betrothal ceremony. The heroes might have surmised that seeing all these animals crippled is suspicious, and it is. However, no matter what they do short of physically attacking Iskyla, she will not shift out of her dog form. The heroes will look quite foolish if they try to force her to do so. If overzealous heroes attack Iskyla move to Conclusion: Iskyla Attacked. Her aid is necessary in removing the curses in Gand.

Have Falen continue to chatter with the PCs, entertaining them and passing some time until the big announcement. He will quickly have a couple of glasses of wine and will press some into the hands of the heroes as well.

When things hit a lull, have the Earl and his wife be announced ...

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

With an iron thunder, the chamberlain brings his staff down on the stones of the hall, signaling for silence. Even Falen goes quiet, in the middle of telling the tale of the three-legged elf.

"Announcing his lordship, Earl Warren Syn'Andolyn and Dame Elwen Syn'Andolyn."

The main doors are opened by a pair of liveried pages, and four more walk in, carrying what can only be described as a palanquin. On the palanquin is a low backed chair with an elderly man in it. His half-lidded eyes peer out over the crowd searchingly as he is borne to the platform. Others in the room politely turn their heads so as to not see an infirmity as the Earl is lifted and placed into his chair on the platform. When he is comfortably seated, a feminine voice rings though the hall.

"On behalf of my husband and my family, I welcome you to Caer Andolyn. Please, be seated and enjoy the feast."

An older woman takes the seat next to Earl Warren, and rests her hand on his. Long white hair spills down and frames her face. The Dame Elwen heartily begins to eat and to make sure the Earl can eat what is placed in front of him. Despite the Earl's age, he appears capable of that much, at least.

Everyone is seated and the meal begins. If any hero specifically states that they are paying attention to the maimed dog by the fireplace they will see that it is awake and appears to be watching the platform.

The heroes will be seated with Harlan and his charges, as well as a pair of half-elves dressed in the garb of tradesmen from Daerwald in the Barony of Raya. The heroes might decide that they have been slighted but if they look around the room they will see that everyone is interspersed fairly well with no regards to class or status. The feast hall soon takes on the atmosphere of an extended family as the wine starts flowing and the music kicks up.

Seated with the heroes are Nedric Hollowtree and Rinder the Sculptor. They run a rather successful business in Daerwald where they craft musical instruments in the manner of their elven forefathers. They are quite friendly and will happily tell the heroes that they have been commissioned to create a musical instrument as a wedding gift from a friend of the Syn'Andolyn family, but that for the instrument to be properly created, they have to get a sense of feeling from the couple. Interested heroes may commission an instrument if they wish.

Rinder and Nedric are more than they appear to be, though they bear no ill towards the Earl. Nedric is actually a full elf who poses as a half elf in order to facilitate his business and because it makes living amongst humans easier. He has been sent to observe human customs and determine the worth of men by a certain elven contingent that dwells deep within the Dreadwood.

Rinder is a Knight of the Malagari. The extraordinary longevity of the Earl has been noted by higher forces and Rinder has been sent here to gauge the truth of the situation. Rinder carries himself as a common tradesman no matter the situation, and if a hero is a readily visible Knight of the Malagari he will carefully observe that hero and will send a report to his superiors.

Detailed roleplaying notes on Rinder and Nedric can be found in DM Aid: Roleplaying Notes. It is important to note that Rinder and Nedric are best of friends and know each other's secrets.

When the heroes have finished speaking with Rinder and Nedric, or the adventure starts to bog down, move to the meeting with the Earl and the Dame.

Smiling, Bethor moves to your table and crouches down so that he is at your eye level. The wine glass he carries holds perhaps a sip left.

"Please friends, I would like you to be the first here to witness a tradition within the Earldom. It is custom to pay respects to the Earl at a meeting such as this, and to offer a small gift. Now, I know you are my guests here and it perhaps seems ungracious, but know that the giving works both ways. I also know you came unprepared to give gifts, but know that it is not the value of what you give, but the spirit behind it. Whether the gift be the strength of your arms to ward this house or a fine jewel for the Dame to wear, or the humblest promise of thanks, all are welcome. Please, come forward and meet my parents."

The heroes will be asked by Bethor to approach the Earl and the Dame one at a time and offer their gift. This is the first chance to see the Earl that the players will have had, so they might be able to determine some of what lingers on him.

Any hero who has the capability will note that the Earl has a single powerful magical aura placed on him, of the transmutation school. This is the metaphysical manifestation of the curse he lingers under. Any hero who can detect a curse will detect a near-blindingly powerful curse on the Earl. Any hero who can detect evil will sense that *something* about the Earl has the taint of evil but it is not the Earl himself. Any hero who can detect good, law, or chaos will get the same results for the various detection abilities. Again, this is the manifestation of a curse laid upon the Earl by his actions and Iskyla's actions.

The Earl is sickly and pale, but appears to have retained his mental faculties. When approached, he does not speak at all; rather the Dame speaks for him as if the Earl were incapable. Heroes will notice that at times the Earl's movements are palsied and unsure, and at times they are strong and swift. The Earl's eyes are the only expressive part of his body, and heroes who meet his gaze get the feeling he is afraid of something. Finally, they will note that the Earl has a voracious appetite. By the time they get to go greet him, three full plates of emptied food lay in front of him.

The Dame will speak to the heroes. The following conversation is probably best held one player at a time.

"Ah, guests to our humble home. Bethor told us of your deeds. We thank you for saving our much loved son. To this, we gift upon you: the mantle of companion of the Earldom. When you rest your heads within the realm, they will be warded by strong hearts and strong arms."

The Dame will then look meaningfully at each hero, obviously expecting a responding gift. Any gift or token of thanks is accepted, no matter the value. Any hero who swears to perform a deed or other action should take careful note of this (and note it on the Adventure Record after the adventure).

If a hero does not offer a gift, they will be politely returned to their seat and no outward harm will befall them. They will garner strange glares from the locals.

If a hero does something foolish such as become rude or disrespectful to the Dame, they will be removed, by force if necessary. They will be promptly escorted from Caer Andolyn. If the other heroes at the table make an effort to track any waywards down, they may continue the adventure with the heroes.

After the heroes are reseated, they will watch the rest of the guests go through the same ritual. It is important to note that the gift giving is done one at a time, and that the Dame gives several people physical gifts while others walk back empty handed. In case the heroes ask, Rinder and Nedric receive a set of intricately made woodcarving tools and Harlan receives a small piece of rock that his eyes go wide over.

About thirty minutes after greeting the Earl, Argal will rise and the feast hall will go quiet.

"Friends, guests, family! The time has come. Please. Join me all in raising your glass to the hospitality of my parents. Now, I feel, is the right time to announce my betrothal. Please, I would like you all to meet the light of my life and my wife to be. Kalla, please come here and meet my family."

At this a woman from one of the back tables stands and the feast hall erupts into a bedlam of applause. Small and of medium complexion, she wears clothes of common quality dyed in browns and greens. The only jewelry she wears is a brooch in

the shape of a large fish. Short dark hair frames her face, and dark eyes glitter in happiness as she moves to Argal's side. To her, there may as well be nobody else in the room.

The feast hall continues to erupt in celebration. Spontaneous toasts start up and everyone is laughing and smiling. Everyone save Earl Warren that is.

A single word cuts through the bedlam.

"NO."

Standing, shaking in what might be pain but what looks like anger, Earl Warren pushes his chair back and knocks his platters to the floor in a crash of scattered bones. The hall falls immediately silent.

"There will be no wedding of my family to those people. Not years ago, and not now. Not EVER."

Earl Warren takes staggering steps from the feast hall while his attendants hurry to help him. Shoving one young page away, the Earl pushes through the door, shaking in palsy the entire way.

The Dame quickly follows the Earl out, after motioning for the minstrels to play. She casts an angry stare at Kalla on the way out. Argal looks utterly confused and returns to his seat with Kalla.

THE AFTERMATH

Allow the heroes to talk to those at their table or with anyone in the hall that they wish to. Nobody really has any idea of what just happened, and Argal does his best to continue entertaining after the social mishap. Everyone seems happy enough for the young couple but concerned about the Earl's outburst.

Eventually the party will wind down, without the Earl or the Dame returning. The heroes are allowed to return to their rooms or explore the grounds, which are beautifully kept. Several hours after the party ends, Bethor will track the heroes down.

Weariness peeks out from behind Bethor's eyes as he speaks. Obviously the last few hours have been unpleasant for him. Collapsing on an overstuffed chair, he speaks.

"Well, it seems that there are things parents keep from even their children. I've spent most of the day trying to sort this sorry mess out, and have gotten next to nowhere. My father has taken to his bed and is only now asleep. My mother has asked specifically to speak to you.

I think she means to get to the bottom of this as well."

Bethor will then rise to his feet and ask the heroes to come with him. He will escort them to his parents' bedroom, knock, and open the door for them. He will

then close the door as they enter and leave back down the hall.

The Dame sits on a chair, and nods at the heroes as they enter. The Earl lays in a huge bed, and his eyes open as they enter. He looks to be near death, sickly and barely able to move. The Dame speaks.

“Thank you for coming at my behest. Bethor says he believes you are the key to unraveling this knot with which we are tied.”

The Dame will then proceed to tell the heroes what she knows of the Earl's story and life. The Dame tells the heroes that when the Earl was young he loved another woman but that she does not know why they didn't marry. All the Dame knows is that the Earl has spoken in his sleep of needing to keep his word to Iskyla, a name she knows rather well.

“Iskyla is a druidess of much power, her grove resides in the Wyrwood and is said to be open to all who openly and knowingly seek it. In recent years the wood has grown dark and dangerous, a reflection of her twisted heart.

For years I hid the truth from myself about Iskyla, but I believe it is now too late. Only a druid, in touch with the powers of nature, could have afflicted my husband with such a curse. Every day he labors unnecessarily, and her power is what binds him to Oerth.

He loved her, and she betrayed him in some manner and has brought her blight upon this house. The Earl loves his family well, but the woman Argal wants to marry is the student of Iskyla. The Earl cannot bear to see his son walk the same path he trod, and bear the same consequences of loving a wicked woman.”

The Dame sighs deeply and crosses her hands on her lap.

“Tomorrow, on the morn, I would like to hire you to travel to the Druid's grove and put an end to Iskyla's hold over my husband. Slay her or drive her from the realm so that my husband may find surcease from his suffering.”

Treasure: The Dame will promise the heroes whatever they desire, within reason, for the task at hand (the same monetary reward that Bethor mentioned earlier, as well as the favor of her house (see Conclusion and Treasure Summary)).

If the heroes prove reticent to outright murdering Iskyla, the Dame will settle for having Iskyla brought back to Caer Andolyn or removed from Gand.

When the heroes leave the bedroom, Falen will approach them in the hallway, obviously having been listening at the door.

“Ho friends. I overheard the errand my mother sends you on. I believe the danger of the situation has been understated to you. Over the last few years the natural order has been endangered within the Earldom. Wild animals attack the commoners, animals have been born with strange deformities and the blighted lands of Linth are our neighbor. Our crops fail and on one occasion horses have been known to shed tears of blood.

I fear that Iskyla is the center of the problem. I spoke to her once as a child, and she bears my father some kind of grudge.”

Looking abashed, he reaches into a pocket and produces a simple beaded necklace.

“Here. Take this. A peasant girl I know fashions them and claims they ward off evil. I know not whether they work but I do know that she believed such, and gave it to me. You may take it as a sign of weakness, but I believe her. I also believe you will need it more than I do on the morrow.”

The necklace is a simple strand of beads with a large serrated claw set in it. A Knowledge (nature) check (DC 10) will let the heroes know that it is the claw of a troglodyte. The charm has no effect other than to serve as a piece of foreshadowing and to serve as a convenient focus for Falen's *locate object* spell later on in the adventure. Should the heroes refuse the charm, Falen will have it stowed away in the saddlebags of one of their mounts. As the third son of the Earl he has complete access to the grounds. Unless the heroes take extraordinary measures to keep a harmless looking necklace out of their possession, it goes with them on the morrow.

ENCOUNTER 4: THE PRECIOUS-PURE DREAM

This encounter covers the heroes' trip to the Druid's grove and presents another side to the story. The heroes leave Caer Andolyn when they desire the day after the announcement. The Wyrwood grows practically to the walls of Caer Andolyn, but the Druid's grove is reputed to be a good ten to fifteen miles away. If the heroes keep up a good pace, they should have time to find the grove and return to the Caer before full nightfall. Directions to the druid's grove are hazy at best, and the most complete answer the heroes get is to “seek the grove openly”. Any druidic hero will recognize that it is possible to find a druid's grove if the druid who owns it wishes it to be found, and that it's possible that the owning druid can set a condition like that to enter.

The heroes will be followed by Falen and his bodyguard. If necessary, Falen will use *scrolls of locate object* to find the necklace he gave to the heroes. If a hero specifically states that he is attempting to determine if they are being followed, have them make a pair of Spot

checks (DC 18 + APL). Success on both checks indicates that the heroes know they are being followed. If they choose to confront Falen, adjust Encounter 6 to occur ahead of this encounter. If this occurs, Falen will admit to following the heroes and will claim interest in anything that might help his father instead of immediately telling the heroes to be gone from his realm.

Following the Forest Road again through the Wyrwood, you travel for a goodly portion of the day without incident. In the distance you see a break in the treeline where there was none you recall previously. You can see a beaten dirt path lined with seashells heading off to the North, and the Forest road continues on Eastward.

When the heroes follow the path, the sounds of the forest will quickly become muted. The area radiates an almost palpable aura of serenity. After walking for about fifteen minutes, the heroes reach the public center of Iskyla's grove.

The path opens up into a small clearing. A large cottage dominates the center of the clearing, but also present is a large stone fountain. Half-burned candles ring the fountain. A series of flat stones runs between the front door of the cottage and the well. Small golden fish swim quickly through the fountain's water, and a inscription is visible on one of the stones of the fountain. A small bowl rests on a stand near the fountain.

The area appears completely empty. Iskyla is watching the heroes from the woods and is effectively invisible in the form of a sparrow in the trees. The inscription on the fountain reads "Jakre, Jakre, Jakre". This is Oeridian and translates into "Swim, Swim, Swim." It appears to be some sort of druidic mantra.

The front door of the cottage stands open, revealing a comfortable looking interior. The cottage is several rooms large, and the remains of an hours old fire linger in the main hearth. The decorations are what you might expect, simple and inspired by natural ideals. Several items of probable value are scattered about the cottage. As the heroes enter Iskyla will flutter down to a disused windowsill and watch the heroes. After a minute or so she will flutter off and change forms into that of a coyote, then return to the clearing from the woods.

A high pitched howl sounds from an edge of the clearing. This is quickly followed by a series of rapid barking.

When the heroes investigate and see Iskyla:

A small coyote sits on the path you arrived from. Mottled and burned fur runs the length of its body. Immediately you note that the coyote is missing a goodly chunk of its right front leg.

As you watch, the coyote's form blurs and shifts, becoming indistinct. In a matter of seconds the mottled coat becomes dark complexioned skin and

the canine becomes a human woman. Her face is a once-beautiful map of tragedy. Burns and scars twist her mouth into a grimace and tug at the skin surrounding her left eye. The right sleeve of her shirt is pinned up in the manner of those who have lost a limb in war. She speaks, her voice beautiful and resonant despite her physical appearance.

"I am the Druid Iskyla. Who are you, and why do you seek me?"

Allow the heroes to explain the position they are in. If they mention that the Dame hired them to see her removed, she will shake her head and allow the heroes to continue explaining. If asked, Iskyla will admit that she was present at Caer Andolyn in several animal forms. When the heroes are done, Iskyla will reveal what she knows of the secrets of Gand.

"The story you have been told is mostly that, a story. There is a kernel of truth to it, and frankly I tire of the position I have been in for many years. Perhaps you are the key to this, as the Earl's son seems to think.

Long, long ago Earl Warren and myself were betrothed to be wed. When he was a young boy I rescued his sister from the hands of troglodyte raiders who had captured her in a provisioning raid on the hamlet of Hawkins' Crossing. Did you know that Gand is home to a particularly feral tribe of troglodytes, and that they're cannibalistic? They intended to use the Earl's sister as dinner.

With the aid of the previous Earl's men, I led an expedition to recover the girl. At the time, the druidic arts were nearly gone from Gand, and I was regarded with suspicion when I revealed my abilities. I could have been hung, instead the previous Earl decided that the life of his daughter was more important. Diakra was his only daughter.

We caught the troglodytes and killed many, but Diakra was very badly wounded. She lay bleeding to death when I chanced upon her and used the remaining magics I possessed to heal her. She was bedridden for months, but she lived.

For my service I was granted this tract of land to cultivate. I was feted and respected by the lords of the land. And Warren and I fell in love. We spent many years as friends and he eschewed an arranged marriage to court me. From what I understand its caused quite a seed of hatred to build in the Dame's heart over the years. No one likes to lose.

My grove used to be open to all. Diakra became my student and on the night before my wedding she attended me here, right where you stand. We went through the druidic cleansing rituals and under the light of the new moon I was purified.

However, it turns out that the Breaktooth tribe hates being denied a meal. The troglodytes attacked

while we were unprepared. Diakra was killed almost immediately and they settled in for a midnight repast on me when Warren came to the grove. It seems he couldn't resist seeing me before the wedding.

They were eating my arm when he arrived. Alone and unarmed he attacked the troglodytes. It seems as though a bit of the berserker blood runs in the line, because he won. He staunched my wounds as best he could, but I passed the mortal coil. I died.

Warren wept and cursed. He clutched my body to his and covered in my blood, his blood, and troglodyte blood swore an oath. He swore that he would see all the troglodytes in the realm dead before he died for what they had done.

That was when I was pulled back into my body and opened my eyes.

After that, things were not the same between Warren and I. How could they be? Within a fortnight I could see the disgust in his eyes. At first I thought he hated the way I appeared, but then I realized that he hated the way I reflected his failure.

The wedding dissolved. For many years he followed his word and pushed the troglodytes out. Eventually he married, and the Dame wanted nothing to do with an old love, so the troglodytes were allowed to be forgotten.

I watched their wedding from a tree. I swore to Vathria, Katav and Istus that I would honor them so long as they allowed me to live to see the Earl humbled and brought low.

It seems that both he and I got what we wanted.

After this lengthy exposition, the heroes are quite wondering, probably, what they can do for the situation, if anything. Iskyla has realized that her living in this way is unnatural, no matter what good she does to balance it. She has come to the conclusion that if she helps the Earl carry out his word, he will pass, and she will be allowed to pass as well. To this end she has conceived of a plan to make it all end.

Falen has been listening in on the conversation this entire time. Iskyla knows this and hopes that if the heroes fail that Falen might find a way to finish her plan, even though he wants his father to die for different reasons.

If the heroes agree to help, Iskyla is willing to lead them to the main encampment of the Breaktooth troglodytes. With her druidic powers she believes that she can usher the heroes past the mundane guards and into the central chamber of the tribe, where their shaman uses a dark idol for rituals. Iskyla will explain that with the idol in her possession she believes she can force the troglodytes from Gand, fulfilling the Earl's promise.

ENCOUNTER 5: YOU'VE SEEN WHAT'S BENEATH

Iskyla leads the heroes along the course of the Restive River, a very shallow but wide river that pushes through the Wyrwood. As it closes in on dusk, the heroes reach the troglodyte settlement. Easily two to three hundred troglodytes are present, and several cave entrances are visible along the riverbank as the river pushes over a small waterfall.

Iskyla will tell the heroes that most of the tribe leaves at night to go hunting. She will also reveal that she has scouted the inside of the main troglodyte warren in the form of a badger and that she believes that she can tunnel into a passage that leads directly into the central shrine.

Iskyla will shift into the form of a giant badger and start digging. Within a matter of minutes she breaks through into an underground passage and comes back out of the hole. She widens it enough for the heroes to pass, and tells them to head downward to find the shrine. She tells them to find the idol and bring it out.

The passageway stinks of troglodyte. It runs downward for several hundred feet in a marvel of troglodyte engineering. The passage is braced and reinforced, and even decorated in places. The troglodytes have clearly been here for a very long time. Eventually the heroes reach the shrine area, where the troglodyte shaman resides with the idol.

The troglodytes worship Laogzed, deity of eating and gluttony. Their shaman is an incredibly obese member of the species who is continually eating something. Unfortunately for Iskyla the shaman is prepared for an invader this evening. Unfortunately for the shaman he expected it to be a lone druid, and not a group of heavily armed adventurers. He has foolishly dismissed his guards for the evening because he wanted the entire druid for himself.

Rounding a bend, a sickly yellow light spills into the passage. A large chamber has been hollowed out of the earth like a cyst hollows out healthy muscle. Flagstones line the floor of the chamber and the walls are decorated in scenes of troglodyte heroes defeating their foes and feasting upon them in gory abandon. In the center of the room is a large stone coffin standing upright. Perched on the coffin is an absolutely obese troglodyte chewing on something. As he sees you he looks surprised, but not completely.

At this point the heroes have two options. They can either parlay with the troglodyte and attempt conversation, or they can just start fighting. The troglodyte shaman is Sluguu, and considering how the heroes outnumber him he will be willing to talk to them. If the heroes seem hesitant, Sluguu will speak.

"I smell you coming from a long distance; why have you entered the holy shrine of Laogzed? I do not think you are worshippers of the glutton lord. What have you come here for? You seek something, yes?"

If the heroes say that they have come for the idol, Sluguu will offer it to them in exchange for something shiny and metal. Any amount of coins or metallic items will do. Sluguu is neither a coward or stupid, but he realizes he is outnumbered and is willing to let the heroes leave, believing that he will be able to track them down in the future.

If the heroes decide to fight:

"Very well. A larger meal than I expected, but I think you will see I never bite off more than I can chew. Come, weaklings, feel the bite of my jaws."

APL 2 (EL 5)

☛ **Sluguu, Male Troglodyte Clr3 of Laogzed:** hp 38, see Appendix 1.

☛ **Monitor Lizard:** hp 25, see *Monster Manual*, page 275.

APL 4 (EL 7)

☛ **Sluguu, Male Troglodyte Clr5 of Laogzed:** hp 53, see Appendix 1.

☛ **Monitor Lizards (2):** hp 25 each, see *Monster Manual*, page 275.

APL 6 (EL 9)

☛ **Sluguu, Male Troglodyte Clr7 of Laogzed:** hp 68, see Appendix 1.

☛ **Monitor Lizards (4):** hp 25 each, see *Monster Manual*, page 275.

APL 8 (EL 11)

☛ **Sluguu, Male Troglodyte Clr9 of Laogzed:** hp 83, see Appendix 1.

☛ **Monitor Lizards (8):** hp 25 each, see *Monster Manual*, page 275.

Treasure: After the combat, the heroes are free to search the room. The only things of interest are a pile of bones which contain some detritus that they might want (as detailed in the Treasure Summary), a small and seemingly disused shrine to Laogzed, and the coffin. It is sealed and trapped. Within the coffin is the idol and a surprising amount of material wealth. Sluguu's equipment is the only other treasure here.

Unfortunately for the PCs, the coffin is trapped:

APL 2 (EL 2)

☛ **Poison Needle Trap:** CR 2; mechanical; touch trigger (opening the coffin); repair reset; Atk +17

melee (1 plus poison, needle); poison (blue whinnies, DC 14 Fort save resists, 1 Con/unconsciousness); Search DC 22, Disable Device DC 17.

APL 4 (EL 4)

☛ **Scythe Trap:** CR 4; mechanical; touch trigger (opening the coffin); manual reset; Atk +20 melee (2d4+8/x4, scythe); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 18.

APL 6 (EL 6)

☛ **Fusillade of Spears Trap:** CR 6; mechanical; proximity trigger; repair reset; Atk +21 ranged (1d8, Spear); multiple targets (1d6 spears per target in a 10 ft-by-10 ft. area); Search DC 26, Disable Device DC 20.

APL 8 (EL 8)

☛ **Deathblade Scythe Trap:** CR 8; mechanical; touch trigger (opening the coffin); manual reset; Atk +16 melee (2d4+8/x4 plus poison, scythe); poison (deathblade, DC 20 Fortitude save resists, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 19.

The idol is actually Iskyla's right arm, mummified and half eaten. Two fingers are missing as is most of the meat. It puts off the most repulsive smell the heroes have likely ever encountered. The troglodytes love it.

If the heroes defile the shrine, take note of any specific hero that does it. Deities don't like that; those PCs receive the **Defiler!** effect on their Adventure Records.

ENCOUNTER 6: NOW FAIL ME

When the heroes leave through the hole, Falen will accost them.

As the first of you leaves the lair, you are greeted by a sight you did not expect. The mailed feet of a guardsman dressed in the colors of Syn'Andolyn and Falen.

"Very good of you. Hand up the idol and I'll let you leave Gand alive. Refuse and I'll bury you in that hole and let the troglodytes have you as breakfast." Falen's friendly face sneers at you, all happiness gone.

This encounter is pure bluster and an opportunity for the heroes to see the mettle of Falen. His guardsman holds a shovel and looks as though he is prepared to start heaping dirt down upon the heroes. If the heroes comply, he tells them to pass up the idol. If they comply, he gladly lets them up and then tells them to leave the lands of Gand and never to return upon pains of death. Then he and his guard mount up and leave. Falen wants to find a way to ensure the Earl's lands fall to him when he is ready. He's not quite done discrediting his brothers yet.

The heroes have several ways around this. Intimidation, coercion, guile and subtlety are all encouraged. Falen and his guard will not fight in any manner. If they are attacked they will fall to the ground and plead for their life. Allow any reasonable plan the heroes to concoct to work. If the heroes submit, move to Conclusion: Heroes Surrender.

If any hero is foolish enough to physically attack Falen, they will suffer the full consequences of their actions. Even if they kill him and use the convenient human garbage disposal of the troglodytes they are very likely to be caught as magical means will finger their guilt. It is best for them if they remember that physical violence is never accepted amongst the nobility from a commoner. PCs who attack Falen receive the **Banned from Gand** effect on the Adventure Record

ENCOUNTER 7: CLOSURE HAS COME TO ME

After dealing with Falen, Iskyla is nowhere to be found. Returning to her grove shows that she is not there and there is no sign of her. Eventually the heroes should return to Caer Andolyn, where Iskyla will greet them just on the road, once again transforming from the form of a coyote into her natural form.

The heroes are allowed easy access to see the Earl. His condition has not improved at all. The Dame goes white at seeing Iskyla but silences when Bethor calms her down.

Stepping to the bedside, Iskyla speaks.

"I see you still remember me, Earl. I know you haven't seen me for many years, but I've seen you. It pains me greatly to see what we've fallen to, how we've hurt each other so. Somehow our love turned into its first cousin, hate."

She tenderly touches the Earl's forehead.

"It's time for this to end. We are trapped, like a snake eating its own tail. We have become unnatural and evil, if only by our continued lives. These kind people have provided the means for our salvation, and yet I must ask them for more."

The Earl looks at you, and suddenly it becomes clear. He doesn't have the look of a man who is afraid he will die before a great deed is completed. He has the look of a man who is now afraid he will never die.

Iskyla turns to you, swallows once, blinks, and speaks.

"I can undo what was done, but for that I must make the Earl good to his word. The troglodytes must all die. They are all bound to this idol, and with it I can extract retribution on them, and all who have touched it, tasted it or praised it will suffer.

They will starve to death, unable to eat any food at all. They will turn on themselves in madness and be consumed.

Unfortunately I must ask a burden of you. The Earl and I...our souls are not clean. I fear that adding the burden of this will see us judged poorly. Since you now have a place in this, I ask you to accept our burden. You have many years ahead of you and can atone for our evils. Please, I beg of you. Let us rest."

The heroes are free to accept or decline. A successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 12) indicates that what Iskyla is asking is possible but very rare. With the burden divided, it will be possible for them to work off this metaphysical debt. Paladins and Clerics will **NOT** be considered to have broken from their faith for accepting this burden. If the PCs accept the burden, they receive the **A Burden Borne** effect on the Adventure Record.

If the heroes refuse, Bethor will leap to his feet and offer to take the burden. Iskyla will make it clear to him that if he accepts the burden by himself that he is likely damned when he dies. This will provide the heroes a chance to rethink their decision if they were going to refuse. If all the heroes refuse, Bethor will indeed be damned but Iskyla will perform the spell anyway.

Iskyla makes one simple pass over her arm and suddenly it reattaches to her stump. She cries out once in abject agony as her entire body begins to rot to match the state of her arm. The Earl begins to shudder and convulse, and he reaches up, pulling Iskyla to him. He speaks.

"All I ever wanted was to die in your arms."

His body is wracked with a gigantic convulsion and he lies still. Her skin beginning to rot and fall off, Iskyla turns to you.

"Love is what makes the world, I've always thought...it is the only thing that allows men and women to stand in a world where gravity always seems to want to pull them down...bring them low and make them crawl...we were...so much in love."

Her eyes close forever, Iskyla shuffles off her mortal coil again.

Proceed to Conclusion: Heroes Succeed.

CONCLUSION

BETHOR TAKEN

Arriving at Caer Andolyn, you find the castle in a state of disarray. Armed troops are hurriedly riding out of the gate. Within a few minutes, you hear the news: the Earl's second son has been found dead in the forest, drained of all blood. The entire family falls into mourning, wedding

announcements are inconceivable. Within a few days everything settles as funeral arrangements are made. There will be no weddings in Gand this season.

ISKYLA ATTACKED

Stunned by your sudden act of violence, Iskyla's eyes open wide. Faster than your eyes can follow she shifts form into a three legged badger and races off into the underbrush. Upon your return to Caer Andolyn things are no better. Days pass with the Earl deteriorating but refusing to pass on. The finest healers in the land are called in, to no avail.

HEROES SURRENDER

Grinning wildly, Falen takes the arm from you. He quickly wraps it in oilskin and turns his mount away. He looks back over his shoulder and addresses you.

"Be gone from my lands upon pain of death. You are unwelcome in Gand."

The PCs receive the **Banned from Gand** effect on the Adventure Record.

HEROES SUCCEED

With the death of the Earl and Iskyla, a calm settles on the Earldom. Within a week Argal is confirmed as the new Earl of Gand, and a month later he and his new bride celebrate their love in a wedding ceremony fit for royalty. You are all invited as honored guests. The evening after the wedding a small ribbon-wrapped package is delivered to you with the compliments of the new Earl of Gand.

Within the package is a collection of gemstones and a silver medal hung from a blue ribbon. Engraved on the back of the medal is your name and the word "Cursebroken" in ancient Suel. A note from the Earl in the package thanks you for your time and effort in helping he and his family. You will always be welcome in the Earldom of Gand.

The PCs receive the **Favor of the Earl of Gand** and the **Notice of the Darkwatch** effects on the Adventure Record.

Treasure: The PCs receive a pile of gemstones (total amount varies by APL, see the Treasure Summary).

The End

EXPERIENCE POINT SUMMARY

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter 1

Rescue Bethor from the Spiders:

APL 2: 150 xp.

APL 4: 210 xp.

APL 6: 270 xp.

APL 8: 330 xp.

Encounter 5

Defeat the Priest of Laogzed either through force of arms or negotiating for the idol

APL 2: 150 xp.

APL 4: 210 xp.

APL 6: 270 xp.

APL 8: 330 xp.

Bypass or set off the traps on the idol

APL 2: 60 xp.

APL 4: 120 xp.

APL 6: 180 xp.

APL 8: 240 xp.

Story Award

Release Iskyla and Earl Warren from their torment

APL 2: 90 xp.

APL 4: 135 xp.

APL 6: 180 xp.

APL 8: 225 xp.

Total possible experience

APL 2: 450 xp.

APL 4: 675 xp.

APL 6: 900 xp.

APL 8 1,125 xp

TREASURE SUMMARY

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a "treasure" section within the encounter description, giving information

about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter's treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer* or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate. Because this is a Regional adventure, characters may spend additional Time Units to practice professions or create items immediately after the adventure so this total may be modified by other circumstances.

L = Looted gear from enemy; C = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; M = Magic Items.

Introduction:

APL 2: L: 0 gp, C: 50 gp, M: 0 gp.

APL 4: L: 0 gp, C: 75 gp, M: 0 gp.

APL 6: L: 0 gp, C: 125 gp, M: 0 gp.

APL 8: L: 0 gp, C: 150 gp, M: 0 gp.

Encounter 5:

APL 2: L: 100 gp, C: 500 gp, M: +1 *chain shirt* (104 gp), +1 *heavy steel shield* (98 gp), *wand of cure light wounds* – CL 1st (63 gp), *ring of swimming* (208 gp), *elemental gem – water* (188 gp).

APL 4: L: 100 gp, C: 1,000 gp, M: +1 *chain shirt* (104 gp), +1 *heavy steel shield* (98 gp), *wand of cure light wounds* – CL 1st (63 gp), 2 *javelins of lightning* (125 gp each), *ring of swimming* (208 gp), *elemental gem – water* (188 gp), *immovable rod* (417 gp), *rhino hide* (430 gp).

APL 6: L: 100 gp, C: 1,400 gp, M: +1 *chain shirt* (104 gp), +1 *heavy steel shield* (98 gp), *wand of cure light wounds* – CL 1st (63 gp), 2 *javelins of lightning* (125 gp each), *periapt of wisdom* +2 (333 gp), *ring of swimming* (208 gp), *elemental gem – water* (188 gp), *immovable rod* (417 gp), *rhino hide* (430 gp), *lesser bracers of archery* (417 gp), *bag of holding – type II* (417 gp), *potion of greater magic fang* +4 (200 gp).

APL 8: L: 100 gp, C: 2,100 gp, M: +1 *chain shirt* (104 gp), +1 *heavy steel shield* (98 gp), *wand of cure light wounds* – CL 1st (63 gp), 2 *javelins of lightning* (125 gp each), *periapt of wisdom* +2 (333 gp), *cloak of resistance* +3 (750 gp), *ring of swimming* (208 gp), *elemental gem – water* (188 gp), *immovable rod* (417 gp), *rhino hide* (430 gp), *lesser bracers of archery* (417 gp), *bag of holding – type II* (417 gp), *potion of greater magic fang* +4 (200 gp), *druid's vestments* (833 gp), *ring of protection* +3 (1,500 gp), *spined shield* (465 gp).

Conclusion:

APL 2: L: 0 gp, C: 400 gp, M: 0 gp.

APL 4: L: 0 gp, C: 650 gp, M: 0 gp.

APL 6: L: 0 gp, C: 900 gp, M: 0 gp.

APL 8: L: 0 gp, C: 1,350 gp, M: 0 gp.

Total Possible Treasure (Maximum Reward Allowed)

APL 2: L: 100 gp, C: 950 gp, M: 661 gp – Total: 1,711 gp (450 gp).

APL 4: L: 100 gp, C: 1,725 gp, M: 1,758 gp – Total: 3,583 gp (650 gp).

APL 6: L: 100 gp, C: 2,425 gp, M: 3,125 gp – Total: 5,650 gp (900 gp).

APL 8: L: 100 gp, C: 3,600 gp, M: 6,673 gp – Total: 10,373 gp (1,300 gp).

ITEMS FOR THE ADVENTURE RECORD

Special

➤ **Banned from Gand:** You have been told to leave the Earldom of Gand under pain of death due to your actions. At the beginning of any adventure beginning in the Earldom of Gand in Keoland, the player may make a Disguise check (DC 15). Success indicates you are unrecognized by the everyday populace. Individual Disguise checks are necessary for anyone paying close attention to this PC as detailed in the PHB. If the

character is caught they will be executed out of hand. A reward of one thousand gold pieces has been posted for your head within the Earldom of Gand.

✦ **Defiler!**: This PC actively desecrated the shrine to Laogzed. You find yourself afflicted with a strange craving for food, of all types. Any time you are presented with an opportunity to eat, you must make a DC 18 Will or devote your full attention to the food in front of you, devouring everything you can. This can be quite awkward in some social situations, as you heedlessly eat immense amounts of food. Finally, during these binges, your teeth become visibly serrated. A DC 18 Spot check will allow someone to notice your new set of pearly whites. This might cause trouble in some areas.

🕯 **Notice of the Darkwatch**: Your actions have been noted and reported by an active Knight of the Malagari in good standing. Best to tread lightly in matters of the unknown and supernatural.

🕯 **Favor of the Earl of Gand**: Your valiant efforts to aid the Earldom have not gone unnoticed or unrewarded. You have been given a small medal with the word “Cursebroken” written on it. When worn within the Earldom it provides a +2 circumstance bonus to Cha-based skill checks. Furthermore, this PC gains a +2 sacred bonus to saving throws against any curse. The PC might be able to expend this medal (favor) in future adventures in the Earl of Gand, at the discretion of the Keoland Triad and the DM.

✦ **A Burden Borne**: You have accepted a metaphysical burden for the lives of an untold amount of deaths from Iskyla's final act. This burden is both a boon and a curse. For the purpose of any spell that affects alignment, you are treated as being true neutral and your actual alignment, and anyone who attempts to determine your alignment magically gets confusing results as your alignment seems to change repeatedly. You receive a +1 sacred bonus to resist the effects of any compulsion or enchantment spell. Finally, the weight of this burden makes it difficult to rouse yourself from the realm of sleep. Add 5 to the DC of any Listen check made to wake up and, in the first round after you awaken, you may only take a single move action. Elven characters who receive this burden find that they are afflicted with the desire to sleep as other races do occasionally. They are never compelled to, but what's the harm in a good night's sleep, right? This burden cannot be removed by any means short of a *wish* or *miracle* spell, except as specifically noted by the Keoland Triad.

Item Access

APL 2:

- *Elemental Gem, Water* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- *Ring of Swimming* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)

- *Wand of Cure Light Wounds* (CL 1st; Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)

APL 4 (all of APL 2 plus the following):

- *Immovable Rod* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- *Javelin of Lightning* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- *Rhino Hide* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)

APL 6 (all of APLs 2, 4 plus the following):

- *Bag of Holding, Type II* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- *Bracers of Archery, Lesser* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- *Potion of Greater Magic Fang +4* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)

APL 8 (all of APLs 2, 4, 6 plus the following):

- *Cloak of Resistance +3* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- *Druid's Vestments* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- *Ring of Protection +3* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- *Spined Shield* (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)

APPENDIX 1: NPCS

ENCOUNTER 5 – APL 2

Sluguu, Male Troglodyte Clr3 of Laogzed: CR 4; Medium Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 5d8+10; hp 38; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 24 (+6 natural, +5 armor, +3 shield); Base Atk/Grp: +3/+5; Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club) or +5 melee (1d4+2, claw) or +5 melee (1d4+2, bite) or +5 ranged (1d6+2, masterwork javelin); Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club) and +3 melee (1d4+1, claw) and +3 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +5 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws) and +3 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +5 ranged (1d6+2, masterwork javelin); SA stench, spells, spontaneous casting; SQ darkvision 90 ft., rebuke undead 3/day, aura; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Concentration +7, Hide +7*, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +7, Spot +7; Improved Initiative, Multiattack^B, Weapon Focus (javelin).

Stench (Ex): When a troglodyte is angry or frightened, it secretes an oily, musklike chemical that nearly every form of life finds offensive. All living creatures (except troglodytes) within 30 feet of a troglodyte must succeed on a DC 13 Fort save or be sickened for 10 rounds. The save DC is Con-based. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same troglodyte's stench for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect from the sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creature resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws. The monitor lizards in this cave are immune to the stench after years of exposure to it.

Skills: The skin of a troglodyte changes color somewhat, allowing it to blend in with its surroundings like a chameleon and providing a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks. *In rocky or underground settings, this bonus improves to +8.

Languages: Draconic, Common.

Cleric Spells Prepared (4/3+1/2+1, save DC 13 + spell level): 0 – *cure minor wounds* x2, *purify food and drink*, *resistance*; 1st – *bane*, *command*, *lesser confusion**, *protection from good*; 2nd – *calm emotions*, *hold person*, *touch of madness*^{SC}. ^{SC}Spell Compendium.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Evil (+1 CL on evil spells), Madness (You subtract 1 from all Wis-based skill checks and all Will saves. However, once per day, you can see and act with the clarity of true madness. Add one-half your level to a single Wis-based skill check or Will save. You must choose to use this benefit before the check or save is rolled).

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +1 heavy steel shield, masterwork club, 3 masterwork javelins, wand of cure light wounds (CL 1st).

ENCOUNTER 5 – APL 4

Sluguu, Male Troglodyte Clr5 of Laogzed: CR 6; Medium Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 7d8+14; hp 53; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 24 (+6 natural, +5 armor, +3 shield); Base Atk/Grp: +4/+6; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club) or +6 melee (1d4+2, claw) or +6 melee (1d4+2, bite) or +6 ranged (1d6+2, masterwork javelin); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club) and +4 melee (1d4+1, claw) and +4 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +6 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws) and +4 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +6 ranged (1d6+2, masterwork javelin); SA stench, spells, spontaneous casting; SQ darkvision 90 ft., rebuke undead 3/day, aura; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Concentration +10, Hide +7*, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +7, Spot +7; Improved Initiative, Multiattack^B, Spell Focus (enchantment), Weapon Focus (javelin).

Stench (Ex): When a troglodyte is angry or frightened, it secretes an oily, musklike chemical that nearly every form of life finds offensive. All living creatures (except troglodytes) within 30 feet of a troglodyte must succeed on a DC 13 Fort save or be sickened for 10 rounds. The save DC is Con-based. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same troglodyte's stench for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect from the sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creature resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws. The monitor lizards in this cave are immune to the stench after years of exposure to it.

Skills: The skin of a troglodyte changes color somewhat, allowing it to blend in with its surroundings like a chameleon and providing a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks. *In rocky or underground settings, this bonus improves to +8.

Languages: Draconic, Common.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/4+1/3+1/2+1, save DC 13 + spell level, DC 14 + spell level for enchantment spells): 0 – *cure minor wounds* x2, *guidance*, *purify food and drink*, *resistance*; 1st – *bane*, *command* x2, *lesser confusion**, *protection from good*; 2nd – *cure moderate wounds*, *calm emotions*, *hold person*, *touch of madness*^{SC}; 3rd – *cure serious wounds*, *prayer*, *rage**. ^{SC}Spell Compendium.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Evil (+1 CL on evil spells), Madness (You subtract 1 from all Wis-based skill checks and all Will saves. However, once per day, you can see and act with the clarity of true madness. Add one-half your level to a single Wis-based skill check or Will save. You must choose to use this benefit before the check or save is rolled).

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +1 heavy steel shield, masterwork club, 3 masterwork javelins, wand of cure light wounds (CL 1st), 2 javelins of lightning.

ENCOUNTER 5 – APL 6

Sluguu, Male Troglodyte Clr7 of Laogzed: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 9d8+18; hp 68; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 24 (+6 natural, +5 armor, +3 shield); Base Atk/Grp: +6/+8; Atk +9 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club) or +8 melee (1d4+2, claw) or +8 melee (1d4+2, bite) or +8 ranged (1d6+2, masterwork javelin); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club) and +6 melee (1d4+1, claw) and +6 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +8 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws) and +6 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +8 ranged (1d6+2, masterwork javelin); SA stench, spells, spontaneous casting; SQ darkvision 90 ft., rebuke undead 3/day, aura; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 17 (19), Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Concentration +13, Hide +7*, Knowledge (religion) +11, Listen +8, Spot +8; Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Improved Initiative, Multiattack^B, Spell Focus (enchantment), Weapon Focus (javelin).

Stench (Ex): When a troglodyte is angry or frightened, it secretes an oily, musklike chemical that nearly every form of life finds offensive. All living creatures (except troglodytes) within 30 feet of a troglodyte must succeed on a DC 13 Fort save or be sickened for 10 rounds. The save DC is Con-based. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same troglodyte's stench for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect from the sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creature resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws. The monitor lizards in this cave are immune to the stench after years of exposure to it.

Skills: The skin of a troglodyte changes color somewhat, allowing it to blend in with its surroundings like a chameleon and providing a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks. *In rocky or underground settings, this bonus improves to +8.

Languages: Draconic, Common.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1, save DC 14 + spell level, DC 16 + spell level for enchantment spells): 0 – cure minor wounds x3, guidance, purify food and drink, resistance; 1st – bane, command x3, lesser confusion*, protection from good; 2nd – cure moderate wounds, calm emotions, hold person x2, touch of madness^{SC}; 3rd – cure serious wounds, dispel magic, prayer, rage*; 4th – divine power, freedom of movement, unholy blight*. ^{SC}Spell Compendium.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Evil (+1 CL on evil spells), Madness (You subtract 1 from all Wis-based skill checks and all Will saves. However, once per day, you can see and act with the clarity of true madness. Add one-half your level to a single Wis-based skill

check or Will save. You must choose to use this benefit before the check or save is rolled).

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +1 heavy steel shield, masterwork club, 3 masterwork javelins, wand of cure light wounds (CL 1st), 2 javelins of lightning, periapt of wisdom +2.

ENCOUNTER 5 – APL 8

Sluguu, Male Troglodyte Clr9 of Laogzed: CR 10; Medium Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 11d8+22; hp 83; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 24 (+6 natural, +5 armor, +3 shield); Base Atk/Grp: +7/+9; Atk +10 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club) or +9 melee (1d4+2, claw) or +9 melee (1d4+2, bite) or +9 ranged (1d6+2, masterwork javelin); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club) and +7 melee (1d4+1, claw) and +7 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +9 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws) and +7 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +9 ranged (1d6+2, masterwork javelin); SA stench, spells, spontaneous casting; SQ darkvision 90 ft., rebuke undead 3/day, aura; AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +6, Will +12; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 17 (19), Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Concentration +16, Hide +7*, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +8, Spot +8; Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Improved Initiative, Multiattack^B, Spell Focus (enchantment), Weapon Focus (javelin).

Stench (Ex): When a troglodyte is angry or frightened, it secretes an oily, musklike chemical that nearly every form of life finds offensive. All living creatures (except troglodytes) within 30 feet of a troglodyte must succeed on a DC 13 Fort save or be sickened for 10 rounds. The save DC is Con-based. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same troglodyte's stench for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect from the sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creature resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws. The monitor lizards in this cave are immune to the stench after years of exposure to it.

Skills: The skin of a troglodyte changes color somewhat, allowing it to blend in with its surroundings like a chameleon and providing a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks. *In rocky or underground settings, this bonus improves to +8.

Languages: Draconic, Common.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/1+1, save DC 14 + spell level, DC 16 + spell level for enchantment spells): 0 – cure minor wounds x3, guidance, purify food and drink, resistance; 1st – bane, command x3, lesser confusion*, protection from good; 2nd – cure moderate wounds, calm emotions, hold person x3, touch of madness^{SC}; 3rd – bestow curse, cure serious wound, dispel magic, prayer, rage*; 4th – cure critical wounds, divine power, freedom of movement, unholy blight*; 5th – bolts of bedevilment^{SC}, greater command. ^{SC}Spell Compendium.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Evil (+1 CL on evil spells), Madness (You subtract 1 from all Wis-based

skill checks and all Will saves. However, once per day, you can see and act with the clarity of true madness. Add one-half your level to a single Wis-based skill check or Will save. You must choose to use this benefit before the check or save is rolled).

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt*, *+1 heavy steel shield*, masterwork club, 3 masterwork javelins, *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1st), 2 *javelins of lightning*, *periapt of wisdom* +2, *cloak of resistance* +3.

DM AID: NEW RULE ITEMS

NEW SPELLS:

Bolts of Bedevilment (Spell Compendium)

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Brd 5, Madness 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: Ray

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

With a strangled peal of laughter to complete the spell, you point your hand at your enemy and fire a black beam from your finger.

This spell grants you the ability to make one ray attack per round. You must succeed on a ranged touch attack with the ray to strike the target. A living creature struck by the ray is dazed for 1d3 rounds if it fails its save.

Touch of Madness (Spell Compendium)

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Madness 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Your hand glows with roiling purple light as you reach out to deliver lunacy with your touch.

You can cause one living creature to become dazed by making a successful touch attack. If the target creature does not make a successful Will save, its mind is clouded and it takes no actions for 1 round per caster level.

DM AID: ROLEPLAYING NOTES

(In order of introduction)

HARLAN HAMMERFORGE:

Harlan is a Dwarven armorsmith of no small water who has taken up semi-permanent residence in Niolen Dra. He is more used to human ways than most of his kin, and maintains a friendly demeanor to everyone he meets. After all, one never knows who is a potential customer. Harlan specializes in finely crafted armor and several of his pieces have been worn by nobles of importance. Harlan is completely bald above the eyebrow level, but maintains a lustrous beard common to dwarvenkind. He will admit to being a retired adventurer, though by his own admission he will agree that it was not a life suited to him.

BRIELLA HAMMERFORGE:

Harlan's daughter is as close to completely acclimated to humankind as any dwarf could reasonably expect to come. She wears her hair and clothes in the latest fashions and serves as a warm face to the customers in her father's armory. She is tall and thin for a dwarf, and exceedingly beautiful by both standards of dwarves and most humans. She has been mistaken for simply a short human on several occasions and laughs about it. She is very proud of her dwarven heritage and her father's work. Her father refuses to let her work the forge as the result of an old clan superstition that forbids dwarven women from creating tools of war, so she helps her family by weaving and mending clothes. If pressed about the clan superstition, Briella will mention that apparently her clan believed that the axe that will be used to slay the last Dwarven King will be crafted by a female dwarf, and so no females are allowed to manufacture tools of war. Briella has long auburn hair and bright green eyes. She will be particularly taken by anyone who can sing and is attractive, and will spend time with them as possible during the trip.

CIENNA OF THE HAMMERFORGES:

An human Orphan who found herself in the care of Friars of Fharlanghan, Cienna has been apprenticed to Harlan. Apparently the clan superstition does not apply to teaching human women the art of making weapons and armor. Cienna is a tall girl of sixteen years or so who appears to come from a mix of Suel and Oeridian stocks. She is quiet and self-conscious, but will talk to anyone who wishes to speak to her. While traveling, Cienna will spend her time making sketches of the people she travels with and many landscapes. Quite the talented artist, she will confess that it is her true love but that she finds forgework to her liking as well. She is quick-witted and funny, once she warms up to someone.

BETHOR SYN'ANDOLYN:

Second son of the Earl of Gand, Bethor is a priest of the Suel Deity Bralm. Simply put, Bethor is scatterbrained. He is trusting, devoted, loyal and steadfast...all combined with his guileless attitude, this means he is often played for the fool by one or the other of his brothers and people wishing to get something from his family. He will cheerfully explain the tenets of his small faith to anyone interested. These include the ideas of progress, growth and harmony. These qualities are best exemplified by insect colonies, which he will point out as well. He will preface many conversations with "If only mankind were like an ant colony in that..." and then drone on from there. Bethor is skinny, of pure Suel stock, and constantly sunburned from too much time outdoors. If there is a person who embodies the phrase "unable to see the forest for the trees", it is Bethor Syn'Andolyn.

ARGAL SYN'ANDOLYN:

Argal is the scion of house Syn'Andolyn, and will be Earl upon the death of his father. He is an exceedingly handsome man, and he carries himself with the arrogance of a man who understands how important he is and how beautiful he is. Argal is the kind of noble who might have been a well-liked pillar of any community were he born to a lower standard. Instead, he lives a life of luxury and indolence and has never really had to work for anything. Argal has two desires, obvious to anyone who meets him for more than a few minutes: to become Earl and to be recognized as a Knight. He will lament never having been allowed to squire himself in his younger days and will always be slightly envious of any heroes who are knights. Despite his faults, Argal does have redeeming qualities. He is loyal to his family and the kingdom, possesses no small skill at arms, and has led several expeditions in the past against some of the more dangerous denizens of the Earldom of Gand. An almost palpable aura of ambition rolls off Argal, and he can often be cold or rude to people who cannot help him achieve an immediate goal.

FALEN SYN'ANDOLYN:

Last son of house Syn'Andolyn, Falen is charming, affable, and welcoming. He is short and thin for a full grown man, and appears weak of strength. He is quick witted and charming, and is reputed to take consorts from the lower classes on regular occasion. Falen is known for never having settled on a path for his life. One of his callings was that of the bardic colleges, and even though he failed to become a true bard, he is possessed of a stock of stories, ballads, and ditties that would put many to shame. If he strikes up a serious conversation with any of the heroes, he will be more than happy to share these stories, particularly those embarrassing stories he knows of his brothers from when they were growing up. With particular relish, Falen will tell the heroes about the time Argal got drunk while courting a girl and fell off the ramparts of the caer when he tried to kiss her and crashed through the stable roof. He has several stories about Bethor as well, most of which involve Bethor wandering off somewhere, getting lost, and requiring rescue. Bethor apparently even used to have a personal guard assigned to watch him, usually someone who had displeased the commander of the watch. Finally, Falen is a lover of all wines. He will quickly descend into full blown drunkenness during the announcement dinner.

NEDRIC HOLLOWTREE:

Nedric is an elven musician and business partner of Rinder. He is a full elf though he carefully grooms himself so that he appears to have a healthy dose of human blood in him. He does because he finds it easier to identify with customers who believe he is more 'like them'. Nedric and Rinder make a living by crafting musical instruments out of living trees, using magical means to ensure they are of the finest quality. Nedric wears his hair and clothes in the latest human fashions to help blend in. Nedric takes special interest in any Halfling or gnome heroes, asking them of their customs and ways. Nedric makes his home in the Barony of Raya, in the city of Daerwald, but he hails from the Dreadwood, from an elven contingent that lives deep within the woods. Under no circumstances will Nedric admit to this, but his personal goal is to evaluate some of the peoples of Keoland on behalf of his peoples.

RINDER THE SCULPTOR:

Rinder the sculptor is a tall and husky half-elf with bright red hair and green eyes. Fair skin leads some to believe that his human blood is of Suel origins, but Rinder will neither confirm nor deny this. Rinder is charming and affable, and will gladly tell the heroes that he is here to get a 'sense' of the couple who are getting married so that he can craft a 'proper' instrument for them. Rinder's sculpting take place primarily through magical means as he and Nedric coax their trees to grow in a certain fashion so that the instrument body almost literally drops off the tree when finished. At first glance, Rinder believes that a harp is what the house of Syn'Andolyn needs. Rinder is secretly a Knight of the Malagari traveling incognito. He has been assigned to travel to the Earldom of Gand because several Knights have gone missing over the course of the last year. Either they have gone rogue or something foul has befallen them. Rinder has decided to start his investigation at the top of the Earldom, after doing some research and realizing that the Earl has been alive for an exceedingly long time for a humanborn. Under no circumstances will Rinder reveal his cover, he carries no insignia, and he will not interfere in the business of the Earldom since he is without assistance other than Nedric. Rinder will watch the heroes and report to his superiors on their actions. If any hero is a Knight of the Malagari who makes it obvious, a detailed report on that hero will be sent to Rinder's superiors outlining those actions.

DAME SYN'ANDOLYN:

The Dame Syn'Andolyn is wife to the Earl and a power in the Earldom. An older woman, nearing seventy years old, she is still possessed of a visible strength. She will speak for the Earl on almost all matters. Proud and noble, the Dame brooks no insolence or disrespect, and offers precisely proper respect to those guests in her house. The Dame is aware that the Earl labors under some kind of curse but does not know the specifics. The Dame loves the Earl, the Earldom and her family, in that order. She will trust the heroes so much as they seem capable of helping her family and she trusts in the premonitions of her son Bethor. The Dame fears the intercession of the Malagari in the realm and wants to resolve her husband's condition quickly.

EARL WARREN SYN'ANDOLYN:

The Earl is a stricken man. He is visibly weak and sick in body, but his eyes still hold a clarity that shows he knows the situation he is in is deteriorating. He will not speak at all other than when dictated in the text of the adventure, letting the Dame speak for him.

ISKYLA, DRUID OF GAND:

Iskyla is the cause and the solution to the problems surrounding the Earl of Gand. Once beautiful to the point of notoriety, she is now scarred and missing an arm. The scars of her body match the scars on her soul and personality. She is a bitter woman who feels betrayed by the man she once loved, but wants to see him stop suffering.

PLAYER HANDOUT #1

The following message is tacked to several signboards throughout the area:

Hear ye!

Mastersmith Harlan Hammerforge seeks a group of trained guides to accompany him and his daughter to the Earldom of Gand. Recompense Negotiable. Please apply in person at Hammerforged Armory.