



VOTK2

YRISA'S NIGHTMARE

by Lucas Curell
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YRISA'S NIGHTMARE

an adventure for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game
by Lucas Curell and Chance Kemp

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Yrisa's Nightmare

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INTRODUCTION

Yrisa's Nightmare is an adventure for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, intended for four characters of levels 2-3. In *Yrisa's Nightmare*, the player characters (PCs) are drawn into a curse afflicting Highhouse Yroden where, to survive, they must unravel the mystery and rescue the young oracle at its center.

FOR THE GM

This module uses both action and investigation to slowly reveal the story at its center. You need to be comfortable with how everything fits together. To help, Appendix IV includes a map of the clues and how they interrelate. Familiarize yourself with them.

PLAY STYLE

Part 1 of this adventure is straightforward. Think of it as a short dungeon crawl. Don't worry if your players skip it altogether. Part 2 becomes much more free-form. Here, the curse

is revealed and the players need to stitch together clues to understand what's going on. Finally, as you begin Part 3, play shifts back towards a dungeon crawl, but with the added element of a ticking clock to force your PCs onward.

There's a lot going on in *Yrisa's Nightmare*, and PCs can get to the end by following numerous trails, or even with a little bit of dumb luck. Have fun with it, give them some rope, and see where things take them.

A Quick Note on Pronunciation

The "Y" in Yrisa and Yroden is silent, read them as Risa and Roden.

READ ALOUD TEXT

You will find shaded text throughout this adventure. It is meant to be read aloud or summarized for your players. Often, this read-aloud text is followed by a bulleted list of additional elements meant to be summarized for your players.

NPC DESCRIPTIONS

Your PCs will interact with many different non-player characters (NPCs), particularly in Part 2, each with their own mannerisms, personalities, and objectives. To help you quickly decide how these NPCs should respond, each is given a single sentence that succinctly describes them. Here's Highman Gantar:

Gantar is a cunning leader who values intelligence over strength and excels at games of strategy.

With just this, you know that Gantar is a thinker, but also willing to use lies and deceit to achieve his ends. You can also safely assume that, given his position as leader of the Northland tribes, he is an accomplished warrior. Finally, there's always a little extra to make the NPC memorable; in Gantar's case, it's that he enjoys playing games.

THE NAMES OF THINGS

In the Northland tribes, villages are referred to as "high-houses," and their leaders either "highman" or "highwoman." Bards are known as "skalds," and married women as "good-wives." Most homes are called "longhouses," and every village has a communal longhouse called a "great hall."

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Highhouse Yroden has been cursed. Apparitions stalk the streets, gnolls lurk in the wilds, and a dragon has taken interest in the village. Yet, the curse runs deeper. Nightmares plague townfolks' dreams and madness grips their waking minds. To make matters worse, just when she's needed most, their wise woman has left.

Everything started four days ago.

Before sunrise, Wise Woman Oga packed a bag and departed without warning, taking with her enough provisions for several days. Around noon, a gnoll war band was spotted in the grasslands, moving south quickly. Then, a few hours later, the dragon was first seen in the skies high above Yroden, returning in the dead of night when it tore the roof off one of the longhouses and killed several warriors.

Somewhere in the haze of that first day, the apparitions also made their appearance: a quartet of heavily robed creatures and two Northland warriors. The robed forms stalked the streets, attacking anyone they encountered, before vanishing into darkness and shadow. At dusk, a lone Northlander raced up the main avenue shouting frantically, "Yrisa! Yrisa! Yrisa!" before vanishing into thin air in front of the Great Hall of Yroden. Finally, another Northlander appeared amid a circle of shadowy gnolls. They fought for a time before a winged shape, larger than a man and with a head like



a gnoll, swooped down and devoured him as the entire scene melted into mist.

There could be no doubt: Yroden was cursed.

THE TRUTH

At the heart of Highhouse Yroden's trouble is a young woman named Yrisa. Born to extraordinary oracular powers, Yrisa has recently learned a dangerous secret: Zalintar Blackclaw, Abyssal Lord of the Smoldering Wastes, will die. She witnessed it all: when, who, where, and how he dies. Unfortunately, Zalintar knows of her vision and covets the secret she holds.

To get it, he summoned his greatest warriors, Blackclaw Minions, and dispatched them to the mortal realm with a simple objective: find Yrisa and learn the details of her vision.

Fearing for her life, Yrisa fled with her guardian Grim Wolf. Together, they traveled south into the lands of Clan Vasi, to the doorstep of Highhouse Yroden.

Meanwhile, Zalintar's gnolls raided her home and learned of her departure. They split into hunting parties to track her down, each of these led by a Blackclaw Minion. One of those hunting parties made for Highhouse Yroden, intent on speaking with the village's wise woman, Oga, who is also secretly a member of the Cult of Zalintar. However, when they neared Yroden, they stumbled across Yrisa and Grim Wolf before they could enter the village.

Grim Wolf fought savagely, but could not prevail against such overwhelming odds. He was seriously injured and left to die. Yrisa's fate was worse. She was taken for questioning.

The Blackclaw Minion sent his gnolls away and joined Wise Woman Oga in caves beneath Highhouse Yroden, where they also took Yrisa. Through torture, both mundane and magical, Oga now seeks to draw the secrets from the young oracle's mind. Yrisa refuses to give it up though, and day after day their mental struggle rages.

It is this struggle, coupled with Yrisa's extraordinary powers, that has put Yroden into its present dilemma. Yrisa's power ripples out, casting a net over the nearby countryside, and drawing everything and everyone into her suffering. The apparitions, the madness, the nightmares, the dragon... everything that troubles Yroden emanates from Yrisa's tortured mind. The only way to save Highhouse Yroden is to save Yrisa.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs are passing through the lands of Clan Vasi when they come near to Highhouse Yroden and are captured in Yrisa's nightmare. They must free her to escape, or at least survive, while trying not to make an enemy of Highhouse Yroden.

In Part 1, the PCs find evidence of gnoll activity in the region, and may choose to track them back to their lair where they rid the area of a danger and have a chance to learn valuable information. They may also rescue Grim Wolf, securing an ally in their quest to survive.

Part 2 begins when the PCs enter Highhouse Yroden. Regardless of whether they dealt with the gnolls or jumped right to Yroden, they find it under siege. A curse has taken hold and the weary villagers turn to the PCs for help. They must sift through a tangled web to learn of Yrisa's plight, discover that Oga lies at the heart of it, and uncover her location in the tunnels beneath the city.

Finally, in Part 3, the PCs descend into tunnels beneath Highhouse Yroden. Here they come face to face with one of Zalintar's dreaded Blackclaw Minions, and must face the witch Oga and her minions. Only if they can best the monster and the witch will they be able to save Highhouse Yroden.

INVOLVING THE PCs

PCs are drawn into the adventure when they near Highhouse Yroden, and, once snared by the nightmare, they cannot leave. Some reasons for their presence might include:

- They are passing through on their way to adventure elsewhere.
- They have come to speak with Wise Woman Oga, a renowned shaman and alchemist.
- They are visiting family or friends in Yroden.
- They are seeking exotic mounts, and the Northlanders of Clan Vasi are known to tame beasts such as wolves and small dinosaurs.
- They intend to join the Northlanders in the approaching festival of Oxmead.

Valley of the Kings

This adventure has everything you need to run *Yrisa's Nightmare*, but additional information on Highhouse Yroden, and the Valley of the Kings, where Yroden is located, can be found in a web supplement at <http://www.valleyofthekingsrpg.com/>. In the supplement, you will find a variety of information, including additional townsfolk, village locations, nearby villages, and the larger valley.



Vit'tun'vit is a game of strategy played among the northland tribes.

FORESHADOWING

If you have opportunity, before starting *Yrisa's Nightmare*, you can setup the events of this adventure with your players in the following ways:

RISE OF A GREAT SEER

Yrisa is an extraordinarily powerful oracle and her coming has been foretold in legend. Rumors are sweeping through the Northland tribes that a “great seer” has arisen. These rumors are carried beyond the tribal borders by peddlers, adventurers, and traders. Though details are few, they agree on these facts:

- The seer is a young woman, born eighteen years ago during a lunar eclipse.
- Her powers of foretelling and sight are so great they can touch even the gods.

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

While enjoying a respite in their favorite tavern, which happens to be situated near the borders of civilization and Northland territories, the PCs encounter Yrisa and Grim Wolf. In the story's timeline, this occurs after the pair fled Yrisa's home, but before Zalintar's minions attacked it.

Two Northlanders share the taproom with you this night, an unusual, though not unheard of, event this close to their tribal lands. One, a grizzled veteran, casts wary glances about like a wolf hunting prey. The second, a young woman, sits huddled in her furs, her brows furrowed as she stares forlornly into a steaming mug of milk which she cradles between her hands.

The PCs may wish to speak with them. Grim Wolf is distrustful, but Yrisa will open up quickly. She is friendly and honest, but neither will speak of her vision, or their hurried flight from her home. They'll only talk of “troubles” that are of no concern to the PCs.

Northlanders

Northlanders are known to be stout warriors who live off the land, pray to their ancestors, enjoy honey meads, and see portents everywhere. Among them, strength is respected, weakness abhorred, and sharp wit tolerated. A skald and wise woman are staples of every village, the former to minister to the mind, and the latter the spirit.



THE CURSE

Highhouse Yroden and a band surrounding it, roughly two miles in diameter, is caught within Yrisa's nightmare. Anyone entering this cursed zone, including the PCs, becomes trapped. Any attempt to leave, regardless of the path taken, always results in a return to Highhouse Yroden. Nothing can escape until Yrisa releases her hold on the region, which will happen when she is freed or when Oga defeats her.

The curse centered on Yroden has three primary effects: storms, visions, and madness.

Storms are the most straightforward manifestations of the curse, forming suddenly and without warning. The skies darken, lighting arcs through black, roiling clouds that roll in from clear skies, and winds howl across the bluff. These effects cause damage to the structures of Yroden, but present little real danger to the PCs. Use them to set up a scene or add excitement to an encounter.

The visions are of people Yrisa knows, creatures she's encountered, or things she fears. In the text, they are referred to as *apparitions*. Within the nightmare, they take on enough actual physical substance to interact with the world around them. The apparitions appear in many forms, but they are all the stuff of dreams and cannot truly harm anyone. Additional details of the apparitions are included below.

Yrisa has a powerful mind and psyche, and through her oracular powers, the emotions she feels spill into her nightmare, where

they are projected into the minds of those caught in the curse. These emotional effects are referred to as *madness*. Each of Yrisa's emotions has a different effect, all of which are described in additional detail below.

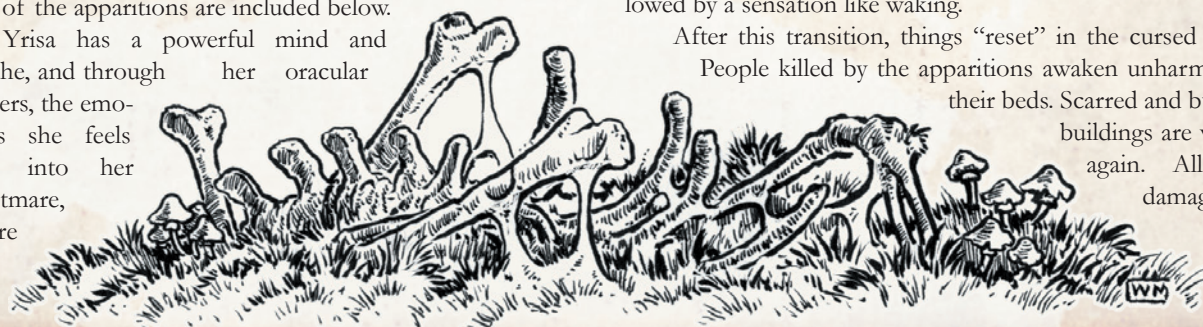
Finally, within the cursed zone, sleep is troubled and difficult. Dreams are filled with nightmares, the details of which are difficult to recall. Waking brings an intense feeling of searching, underpinned by panic and fear. Glimpses of witches, dragons, and dark winged figures feature heavily in these dreams. Grim Wolf and Vigi (Vigi is an apparition described below) also make appearances, their visages clear enough to be recognized when encountered elsewhere during the adventure (or if the PCs met Grim Wolf during A Chance Encounter (see above).

DAILY CYCLE

At some point during every 24-hour period, everyone in the cursed area experiences a sensation of waking. This happens at the same time, and it doesn't matter if people were actually asleep. Even characters that do not need sleep, or that were awake, experience an unexplained, momentary blackout followed by a sensation like waking.

After this transition, things "reset" in the cursed zone.

People killed by the apparitions awaken unharmed in their beds. Scarred and burned buildings are whole again. All the damage



caused by the storms or the apparitions vanishes. Although this phenomenon is obviously unusual, it does not seem odd to the victims of the curse. It happens and is accepted without explanation in the same way things that happen in a dream are accepted.

As you make the transition from one day to the next, take care to introduce it nonchalantly, and let the players figure out that something odd is happening. Once they do, if their characters then press the villagers about the oddity, the people won't immediately understand the conflict. Further insistence will cause them to grow confused and anxious as they struggle with the paradox.

APPARITIONS

Yrisa's suffering has spawned apparitions that come alive in Yroden, day and night. Each offers a clue that can help the PCs learn the true nature of the problem they face. The apparitions include:

- A black dragon
- A group of cultists
- A green hag
- Two northlanders (Grim Wolf and Vigi)

DRAGON

A black dragon visits the town at random times during the day, and at least once every night. It appears aggressive and hostile, but never actually initiates combat. Instead, it circles around the village, occasionally spitting its acid breath near villagers before getting down to business. If left alone, it eventually alights upon a house, tears the roof off, and then searches the home. The dragon is a danger only if it is attacked.

Symbolism: The dragon is a representation of the questioning Yrisa suffers. It should be obvious that the dragon seeks something, but a subtler clue exists. It searches every home in Yroden except the homes of Goodwife Tonna and Wise Woman Oga (buildings D and G on the village map). It never searches the same house twice until it has scoured all the others.

CULTISTS

Four cultists, dressed in tattered brown robes emblazoned with a hyena's head symbol upon their backs, visit the town at random times. Sometimes they are all together, sometimes they are alone or in pairs. Two of them are about six feet tall, and two of them are shorter than four feet tall.

They are not usually hostile, although occasionally they do attack without provocation. These attacks occur more often by the smaller cultists, and typically when they are not with the larger ones. If defeated and unmasked, their faces are revealed to be smooth and featureless, and their bodies dissolve into mist and smoke within minutes.

Symbolism: The four cultists are representations of Goodwife Tonna and her family (Tonna and her family are described in detail in Part 2). They are always heavily cloaked and shadowed, even during the day. Like the dragon, they are searching, and avoid Tonna and Oga's dwellings. Their search

schedule is erratic, and they revisit places before finishing a circuit through the village.

HAG

Occasionally, a green hag appears with the dragon. The dragon continues to act as defined above, but the hag dismounts, lashing out desperately at anything nearby and rampaging through the village until killed.

Symbolism: The hag is a representation of Oga. It appears erratically as Oga works hard to stay out of the visions.

GRIM WOLF

Yrisa's guardian Grim Wolf appears every day a few hours before dark. He is always in battle with phantom gnolls, and is always killed by a massive dark shape with great bat-like wings and a head like a gnoll. This image recurs even if the PCs rescue Grim Wolf (see Scene 3 below).

Symbolism: The phantom of Grim Wolf is not a symbol, but rather a memory. Grim Wolf's appearance suggests there is another person allied with Yrisa. If PCs investigated the battle site, this vision should be easily recognized as a telling of that scene.

Of note, if your PCs have not discovered Grim Wolf, this vision could be extended, showing him crawling away after the gnolls leave. His broken form makes it to the river, where it is picked up and washed a short distance downstream, coming to rest in an alcove.

VIGI

A second Northlander appears at random times during the day and night. He is always alone. The first sightings of him are brief, and he appears shouting and reaching at the air, then vanishes into smoke. As time passes, he becomes increasingly violent, attacking anyone or anything nearby. Finally, he begins to do violence to himself.

Symbolism: This is Vigi, and he is a manifestation of Yrisa's hope and desperation. As her suffering increases, Vigi grows more violent. As she begins to lose hope, he does also. Grim Wolf knows Vigi (a young man from their tribe), and knows that he and Yrisa are lovers. If the PCs have rescued Grim Wolf, he will share this information.



MADNESS

There are times when Yrisa's grip on reality becomes tenuous, and in these moments her madness seeps into Yroden. This is marked by a variety of effects, from inexplicable rage, to bouts of passion.

Rage: As Yrisa becomes increasingly frustrated with events, her anger and frustration seep into the nightmare. During a period of rage, anger grips the town and fights erupt. This rage is fleeting, leaving people a mess of raw emotions.

Passion: A tactic Yrisa uses to resist Oga is thinking of Vigi, and her love for him. This enters the nightmare first as tender passion, but evolves into something darker. This madness occurs during the worst moments of her interrogation. In the beginning, it acts as an aphrodisiac: lovers seek out one another and new love blooms. As Yrisa's suffering drags on, it shifts to a rage targeting loved ones. Finally, in the end, the violence turns inward, driving victims to harm themselves. This madness is often accompanied by the vision of Vigi.

Fear: Yrisa is always afraid, and sometimes her fear slips into the nightmare. When it does, panic and terror ripple through Yroden. Common responses to fear include: sweating, blushing, crying, throwing up, soiling oneself, freezing up, goose bumps, fainting, and fleeing. Villagers will exhibit all of these symptoms, but PCs may as well.

Shame: Sometimes, Yrisa becomes aware of what she is doing to Yroden. These moments are difficult for her, and shame and disgust seize her. This too then spills into the nightmare, creating a sudden feeling of dirtiness and a compulsion to clean. Victims begin scrubbing themselves, frantically trying to get rid of the nonexistent dirt.

The madness effects can be used to great effect to make Yroden feel cursed. PCs should be given a **Will saving throw DC 12**. Those that succeed are able to shrug off the effects, while those that fail become filled with the emotions described above. Encourage your players to have fun and be creative with these sudden, unexplained emotional states.

MECHANICS OF THE CURSE

Exhaustion

Every day, each PC, even those that do not need sleep, must succeed on a **Constitution DC 12 check** or become fatigued. A second failure results in the character becoming exhausted. Subsequent failures each deal 1d3 Con damage. The difficulty of this check increases by 1 for each day they remain in the cursed area and, as long as they remain inside the cursed region, exhaustion can only be recovered from rest if the character also succeeded on their Ability check that day.

Damage

The apparitions haunting Yroden are not real, and neither is the damage they deal. It persists only until the "daily reset." Damage from any other source is treated normally. For example, when the Rage madness sweeps through the town and fights erupt, the damage done from these brawls is real. However, when the dragon belches acid at PCs, this damage is not real, and it persists only until the daily reset.

Death

Although damage dealt by the apparitions is fleeting, "dying" to these things is traumatic. Anyone that "dies" does not remain dead, instead, they automatically fail that day's Ability check against the curse and awaken during the daily reset.

PART I

GNOLLS

After their fight with Grim Wolf, the gnoll raiders, led by their flind lieutenant, have fallen back to a cave complex south of Highhouse Yroden, awaiting orders from the Blackclaw Minion.

SCENE 1. GETTING STARTED

As the adventure opens, the PCs are on the road, unaware they're about to fall headlong into a heap of trouble. They approach a small village and after hours of walking, a midday break should be a welcome respite.

Rolling hills, peppered with small stands of trees, stretch for miles in all directions. A short distance off, these

grassy hills are interrupted by a high, lightly forested bluff upon which a small village is visible. Smoke drifts lazily from a dozen chimneys, though its streets seem oddly deserted. Sharpened logs protect the eastern approach, while the bluff's sheer cliffs discourage any other. A small river wends a winding course along the bluff's base, its source somewhere miles away, in massive white capped mountains so tall their peaks vanish into clouds.

This is the Northland village of Highhouse Yroden, one of a half-dozen villages that make up the holdings of Clan Vasi.

The road upon which the PCs travel winds around the base of the bluff, continuing south into the hilly grasslands. A fork at the bluff's base threads upwards to the village.

A herd of buffalo graze lazily in the grasses.

THE HYENA

A sudden high pitched yipping sound draws your attention as a large hyena lumbers out of the tall grasses a dozen paces away. The creature's fur is white with pale blue spots, and it wears wickedly spiked leather barding. Despite an open gash on its side, the beast cavorts, pawing at the ground, yipping, and generally making a nuisance of itself.

The mountain hyena waits at the head of a blood-specked trail that winds 500 feet through tall grass to a battle site. It wants the PCs to follow it, hoping they will help its dying master. If they seem willing to follow, the creature bounds down the trail and quickly out of sight, but it continues its yipping and occasionally returns to their sight to ensure they don't lose interest. If they do not follow the animal, they can easily find and follow the trail if they choose.



DYING GNOLL

In a small clearing a short distance off the road, the tall grasses have been stomped down and the remnants of a battle are visible.

- There are **4 gnolls, 3 dead** and **1 nearly dead**.
- There are **2 dead hyenas**.
- The **gnolls' coloration is similar to that of the mountain hyena**, white fur with dark blue, nearly black spots and stripes.
- They wear **black leather armor** marked with a **hyena's head symbol**.
- **Blood is splattered** all over the scene.
- **2 trails exit** the clearing.

Mountain Hyenas

Mountain hyenas use the same statistics as normal hyenas, but their coats are white, with black or pale blue spots. They are a little larger, and they live in cold mountains.

In this place, Grim Wolf and Yrisa were ambushed and overpowered. The Blackclaw minion took Yrisa and left, leaving Grim Wolf behind as dinner. Instead of dying, Grim Wolf renewed his attack, killing several gnolls and chasing off the others before succumbing to his wounds. He then crawled to the nearby river.

Both trails that exit the clearing lead to the river. The gnoll trail can be picked back up easily,

while Grim Wolf's trail requires some exploration.

RUNNING THE SCENE

The hyena fears for the life of its master. It rushes over to the dying gnoll and stands overtop him, whining. It will defend the gnoll if the PCs try to harm him.

The gnoll will die without help, but healing it won't earn the PCs much favor. Evil to its core, it will not willingly help them.

TALKING WITH THE GNOLL

In any conversation, the gnoll will attempt to be unhelpful, weaving lies together to deceive the PCs. It relishes pain, and does not fear death, though it does fear losing the favor of Zalintar or its Blackclaw minion commander. Don't volunteer facts, and remember it only speaks Gnoll.

If the PCs can get it to talk, the things it knows are:

- It was part of a large raiding party tracking two Northlanders, a male and female.
- They overtook the Northlanders as the pair was heading for the "hill town."
- Their commander left with the female.
- Several gnolls stayed back to kill the male, but he overpowered them.

INVESTIGATIONS

With a **Perception** or **Survival** check the PCs can learn the following:

DC 10: A battle occurred here between large numbers of creatures: both animal and humanoid. Most combatants were gnolls, but at least two other humanoids were involved. There is a third type of bipedal print, larger and deeper than the others, which is not easily identifiable, but has distinct draconic qualities.

DC 12: Two trails exit the clearing. The first appears to have been made by a large force of gnolls, and leads south. A second, stained with blood, was made by a lone, crawling humanoid. It heads west towards the river.

DC 15: There were actually two battles here. The first involved all the creatures. The second was only between a few gnolls and one humanoid.

DC 20: The smaller humanoid and the dragon-footed creature left no signs of their departure.

Additionally, a **Knowledge (Local)** check made by anyone local to the region reveals:

DC 10: Gnolls are common in the nearby mountains, but should not be this far away. Getting a pack of gnolls through the Northlander territories was no easy feat, and they would only do so if they were desperate.

MOVING ON

If the PCs release the wounded gnoll, it makes its way home. They'll likely never encounter it again. If they take it to Highhouse Yroden, the Northlanders hang it.

If the players choose to head for Highhouse Yroden, proceed to Part 2: Yroden. If they follow the gnolls to the south, continue to Scene 2, or if they head west after Grim Wolf, go to Scene 3.

HYENA

CR 1 (400 XP)

N Medium animal; **Speed** 50 ft.

Init +2, **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +8

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 13

hp 26 (4d8+8)

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Melee bite +3 (1d6+3 plus trip)

Str 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15 (19 vs. trip)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +6 (+10 in tall grass)

Feats Skill Focus (Perception)

SCENE 2. GNOLL CAMP

The surviving gnolls have taken up residence in a small cave about a mile from Highhouse Yroden. Northlanders have learned to avoid this cave, wary of the bear that lives within (see area 2c).

LOCATING THE GNOLLS

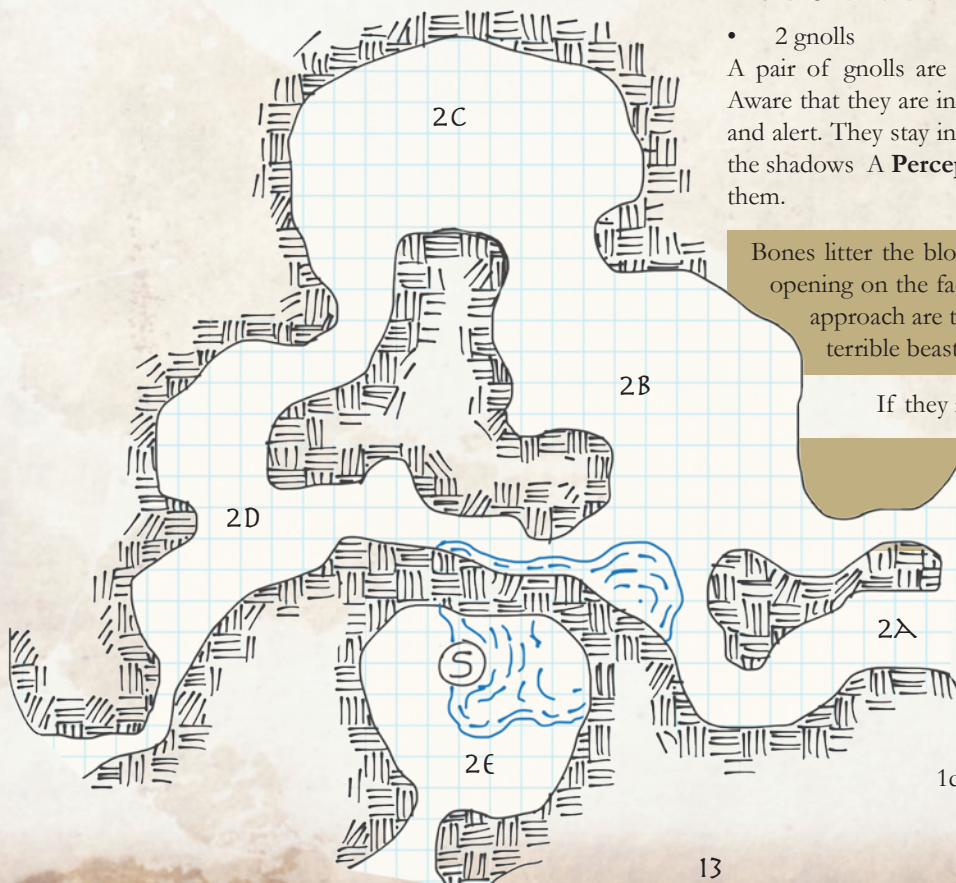
The trail which begins at the attack site ends at the river. To pick it up again, PCs simply need to follow the riverbank south. No check is needed as the gnolls made no attempt to hide their passage.

After following the war band's trail to the river, you are able to pick it up again a short distance downstream. It continues southwest through the grasslands, ending at a low, rocky hill. The shadowed mouth of a large cave opens on the hill's eastern slope.

- The PCs can observe the cave from a **copse of trees** about **300 yards distant**.
- There is no cover beyond **waist-high grass** between the trees and the cave.

If the PCs watch the cave for a time they'll also learn the following:

- A **pair of gnolls** lurks just inside the eastern cave entrance (area 2a).
- There are **two smaller entrances**, one to the south and one to the west.
- **Gnolls come and go** from the cave in small groups once or twice a day, always using the eastern entrance (area 2a).



TALKING WITH THE GNOLLS

All of the gnolls know the same basic information as the dying gnoll above, but none will speak willingly to outsiders. Most of the gnolls are cowards, however, and value their lives over silence.

Their story goes like this:

A sizeable force of Blackclaw gnolls, led by several Blackclaw minions in service to Zalintar, recruited their tribe from their mountain home and brought them through the Northland territories to a northern village. They attacked and ransacked it, but failed to find the human female whom they sought. They then split into small hunting bands, each commanded by a Blackclaw minion, hunting the girl. Fortune was with them, for they overtook the girl and her guardian before the pair reached the safety of Highhouse Yroden. Their commander, the Blackclaw minion, took the girl and left, giving them orders to find a nearby place and wait.

The gnoll tribe's flind leader knows a few additional facts. In addition to Yrisa and Grim Wolf's names, he knows the war band overtook the pair by accident while heading for Highhouse Yroden where they had intended to consult with a member of the Cult of Zalintar living there.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

There is no light in the caves. The gnolls have no need for it, and the temperature, though chilly, does not compel them to make a fire.

2A. EASTERN ENTRY

- 2 gnolls

A pair of gnolls are stationed at this entrance at all times. Aware that they are in hostile territory, the guards are vigilant and alert. They stay inside the cave and may be overlooked in the shadows. A **Perception DC 15** check is required to notice them.

Bones litter the bloodstained ground in front of a dark opening on the face of the hill. The rocky walls of the approach are torn and gouged, as if some great and terrible beast savaged them.

If they noticed the gnolls, continue:

Inside, a pair of gnolls stand guard, casting alert, anxious glances about.

At any sign of trouble, each gnoll sends up a warning call that sounds like a whooping laugh. The others in area 2b have a 75% chance each round of hearing it, and coming to the aid of the guardsmen (arriving 1d4+1 rounds later).

BLACKCLAW GNOLL CR 1 (400 XP)

CE Medium humanoid (gnoll); **Speed** 30 ft.

Init +0, **Senses** darkvision 60ft.; **Perception** +2

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16

hp 11 (2d8+2)

Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0

Melee elephant axe +3 (1d12+3/×3)

Ranged spear +1 (1d8+2/×3)

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Skills Perception +2

Feats Power Attack

Languages Gnoll

FLIND CR 2 (600 XP)

LE Medium humanoid (gnoll); **Speed** 20 ft.

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60ft.; **Perception** +3

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18

hp 15 (2d8+6)

Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

Melee flindbar +5 (1d8+4)

Ranged longbow +3 (1d8/x3)

Str 19, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +5 (+7 disarm with flindbar); **CMD** 17

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +3, Perception +3

Feats Power Attack

Languages Common, Gnoll

Gear scale mail armor, flindbar, longbow with 20 arrows

HYENA CR 1 (400 XP)

N Medium animal; **Speed** 50 ft.

Init +2, **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +8

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 13

hp 26 (4d8+8)

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Melee bite +3 (1d6+3 plus trip)

Str 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15 (19 vs. trip)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +6 (+10 in tall grass)

Feats Skill Focus (Perception)

2B. LIVING QUARTERS

- 1 flind
- 2 gnolls
- 2 hyenas

The gnolls have turned this large chamber into a makeshift barracks.

The rough natural walls of this chamber are slick with moisture, and water can be heard trickling somewhere to the southwest. Rough piles of moss and brush, topped with heavy animal hides, form makeshift beds on the ground and the remnants of half-eaten animal carcasses leave the metallic scent of blood in the air.

- There are **7 bedded areas** in the room, clustered together in twos and threes.
- Several **half-eaten animal carcasses** litter on the floor.
- **Water fills a natural basin** on the southwest wall.

The water from this pool is filled from the shrine at area 2e. It is cool and crystal clear and shares the magical properties detailed in that location.

ROGEASH

The flind Rogeash commands these gnolls. He is a ruthless creature that enjoys suffering in those around him. He is also the most cowardly, and least loyal to Zalintar.

A particularly large and vicious gnoll snarls at you while staring through its one good eye. A long scar running from the top of its head cuts through a milky-white eye, bisects its snout, and finally ends just above its shoulder.

2C. BEAR'S DEN

- 1 cave bear

When the gnolls entered the cave system they found it inhabited by a large cave bear. They attacked the bear, mortally wounding it. The creature now lies dying in its den.

From the darkness ahead a deep, animalistic sound can be heard, bawling in long, mournful tones. Here the crisp scent of blood permeating this place is intermingled with a foul odor.

- The floor and walls are **covered with deep gouges**, recently formed by the bear clawing them.
- The rotting remains of **3 dead gnolls and 4 hyenas** lay where they fell during the battle.

RUNNING THE SCENE

The bear is wounded and dying, and will lash out at anything that comes near it. However, enterprising PCs can befriend it a **Handle Animal DC 15** check combined with any sort of magical healing or a **Heal DC 20** check.

2D. BACK DOOR

- 1 gnoll

The rear entrance is easy to miss, as it is only 4-feet tall, and hidden in the grass. The gnolls do not expect trouble from this direction, and the guard is not alert.

A small, narrow passageway burrows into the side of the hill, nearly hidden in the tall grasses.

- The **passage quickly becomes snug**, until it's only about 2-feet wide and 1-1/2-feet high in the middle, then gradually widens back out.
- The passage **runs for 30-40 feet** before connecting with a small chamber.
- **1 gnoll stands guard** here at all times, **often napping**.

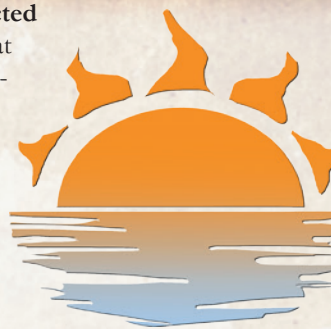
Like the gnolls in area 2a, if there is trouble, the guard begins a whooping laugh to alert the others to danger. There is the same 75% chance each round that its cries are heard, with reinforcements arriving in 1d4+1 rounds.

2E. THE GODDESS SHRINE

A long-abandoned shrine to the Goddess waits here for weary travelers. The gnolls shun this cave and, as such, it could serve the PCs as a safe place to rest.

A feeling of safety and peace permeates this small, natural cavern where a statue of the Goddess, now covered with vines, holds forth a hand as if in welcome.

- The entire area is **protected with a *sanctuary* spell** that inhibits violence. No violence may be committed here unless the perpetrator first succeeds on a **Will saving throw DC 19**.
- The statue stands within a small pool of **cool, crystal clear water**.



DRINKING THE WATER

Anyone that drinks from the water of the pool is nourished as if they had eaten a full meal, and recovers 8 hit points of damage. If the character is also of good alignment, they are considered to be under the effects of a *bless* spell for the next 24 hours. An individual can benefit from the pool only once every seven days.

THE GODDESS

The Goddess is the deity of bravery, kindness, nature, and purity, and the patron of druids. She is venerated by all peoples of the Valley of the Kings. If you have relocated this adventure to another setting, simply replace references to the Goddess with an appropriate alternative from your setting of choice.

CAVE BEAR		CR 4 (1,200 XP)
N Large animal; Speed 40 ft.		
Init +1; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +6		
AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 15		
hp 42 (5d8+20)		
Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +2		
Melee 2 claws +7 (1d6+5 plus grab), bite +7 (1d6+5)		
Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.		
Str 21, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6		
Base Atk +3; CMB +9 (+13 grapple); CMD 20 (24 vs. trip)		
Skills Perception +6, Survival +5, Swim +14		
Feats Endurance, Run, Skill Focus (Survival)		

SCENE 3. GRIM WOLF

After nearly dying at the hands of the gnolls, Grim Wolf crawled to the river and passed out. His body washed a short distance downstream. He has lain in the mud and weeds ever since, delirious and suffering from a fever. If the PCs do not find him, he will die.

LOCATING GRIM WOLF

Grim Wolf's trail leads from the clearing to the river, where it can be tracked no further. To find Grim Wolf, the PCs need to follow the riverbed, and succeed on a **Perception DC 15** check.

Lying in the mud and obscured among the reeds, you see the body of a human male. He appears to be unconscious, and looks to have suffered a severe beating.

- Grim Wolf is a Northland barbarian with a **strong, muscled body**.
- He is clearly suffering from **wounds received in a battle**: slashes, cuts, scrapes, bites, etc.
- His **skin is hot**, and he has a fever.
- He is actually awake, though **delirious**.

Grim Wolf needs medical attention. If he is taken from the river bed, his wounds cleaned up, and given a day or two to rest, he'll make a full recovery. Spells such as *restoration* or any effect that cures diseases can help hasten his recovery.

TALKING WITH GRIM WOLF

In his initial state of delirium, speaking with Grim Wolf is unhelpful. He rants and raves about failing Yrisa, rescuing her, being attacked by a demon, a dragon, and about burning claws. These come in random bouts of speech, pleading for aid, sudden bursts of determination, or howls of grief. He can be calmed, with his more violent rants receding into mumbling. In any event, useful information is limited.

After his recovery, Grim Wolf can share with the PCs everything from the background dealing with him and Yrisa (her vision, their flight, etc.), as well as his side of the ambush. He can describe the Blackclaw minion in detail, but he's never encountered such a creature previously. He can also identify the apparition of Vigi, although he will need to see it to do so.

If the PCs intend to search for Yrisa, Grim Wolf will insist on joining them in their quest.

RECEPTION IN YRODEN

Grim Wolf is Clan Jorn, and the relationship between Clans Vasi and Jorn, while not hostile, is strained. The people of Highhouse Yroden will be suspicious of Grim Wolf.

Should the villagers believe Grim Wolf and the PCs are working together, the PCs will suffer a -2 penalty on all social interactions in the village. This penalty doesn't apply to interactions with the smith Gunnald, or with Highwoman Thora.



PART II

YRODEN

In this act, the PCs enter Yroden and find it cursed. Its townsfolk are demoralized, tired, and scared, but they are also proud and defiant. They don't understand the problems they face, and they know they need help.

USING THIS SECTION

Part 2 is not structured in a linear fashion. Rather than encounters, you are presented with detailed information on Highhouse Yroden and its inhabitants. Familiarize yourself with the village, its people, and what's happening, and let the PCs explore. Pay special attention to Goodwife Tonna and her family, as they're critical actors in this drama.

It's likely your players won't immediately know what they should be doing. That's OK, let events play out a bit and they'll get swept into the action. Start by introducing the curse, and the bedraggled state of Yroden. Then give the PCs a lead to follow, but hit them with one of the apparition encounters before they get too far. The dragon is a good start; it's action packed, and provides important clues.

THE VILLAGE

Highhouse Yroden is built atop a great, rocky bluff, giving it a commanding view of the surrounding countryside for miles in all directions. It is protected by steep cliffs on three sides, and a palisade of wooden spikes on the fourth. The people often refer to a "western woods," which is really just a small patch of trees off the western bluff.

Most of Yroden's structures are wood or brick, with thatch roofs. Scattered among the longhouses are a few smaller dwellings, including two outside the palisade. As is true of most Northland villages, Yroden's community center is its great hall. The Great Hall of Yroden is an impressive structure, bearing

two of the three tusks Gantar took from the threehorn he killed in his middle years (see Gantar's Honor below).

Highhouse Yroden is a typical Northland village, consisting of a dozen family homes, called longhouses, arranged in a pair of rows along a wide avenue. The avenue runs up a steep bluff and ends at an open courtyard before the village's great hall. There are no inns or taverns in Yroden. Visitors stay with their relatives, friends, or in the great hall.

Northland society is structured broadly in two castes: warriors and civilians. Most warriors live, eat, sleep, drink, and carouse in the great hall, while civilians live in the longhouses. Each longhouse is large enough for up to twenty family members, and typically includes several generations. A smattering of smaller homes are tucked among the longhouses.

Highman Gantar and Highwoman Thora rule Yroden. Gantar is accounted a cunning and sly leader, but is known to be influenced by his emotions. Thora, in contrast, is quiet, reasoned, and rarely allows her emotions to show, let alone control her.

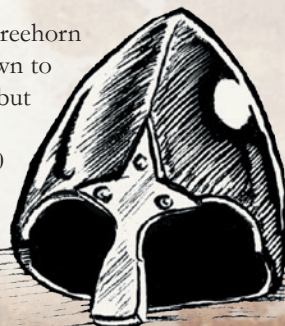
HIGHHOUSE YRODEN

Any characters local to the area can make a **Knowledge (Local) check** to know the following about Highhouse Yroden.

DC 10: Highhouse Yroden is one of a half-dozen villages in Clan Vasi. Yroden is famous for the potent Oxmead brewed there.

DC 12: Highman Gantar Threehorn rules in Yroden. He is known to be shrewd and cunning, but also abrupt and emotional.

DC 15: Yroden has about 30 warriors and 200 villagers.



ROLEPLAYING THE VILLAGE

Proud. Tired. Scared. Desperate.

The people of Yroden are rightfully proud of their village. They consistently claim top places in the annual goblin culling, brew Oxmead that is the envy of the region, and earned great honor when Highman Gantar presented the artifact *Jutornbel* to King Mord of Vasi. Further, they stand on the border of Northland territories.

As a border town, Highhouse Yroden is accustomed to outsiders, typically offering a friendly if cool welcome. Visitors are invited to spend their evenings in the great hall which includes a lively meal, copious drinking, and tales from the village skald. However, in the grip of Yrisa's nightmare, the usual welcome has become strained. People grow increasingly tired with the passage of each day. Tempers run ragged, and emotions are raw. If something doesn't happen soon, violence will surely follow.

To make matters worse, beneath the pride and the weariness,

What if they leave?

Don't worry, the PCs cannot escape the curse so easily. If they try to leave now, they'll find themselves back at the base of the bluff after an hour or two of walking.

and fear blossoms. A magical curse has settled upon their town and, just when she's needed most, their wise woman has left. If this were not enough, a dragon has taken an interest in the village, killing warriors and civilians indiscriminately. It shakes even the most stalwart of Yroden's warriors. Already,

this fear is shifting towards desperation. If the curse is not broken soon, Yroden will fall.

As the PCs interact with the townsfolk, **commoners exhibit the fear** they feel. Their faith in Highman Gantar, once unshakable, frays. Meanwhile, the **warriors are bone-weary**, but too proud to reveal their growing fear. They swagger about, boasting of what they will do when the dragon next appears. Yet with their wits dulled by lack of sleep and their tempers razor-thin, they may be quick to strike at an enemy they can see and touch. PCs would be wise to tread cautiously.

KEY NPCs

The major players in Highhouse Yroden are Highman Gantar, Highwoman Thora, and Goodwife Tonna. Each is given their own page to describe their personalities, goals, and place in Yroden (found later in this section). Other people of interest include:

Alric (m, human, 47-year-old): Alric gave up his spears and retired to become the towns leatherworker. He loves Highwoman Thora, though he has never confessed this, and holds a grudge against Highman Gantar over his affair with Tonna.

What Alric Knows: Alric has encountered Tonna on several occasions out near the old dwarven caves. Though he doesn't think this particularly unusual, he will mention it in conversation if it seems the PCs suspect Tonna of involvement.

Armod (m, human, 19-year-old): Armod and his brother Erlend, are often called on to do work for Goodwife Tonna and Wise Woman Oga. Both know the women are engaged in something bad, but they are well-rewarded for their service and keep their mouths shut. Armod harbors a great deal of resentment towards Yroden, believing the townsfolk treat his family as outsiders despite their father having given his life in service to Gantar.

What Armod Knows: Despite their attempts to keep it quiet, Armod is aware that Oga and Tonna are involved in a demon cult of some sort, although he doesn't know any details. Of course he can also relate the work he does for Oga and Tonna, which entails digging up the bodies of recently dead villagers and depositing them at the dwarven caves down at the base of the bluff.

Aetom the Skald (m, human, 45-year-old): Once a warrior, Aetom injured his leg during a buffalo hunt that went bad. Although this old injury precludes him from joining the warriors in their hunts, he doesn't let that keep him down. Instead, Aetom donned the skald's cloak and took up the art of storytelling. He can often be found under the tree (behind area B2), gazing out at the grasslands, a favorite pastime.

What Aetom Knows: Aetom spends a great deal watching the surrounding grasslands. It is likely that he witnessed the gnolls moving south after their encounter with Yrisa and Grim Wolf.

Bera (f, human, 23-year-old): Bera is one of the strongest people in Yroden and, due to this, people assumed she would become a warrior. When she instead opted to apprentice with Gunnald, and learn the art of blacksmithing, it surprised everyone. Shy and quiet, Bera spends most of her time at Gunnald's Smithy, and his zeal for Yroden has rubbed off on her.

What Bera Knows: On several occasions, Bera has watched Goodwife Tonna's children, and she is familiar with their peculiar dolls (see area D below). She suspects Hrolf of being involved in something bad based on things the children have said to her.

Erlend (m, human, 18-year-old): Erlend and his brother Armod are rarely seen apart. They know the same things and feel the same way towards Yroden.

Gunnald the Smith (m, dwarf, 210-year-old): Gunnald is an old mountain dwarf who settled in Yroden years ago. He has served numerous lords of Yroden, and his allegiance to the village is unshakable. He respects Highman Gantar, trusts Highwoman Thora, and dislikes Goodwife Tonna and her family, who he sees as a bad influence on the town.

What Gunnald Knows: Gunnald is not a gossip, but if induced to speak, he can share that on several occasions he has encountered Tonna lurking in the western woods, twice he's had to run her kids away from his smithy where they were hoping to steal weapons, and he once stumbled across Tonna with Armod and Erlend out in the forest at night, an encounter he didn't stick around to explore.

Hrolf (m, human, 40-year-old): Hrolf is husband to Goodwife Tonna, and seen as a dim-witted fool by most villagers. The truth is darker. He is an active participant in the Cult of Zalintar, and knows his position is lesser than Tonna's, a

fact that doesn't bother him. He plays the role of dutiful husband, acting aggrieved and hurt if asked about Tonna's affair.

What Hrolf Knows: Hrolf knows a little of what is happening, including that gnolls have tracked a Northland seer to this village and that his wife is engaged in an illicit affair with Gantar. He is not aware of the location of the gnolls, the presence of a Blackclaw minion, or even that Oga and Tonna use the old dwarven caves. Furthermore, Oga and Tonna have carefully protected the secret of Oga's involvement, and Hrolf believes his family to be the only cult members in Yroden.

Kaiya Blackmoore (f, human, 38-year-old): A priestess from the outside world, Kaiya came to Yroden to escape her past. Her love of the Goddess makes her something of an outsider, but the villagers have accepted her and appreciate her abilities. She often assists Wise Woman Oga, but does not approve of Goodwife Tonna, or Oga's choice of Tonna as apprentice. Kaiya speaks little of her troubled past.

What Kaiya Knows: Kaiya is aware of Gantar's infidelities, and can attest to the truth of who is father to Tonna's children. She has found refuge from the curse in the sheltering hand of the Goddess and, should the PCs befriend her, can extend this protection to them, giving them a +2 bonus on their daily check to avoid exhaustion.

"Old Man" Thorald (m, human, 76-year-old): The oldest human resident of Yroden, and the most cantankerous by far, Thorald is despised by nearly everyone. Once a friendly man, he soured on life after his wife and son were killed. Although it happened nearly fifty years ago, Thorald has never forgiven Yroden for "taking his loved ones." He refuses to live in the longhouses, spending most of his time drunk in his shack.

What Thorald Knows: Thorald has witnessed Tonna and Gantar's illicit affair firsthand, knows about the caves below Yroden, the secret door under the old tree (see area I), and is aware of Oga's dabbling with undead and demons. He's terrified of her, however, so is loathe to speak of anything that involves the old witch.

Orn (m, human, 9-year-old): Orn is one of two sons of Hrolf and Tonna. He can be cruel, especially to smaller children, but deep down is terrified of the things his family does.

What Orn Knows: Orn doesn't know anything specific about what is going on in the village but he can tell his parents are worried. He's overheard them talking about important visitors who are staying somewhere nearby.

Runa (f, human, 42-year-old): The best tailor in town

and mother to Armod and Erlend, Goodwife Runa emigrated to Yroden when she married her husband. Her husband died years ago in service to Gantar, and she has not remarried. Runa is short for a Northlander, being just under five feet tall. Runa has few friends in Yroden, and spends most of her time either working her craft or with her boys. She is lonely.

What Runa Knows: Runa suspects her boys have fallen into trouble with Goodwife Tonna, having caught them whispering about the goodwife on several occasions. She doesn't know the extent of it, and is extremely protective of her boys.

Un (m, human, 8-year-old): The younger son of Tonna and Hrolf, Un has taken to the Cult of Zalintar with a zeal unrivaled even by his parents, a fact that has not gone unnoticed by Oga. Un is particularly cruel.

What Un Knows: Un has been brought into Oga's confidences and knows about her involvement with the cult, and the caves Oga and Tonna use. Like his brother, he doesn't know any details of what is transpiring currently.

Foronda is a fearless warrior and inspiring battlefield commander who enjoys listening to skalds weave their tales in the great hall.

Yroden's Warriors:

There are about thirty warriors that live in Yroden.

The youngest of them is barely fourteen, the oldest well into her sixties. These warriors put on a good face, and greet the PCs boastfully, but it won't take long for their exhaustion and frustration to show.

Foronda's Honor

In her youth, Foronda faced the armies of the underworld as one of the 100 Ghosts of Valkris.

In her prime, she recovered the root palnir, curing Bui of a plague, and establishing a great alliance for House Yroden.

Also in her prime, she defeated the Sisters of Corruption, saving Greenwood from destruction.





HIGHMAN GANTAR

m, human, 50-year-old

Gantar is a cunning leader who values wits over force and excels at games of strategy.

APPEARANCE

Mighty, proud, and graying. Gantar is a powerfully built man with an impressive beard. He has interwoven both his beard and graying hair with beads, in the style of his people. A wicked scar runs down his face and neck, beginning just below his right eye and disappearing into his tunic.

PERSONALITY

Sly, impulsive, and commanding. Gantar carries himself as a leader. He expects and receives respect, and uses sarcasm or biting words to throw others off balance. His tactical mind is tempered by a tendency to allow his emotions to guide his choices.

GOALS

To see Highhouse Yroden thrive. Gantar was asked to ascend to Highman of Yroden at a young age, and though loathe to accept the burden, he did so.

HOBBY

Games. Gantar enjoys long hours spent in Yroden's Great Hall playing games with his warriors. He favors *vi'tun'vit*, and is accounted a master player, known for an aggressive play style.

IN YRODEN

From his great hall, Highman Gantar Threehorn champions Clan Vasi. His dedication to Yroden forms a barrier around him to which everything else is secondary. This has strained the relationship between him and Thora, which he further damaged a decade ago when he began an illicit affair with Goodwife Tonna. Gantar is plagued by competing emotions where Tonna is concerned. On the one hand, he is wracked by guilt over his actions, but he also loves her.

GANTAR'S DETERIORATION

Gantar's mental state is tenuous. He feels helpless and the curse's madness has taken a hard toll on him. He begins the adventure reasonable, but as events unfold, his mind slips towards madness. Each day, Gantar grows increasingly desperate to find a solution, or a scapegoat. Things take a turn for the worse if PCs suggest involvement by Goodwife Tonna or her family in the curse. Where Tonna is concerned, Gantar is unreasonable. Even direct evidence of her involvement is dismissed as lies, and causes Gantar to slide towards outright insanity. If Tonna is hurt, or her children are endangered or accused, he flies into a rage. If this happens, you will need to use the steady hand of Thora to calm things down.

Gantar's Honor

In his youth, Gantar earned the name Threehorn when he slew an elder three-horned beast with his bare hands.

In his long stretch, he outwitted the red wyrm Auristalin'Dragolic and claimed the artifact *Jutornhel* as his own.

In his graying, he presented *Jutornhel* to King Mord of Vasi thereby securing great favor for House Yroden.

HIGHWOMAN THORA

f, human, 49-year-old

Thora is a quiet, reasoned woman with a graceful poise and eternal beauty who enjoys oratory and music.

APPEARANCE

Beautiful, unassuming, and sad. Thora carries herself with the grace and poise of a queen. She dresses in rich colors and exotic silks. Her natural beauty has not diminished with age, but as the years pass, a growing sadness is visible behind her blue eyes.

PERSONALITY

Quiet, supportive, and guarded. Thora keeps her thoughts to herself, speaking rarely, but her gentle, unassuming manner encourages others to speak freely. When she does talk, Thora reveals little about herself.

GOALS

Please her ancestors, support Gantar, and see Highhouse Yroden flourish. Thora loves her husband and her people. Gantar has come to rely on her cooler head, and it often takes only a glance from Thora to calm him. She looks to her ancestors for strength, though she rarely chooses to speak of her faith.

HOBBY

Walking. Thora enjoys long, solitary walks through the countryside, spending a few hours outside the town most days. Although she greatly enjoys the songs and tales told in the great hall, she holds back in these pursuits, believing it would be inappropriate for her to spend too much time with the skald.

IN YRODEN

Thora fills an important role in Yroden, acting as a counterbalance to Gantar's impulsiveness.

Gantar, Thora, & Tonna

Gantar loves Tonna, or at least he thinks he does, and although his indiscretions leave him riddled with guilt, he persists. Tonna has led Gantar to believe that her two children are his. The truth of this is up to you, though Gantar believes it. Thora is aware of her husband's infidelities. She chooses to overlook them as she believes not doing so would harm Highhouse Yroden.

THORA'S AID

As Gantar's reason deteriorates, Thora grows increasingly concerned with his decisions and her support for him wanes. She will not suffer injustice to come upon the PCs at the hands of her husband, but neither does she wish to openly defy him. If Gantar descends into true madness, perhaps if something happens to one of Tonna's children, Thora may be moved to direct action against him. Use this as a last resort.



GOODWIFE TONNA

f, human, 38-year-old

Tonna is a self-assured, cold, ruthless woman who seeks power over others and will do anything to get that power.

APPEARANCE

Distant and beautiful. Tonna holds herself apart from others. She dresses in the simple garb expected of her position, but chooses clothing that subtly highlights her natural beauty.

PERSONALITY

False, manipulative, and confident. Tonna is a villain hiding in plain sight. In the presence of townsfolk, she affects a **shy uncertainty**, an act she's been playing for so long it is nearly impossible to see through. It's only when she finds herself alone with her family, or outsiders, that she allows her true self to show. The "real" Tonna is **self-assured, cold, and ruthless**, and, aware of her beauty, and the weakness of men, sometimes **flirtatious**.

GOALS

Power at any cost. Tonna seeks personal power, and she believes the Cult of Zalintar is her fastest road there. She will do anything, to anyone, to achieve this power, including abandoning Zalintar and betraying Oga.

HOBBY

Reading. Tonna is a voracious reader, importing books from outside the village. She particularly enjoys stories featuring common folk that have risen to places of power and authority. The *Rise and Fall of Tanthraxus Dominion* is her favorite book. She usually keeps an ear-marked copy with her. This novel tells the story of a young paladin's seduction to evil, his subsequent creation of the dreaded Octocult, and ultimate defeat by the Company of the Dawn.

IN YRODEN

Tonna is apprenticed to Wise Woman Oga. The villagers assume this means she wishes to become a Wise Woman, but the true nature of her apprenticeship is darker. Like Oga, she has given her service to the Abyssal Lord Zalintar, and brought her family along as well.

During most of this adventure, Goodwife Tonna will be found in Oga's Shack (see Area G). This is expected of her; when Oga departs it is usual for Tonna to take up residence in the shack.

TONNA'S KNOWLEDGE

Tonna knows everything that is occurring including Oga's activities in the tunnels, the presence of a Blackclaw gnoll, and the importance of Yrisa to Zalintar. As long as she continues to feel Zalintar offers her the fastest road to power, she will seek to distract the PCs from the truth, or point them at the gnolls outside town, hoping to send them to their death.



TALKING WITH TOWNSFOLK

There is much to learn by talking. Everyone has something to say, or someone to blame for Yroden's trouble. Use this information as PCs interact with the people of Yroden.

Common Information is widely known, and the PCs can learn it without a skill check. Simply expressing an interest is enough. **Uncommon Information** is not necessarily secret, but neither is it known to everyone in the village. It may require a skill check to unearth, or might mean the PCs need to talk to the right person.

Remember, not everything the villagers talk about is true.

DRAGON

Everyone wants to talk about the black dragon. Descriptions of the beast vary from one telling to the next, and about the only thing everyone agrees on is that it first appeared at dusk, four days ago. The stories always focus on the dragon's attacks.

Connecting the Dots

Take care to frame the stories so a discerning listener can pick up that the Northlanders have initiated all of the battles with the dragon. Also, this is a good opportunity for the people to talk about warriors killed by the dragon, discussing men and women that are probably alive and well, and possibly people with whom the PCs have spoken. Remember, the villagers don't realize it's odd that people killed one evening awake the next morning.

UNCOMMON INFORMATION

- Black dragons prefer warm climates and swamps. This creature is far outside its element. In fact, a black dragon has never been encountered in this part of the world.
- The dragon is grandstanding. It spits gout of acid, roars, and makes a great ruckus, but it never actually fights until engaged.
- The dragon seems to be looking for something. It always alights on a building, tears a hole in the roof, and then looks inside. It has visited all the longhouses except the Great Hall.

DREAMS AND VISIONS

Several days before the PCs arrival, sleep became troubled and the apparitions appeared. Within another day, storms suddenly whipped up out of nowhere, and the madness began. The villagers refer to these events as the "curse." Everyone blames someone or something different, and they're quick to share what they think.

WISE WOMAN OGA

The people of Yroden love and trust Oga, who has been Yroden's wise woman for over six decades. Oga is an intensely private person with many secrets, although this doesn't bother the villagers since many of those secrets involve them. She spends most of her time tending to the sick or pregnant, or handling spiritual matters. Everyone in Yroden has a story to tell about what Wise Woman Oga has done for them.

As a well-known and respected shaman and alchemist in Clan Vasi, Oga is often called away from Yroden abruptly. This, as much as her age, is why she took Goodwife Tonna as an apprentice. When Oga is away, Tonna handles her affairs, including tending to Oga's home.

UNCOMMON INFORMATION

- Oga has a cruel streak. Those unfortunates who have angered her whisper quietly of evil spirits she calls to torment them.
- The Wise Woman spends a great deal of time in the western woods gathering roots, herbs, mushrooms, and other supplies she uses in her alchemy.
- Although almost everyone loves Oga, she is a wicked person. If you peek into her cottage you will find all manner of horrible things, including skinned humans.

GANTAR AND TONNA

When the PCs' investigations turn towards Goodwife Tonna, stories of indiscretions between her and Highman Gantar pour out. Their illicit relationship is an open secret. No one talks about it publicly, but it is a common source of rumor mongering. Nobody knows for certain just how much Highwoman Thora knows, although again, everyone has an opinion. The affair has been going on for over a decade.

UNCOMMON INFORMATION

- A common belief, discreetly but actively encouraged by Tonna, is that Highman Gantar is father to both of her children.
- Tonna is often seen leaving town, heading west. This must be where the pair meets for their trysts.

GNOLLS

Gnolls live in the distant mountains where they are a constant plague. They are easily recognized by their white fur with pale blue or black spots. Clan Vasi haven't seen gnolls in years, being bordered to the east by civilized peoples, and to the north, south, and west by Northland clans.

The gnolls of the mountains are known to be demon worshipers. In particular, they favor the Demon Prince of Torments, Zalintar Blackclaw, as well as an Abyssal rival of his.

UNCOMMON INFORMATION

On the same day that the dragon was first spotted in the skies, gnolls were seen in the nearby grasslands. Their presence this close to their village is troubling.

KEY TO THE VILLAGE



The Honor of Jharakai the Scarred

In his youth, Jharakai survived the darkness beneath the earth alone and hunted by King Sniveek, Lord of Rats.

In his prime, he saved Bui from a demon whose phantoms had possessed the hearts of kings and warriors alike.

As a graybeard, he ascended to the clouds with the shadow dragon Nashok and turned the Armies of the Air Lords back to their realm.

The Honor of King Semyan

As a boy, Semyan's words convinced the fey spirit Adulessin to return King Jergal's daughter, earning him the title of skald.

In his prime, he turned King Jergal against his advisors and took the king's youngest daughter as wife.

In his graying, he seized the throne and exiled the heirs of Jergal from the Northlands.

Read-aloud text in this section is provided for the first time the PCs approach various sites within Yroden.

A. GATE

A palisade of sharpened logs, slanted outward, protects Yroden's eastern approach. Two haggard guards stand at the gate, leaning heavily on their spears for support. They peer at you with heavily laden eyes and have a look suggesting they've not slept for days.

In normal times, Yroden doesn't post a guard at its gates, but with the curse that now afflicts the village, the gate is always manned. Weary guards warn PCs off, telling them Yroden has fallen under a heavy curse. They talk of a "darkness", and a dragon. If the PCs insist on entering, the guards suggest they make their way to the great hall and present themselves to Highman Gantar.

WARRIORS AT THE GATE

- **Sibbi (m, human, 22-year-old)** is a young Northlander with stark white hair, a result of a meeting with a mountain yeti during his Coming of Age ceremony.
- **Drifa (f, human, 25-year-old)** wears her long hair in a ponytail that reaches past her buttocks. She is famous for taking first place in the swimming contest at Red Feast three years in a row.

B. LONGHOUSES

A wide, dusty lane runs along the center of the bluff, flanked by several longhouses, each easily large enough for two dozen people. They are made of wood or brick, on stone footings, with thatched roofs. From behind windows covered by animal skins,

curious villagers peer out at you, their faces drawn, their eyes lined with dark circles.

Occupants: Goodwife Runa, Armod, Erlend (B1), Alric (B2), Bera (B3)

Yroden has about a dozen longhouses. These multi-generational homes can house up to thirty townsfolk spanning three to five generations. Small livestock, predominantly chicken and pigs, are kept outside in small kennels under the roof line.

Each longhouse is divided into two sections by a wall running along its longitudinal access. One section, the outer area, is a large shared space that runs the length of the home. This is where meals are taken, games played, and guests invited to sleep. The back half of the longhouse is sectioned off into private chambers for each family living there, along with kitchen space.

A handful of single-resident homes are tucked in among the longhouses.

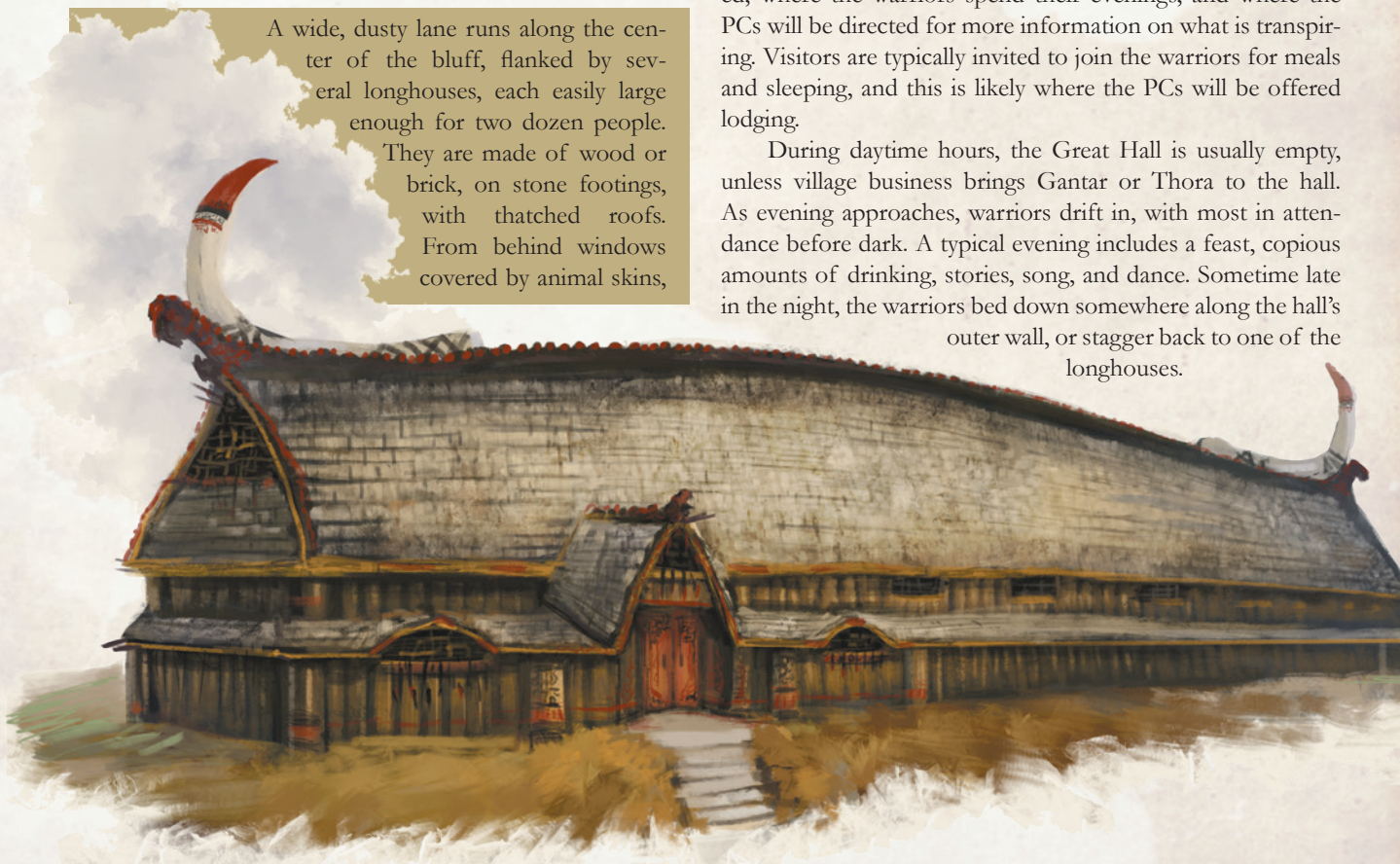
C. GREAT HALL OF YRODEN

Yroden's great hall is an impressive structure built of large stone blocks and adorned with two massive ivory horns. It is perched precariously close to the bluff's imposing cliff.

Occupants: Aetom, Highman Gantar, Highwoman Thora and about thirty warriors

The Great Hall of Yroden is where most business is conducted, where the warriors spend their evenings, and where the PCs will be directed for more information on what is transpiring. Visitors are typically invited to join the warriors for meals and sleeping, and this is likely where the PCs will be offered lodging.

During daytime hours, the Great Hall is usually empty, unless village business brings Gantar or Thora to the hall. As evening approaches, warriors drift in, with most in attendance before dark. A typical evening includes a feast, copious amounts of drinking, stories, song, and dance. Sometime late in the night, the warriors bed down somewhere along the hall's outer wall, or stagger back to one of the longhouses.



D. CHEERFUL COTTAGE

Nestled in among the longhouses is a small cottage. Flowers bloom beneath its wooden shutters, and two young children chase each other around the yard, laughing happily, while their father looks on lovingly.

Occupants: Hrolf, Orn, Un

Goodwife Tonna, her husband Hrolf, and their two children Orn and Un live in this small cottage, which consists of an open ground-floor room and two lofts. Tonna is rarely present here during this adventure, spending the majority of her time at Oga's shack, but Hrolf and the children can usually be found here.

Tonna and her family are careful to hide obvious signs of their association with the Cult of Zalintar, but they do allow their children to play with small dolls formed into the likeness of demons. Zalintar features among the toys, which are usually kept in the house, out of immediate sight.

VALUABLES

Hidden in a small, hollowed-out area of earth before the hearth, the family keeps their valuables in a wooden box, these include:

- 135gp in assorted gems
- Herbalism kit, 2 flasks of unholy water, 2 *potions of healing*
- Several books including: *Octocult: The Long Night*; *Nerisarin Kelisharn, A Warlock's Tale*; *Thelionus and Razune: the Study of People of Power*; and others, most regarding the lives of men and women of considerable might.

RUNNING THE SCENE

Although Tonna is not typically at home, if the PCs visit this cottage, Hrolf affects an absent-minded friendliness. He is open and cheerful. Although aware of the dragon, and Yroden's troubles, he is abnormally nonchalant about it. If pressed on the matter, he claims to be putting on a good face for his children.

Observant PCs should notice the lack of physical signs of fatigue visible in nearly everyone else in Yroden. The children are similarly unaffected. Even their playful romping in the yard is strange, given the rest of Yroden is buttoned up like a village under siege.

If the PCs become friendly with Hrolf, or otherwise find a way into the house, they may notice the strange dolls his children play with, which are carved into demonic likenesses.

E. THE HIGHHOUSE

A small cottage, near the great hall, enjoys a commanding view off the bluff.

This is the home of Highman Gantar and Highwoman Thora, though they will most often be encountered in the great hall.

F. SMITHY

A stone cottage and adjoining smithy are tucked into a small copse of trees just off the river, almost hidden from view. Behind it, a precarious 200-foot climb connects the cottage with Yroden.

Occupants: Gunnald and Bera

The dwarf Gunnald lives in a stone home adjoining his smithy. It is built on the shore of Yroden's river, and connected with the bluff by an uncomfortable 200-foot walk up a narrow, winding pathway. Gunnald or his apprentice Bera are usually present

at the smithy.

Gunnald's smithy is not visible from the road.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Gunnald's smithy is well stocked, with quality implements of dwarven make. They include an anvil, bellows, sledges, tongs, swages, cutters, chisels, hammers, shovels, tongs, rakes, pokers, water troughs, a shoeing box, and several water barrels.

In his workshop are several half-completed works, predominantly weapons, but Gunnald is also working on his life's masterpiece, a suit of mithril full plate armor.

G. SHABBY SHACK AND CEMETERY

At the base of the bluff, backed up against a small copse of trees, is a small, ill-kept shack, adjoining a fenced cemetery. Weeds and thistles choke the yard. Behind the house, several recently dug graves suggest Yroden has fallen on hard times.

Occupants: Goodwife Tonna

Wise woman Oga lives in a small shack at the bottom of the hill, next to the village cemetery, although she will not be encountered here during this adventure. Everyone knows not to



enter Oga's home, which is a small, paltry structure with windows and doors of curtains of beads.

INSIDE THE SHACK

Oga does not allow villagers into her home due to the exotic nature of her spell components. Inside the cottage are all manner of oddities used in her craft: beakers, bottles, stoppers, pickled body parts, dead animals (hanging from the ceiling), beads, full skins of creatures (animals and people), etc. In addition to these things, there is a cot where Oga sleeps and little else. Her true treasure is kept in the tunnels below the village.

CEMETERY

A split-rail fence encircles Yroden's cemetery, wherein several recently dug graves offer a hint to the trouble Yroden faces. Tonna (or any villager) can explain that these are the resting places of those who succumbed to the curse. Closer investigation of the cemetery's graves reveals an interesting fact: there are no bodies in this cemetery. Unbeknownst to most villagers, Oga and Tonna dig up the bodies and take them into the tunnels beneath Yroden, where they are animated as undead, or used in rituals.

H. POOR COTTAGE

This small cottage is in a state of extreme disrepair. The door hangs crooked, the skins covering its windows are pitted and filled with holes, the lumber of its walls rotting, and its thatched roof open to the elements in numerous places.

Occupants: Thorald

Old Man Thorald lives here, where he is usually found drunk.

The inside of the cottage is as dirty and run down as the outside.

I. STORAGE

A small warehouse sits off the main lane.

This building is used as public storage and holds implements shared by the villagers, such as the tools for brewing Oxmead. When they have need to incarcerate someone, they empty the storage and it doubles as a jail.

J. OLD DWARVEN CAVES

Hidden by trees and tall grasses, the entrance to the old dwarven caves lies at the base of the bluff. These caves are detailed in Part 3: Caves.

K. ANCESTRAL SHRINE

Two weather-worn stone statues, each depicting an aged Northlander, stand amidst a collection of small trinkets. The statues, and trinkets, rest on a raised, circular dais with a path of stepping stones wending its way through a rock garden of patterned sand.

This small shrine is the closest thing Yroden has to an official place of worship. They venerate the spirits of their dead ancestors. The small trinkets surrounding each statue are likenesses of the ancestors of villagers, brought to the shrine for luck.

This shrine is a common destination of villagers, and one of the few places outside their longhouses that they'll be encountered during the adventure.



L. HIDDEN DOOR

A trapdoor is hidden beneath a large rock under the village's largest tree. It opens to reveal a dark chute lined with rusted, pitted iron rungs. It has been sealed and forgotten, though a few villagers know of its existence.

Locating this hidden door does not require a skill check. It is automatically discovered if the rock is moved. It is a long, dangerous climb to the bottom, nearly 300 feet down. The ladder rungs are old and rusted, and many will give way under any weight.

The chute connects with Area 7 of the old dwarven caves, and both Oga and Tonna know of its existence, though they've never used it.

CURSE ENCOUNTERS

Use the curse to spice up the time the PCs spend in Yroden. There should be enough suggested above in "The Curse" to give you ideas of how to use it, but here are a few encounters to get you started.

DRAGON ATTACK

- 1 young black dragon

Use this on the day the PCs first enter Yroden. Don't let on that the dragon's damage is not real; let them feel a little of the fear that grips Yroden.

The quiet of Yroden is suddenly shattered by a long note blown on a horn. It can only mean trouble. The warriors awaken suddenly, snatch their spears, and spill forth from the longhouse like ants. A black dragon has come to Yroden!

- The dragon has **landed on a nearby longhouse** and is tearing a hole in the roof.
- Northland **warriors rush the dragon**, hurling spears as they approach.
- As the **spears shatter on its steely black hide**, the beast turns and **sprays them** with its breath weapon.
- The dragon then **fights for 1d4+2 rounds**, until it is killed, or until it defeats the attackers. Afterwards, if it is still alive, it flies away.

OTHER ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DRAGON

Whether the dragon is killed, or driven off, or leaves on its own, it always returns. Use encounters with the dragon to keep things interesting, and make sure you always point out that the Northlanders initiate combat.

FURY AND A DRAGON

- 1 young black dragon

An excellent use of the dragon is to pair it with one of the madness effects. Have the dragon show up immediately after the madness, illustrate to the PCs both the dedication and weariness of the warriors when the horn calls them to battle.

Use this encounter when the PCs are in Yroden's great hall. Begin by asking for a **Will save DC 12**. Those who suc-

ceed can act normally, those that fail fly into a rage, lashing out violently against anyone nearby who has slighted them in the recent past.

Suddenly the air shimmers and a curtain of heat washes across you. As it touches you, your vision swims red with fury and anger. Around you, the warriors of Yroden have erupted into a mighty brawl.

The PCs may join the fray, or try to stop it. If they do nothing, at least one warrior will be killed, and remember, those killed by their companions do not awaken during the daily reset.

The fury lasts for 1d4+2 rounds, then the dragon arrives.

As sanity returns, the warriors look about in horror. All of them are battered, many openly bleeding. Nearby, one cradles the now-dead body of a friend he killed. He's howling in sorrow while several others stand nearby, looking on mutely. Then, cutting through the carnage comes the long note of a horn of Yroden and distant cries of, "Dragon!, Dragon! To arms! To arms!"

For the briefest of moments, you think these warriors, bone-tired before the melee and clearly exhausted now, will stand down, but then the first of them hefts her spear, gives her shoulders a bit of shake, and dashes from the great hall. Slowly the others rise and do the same.

The dragon does its normal thing. Flies to a house, tears off the roof, and looks inside. Then the warriors show up and start attacking, so it fights them before flying off.

CULTISTS

- 2 apparitions

Use this encounter after the PCs have spent a good amount of time talking with villagers and you want to distract them with a bit of action.

A cry for help draws your attention to an alleyway between two longhouses. There, a small child is cowering between two robed figures who assail her with cat-o'-nine-tails. The child whimpers and cries out with each blow. The attackers are themselves small, each standing only 3-4 feet tall. No part of their flesh is visible beneath their voluminous brown tattered robes. They turn their faces towards you, and gaze at you through two tiny pinpricks of red that swim amidst a sea of blackness.

If the PCs engage the cultists, their cat-o'-nine-tails shift into flails. When killed, their bodies and weapons melt into motes

The Horns of Yroden

Yroden is a small village and when there's trouble, the warriors sound a long note on their horns to summon help. It shouldn't take long for all the warriors to turn out for a fight if needed.

of black dust that then disintegrate into nothing.

VIGI

“Yrisa!” The voice sounds from the street where a Northland warrior, dressed in deer furs and wearing an antlered helm, is standing, looking from the left to the right. His garb marks him as an outsider to Highhouse Yroden. “Yrisa!” He calls again, then races forward, up the bluff towards the great hall. “Yrisa!” he howls desperately a third time as he leaps into the air before the great hall where he vanishes into a sudden burst of smoke.

This is Vigi, or rather, his apparition. As the Nightmare worsens, his actions will change, becoming violent, and then self-destructive. Vigi ignores any attempt to interact with him and acts as if he is alone in the village. He is intangible, so cannot actually be contained, and he will simply move through anyone or anything placed in his way.

If Grim Wolf is with the PCs, he can identify Vigi, and tell them of the relationship that exists between Vigi and Yrisa. He’ll point out that this image is not Vigi, noting certain differences, primarily improvements. This is Vigi as Yrisa sees him, not as he actually exists.

KAIYA BLACKMOORE

- 2 apparitions

As the curse drags on, the energies begin to play on the fear and emotions of others in Yroden. This encounter is an example of tailoring the nightmare to people not directly involved in the larger story. Use it to draw inspiration for creating additional encounters that play off your PCs fears and emotions.

As you round a corner, you hear a strangled cry, “No please, Sully, please...” A man dressed in once-fine clothing is holding a woman off the ground, his hand around her throat. You recognize her as Kaiya Blackmoore, a priestess of the Creator. Standing a pace behind the pair is another man, dressed all in blue, looking on with a smile on his face. His fingers strum chords on a mandolin as he sings a tune about a woman who abandoned her lover.

The two men are both apparitions drawn from the mind of Kaiya. Before coming to Highhouse Yroden, she was betrothed to Sully but broke it off after Celltar, the man in blue, charmed her. When the spell was broken, she fled her home seeking refuge far away. She has not seen Sully or Celltar since those events.

Look for Sully and Celltar to appear again in *Rats in the Street*, an adventure by Embers Design Studios.

MOVING ON

When the PCs decide to explore the old dwarven caves, whether they realize the end of their quest lies within or not, proceed to Part 3.

YOUNG BLACK DRAGON CR 7 (3,200 XP)

CE Medium dragon (water); **Speed** 60 ft., fly 150 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.

Init +6; **Senses** dragon senses; **Perception** +14

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19

Immune acid, paralysis, sleep

hp 76 (8d12+24)

Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

Melee bite +13 (1d8+6), 2 claws +12 (1d6+4), 2 wings +7 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks breath weapon (60-ft. line, DC 17, 6d6 acid)

Str 19, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 24 (28 vs. trip)

Skills Fly +13, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +11, Perception +14, Stealth +16, Swim +23

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (bite)

Languages Draconic

SQ speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

APPARITION

CR 2 (600 XP)

NE Medium construct; **Speed** 20 ft.

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +0

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 10

hp 26 (3d10+10)

Immune construct traits

Fort +1, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1

Melee claw +5 (1d6+1 plus seed of corruption)

Str 12, **Dex** 21, **Con** --, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 19

Skills Intimidate +6, Stealth +11

Feats Skill Focus (Intimidate, Stealth)

Languages Common

SQ mutable

Mutable (Su) The apparitions form is not fixed. It can flow from one form to another, always maintaining roughly humanoid features. It may appear with weapons and armor. These changes do not impact its statistics.

Seed of Corruption (Su) Anyone struck by an apparition must succeed at a Fortitude save DC 11 or become infected with a seed of corruption. An infected creature takes 1d6 necrotic damage each round and is sickened. The seed continues to fester for 1d6 rounds.

PART III

CAVES

Long before humans came to Highhouse Yroden, dwarves dug a small shrine to a now-forgotten deity into the bluff. Although it has been abandoned for centuries, its walls still hold runes and engravings from those forgotten days.

Most villagers know of the “old dwarven caves,” but no one thinks anything of them. Village children sometimes play near the caves, the bravest even daring to step a few paces in, but not many have ever gone deeper.

Use the NPCs and clues outlined in Appendix IV to introduce the caves when you feel it is appropriate.

The entrance is obscured in a copse of trees on the bluff’s western side. It’s easy to miss, but if PCs know what they’re looking for, or have directions from the village, they can uncover it without much trouble. Otherwise, locating the entrance requires a **Perception DC 15** check.

- Room temperatures stay a constant 48°.
- Corridors are 10-feet wide and 15-feet tall.
- Rooms are 20-feet tall.
- Twelve-inch tall lines of dwarven runes are etched into the walls at the floor and ceiling with the space between filled with bas-reliefs depicting dwarves in battle.

Character Level

If your PCs are level 2, apply a -2 penalty to all attack and damage rolls of the Blackclaw minion. Remove 3 skeletons and 3 zombies from area 6, and on the second count-down, remove a die only on a 6, as with the first and apply the staggered condition to the grotesque amalgamation.

I. ENTRANCE

A dark cavern looms before you, its broken doors laying discarded and rotting on the ground. Two larger than life statues of dwarves flank the door, one missing a head. Several sun-bleached skeletons lie slumped against the walls just inside, each still grasping a sword in its dead hand.

The skeletons are not animate. They were placed here and arranged in their positions by Oga, hoping to scare off children.

During Yrisa’s nightmare, anyone can sense a lingering aura of malice and fear emanating from the caves. This is the psychic residue of Oga and Yrisa’s struggle. A character sensitive to such things can further discern a powerful, controlled mind wrestling with a younger one that is clouded by fear and filled with uncertainty.

TREASURE

Lying in the dirt and underbrush about ten feet from the entrance is the statue’s missing head. Its helmet can be removed, and is magical.

- *helm of resilience* (see Appendix III)

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Except as noted otherwise, the cave system shares the following features:

OLD DWARVEN CAVES



2. FALSE WALL

A short distance beyond the entrance, the tunnel jogs south before continuing east another 30 feet, where it ends at a crude field-stone wall, clearly not of original construction. The stone head of a mallet, its handle nowhere to be seen, has been discarded just in front of the wall.

- The **floor and walls at the end of the hall gleam** in the PCs light.
- The **fieldstone wall is cracked** and poorly constructed. It can be easily pushed through.
- A secret door on the east wall can be discovered with a **Perception DC 15** check.

The danger here is on the ceiling, where Oga has grown a large patch of green slime. Noticing it doesn't require a check,

but the PCs do need to examine the ceiling. If anyone moves beneath it, the slime drops down on top of them, attempting to consume them.

Oga and Tonna bypass the slime patch using the secret passage. A character examining the floor, that succeeds at a **Survival DC 15** check, notices foot-



the wall, where they suddenly end.

If the PCs notice the green slime, read or paraphrase:

A thick patch of slimy green mucus covers a wide section of ceiling, its form slowly undulating, as if breathing.

3. MUSHROOM FARM

- 2 shriekers

The air in this cool chamber is moist, and a you can hear a constant dripping. The stone floor has been covered with rich soil and is blanketed by thousands of colorful mushrooms of all shapes and sizes.

- The **mushrooms range in size** from less than an inch to several feet tall.
- Their caps are of all **different sorts**.
- Several of the caps have **small nodules** growing in them.
- These nodules are more **common on larger mushrooms**.

Through cracks in the ceiling, water flows into this chamber. The air is cool and wet and Oga has taken advantage of the environment to cultivate a mushroom patch. It serves her not only as a source of materials for her work, but also as security, as she has planted several shriekers amongst them.

If the PCs come within ten feet of the shriekers, or if they disturb them in any way, read the following:

A sudden, painfully loud blast erupts from several of the mushrooms in the patch. They let out one long wail, then

Dungeon on Alert (1)

As soon as the shrieking begins, Oga and the Blackclaw minion become alerted to the presence of intruders. Oga has no interest in facing the PCs here, however. She snatches Yrisa, and flees towards her lair (Area 8), while the Blackclaw minion prepares for battle.

You can simply decide that the PCs encounter Oga in her lair, or instead use a countdown pool to determine how long it takes her to wrangle Yrisa back to her lair.

Here's how it works.

Start the countdown when the shrieker begins its cry. Your countdown pool consists of 5d6. Every round of combat, or a dramatically appropriate amount of non-combat time, have one of your players roll the countdown dice pool. Remove any dice that come up as 6s from the pool. When the pool is empty, Oga reaches her chamber where she stabs Yrisa and begins animating her grotesque amalgamation (see Area 8).

Don't tell your players what the countdown indicates, just let them know that when it's empty, something happens.

pause for a heartbeat before beginning again. In that heartbeat, you catch a woman's desperate cry for help, followed by a harsh, guttural voice cursing. Before you can make out anything useful, the mushrooms renew their shrieking.

4. HIDDEN ARMORY

A search of the mushroom farm, accompanied with a successful **Perception DC 20** check, reveals a long hidden secret: an armory left behind by the builders. It has gone undiscovered all these long years.

If the PCs discover the secret door, read or paraphrase:

The secret door pivots quietly, despite its great age, a sure sign of master craftsmanship.

- The room is **choked with cobwebs and dust**.
- **Five mannequins** are inside, dressed in dwarven **battle regalia** and grasping weapons.
- Wooden **racks for various weapons** line the walls.
- A **small shrine** at the back of the hall gives homage to the dwarven deity of battle.

Most of the weapons and armor contained within are no longer usable, moisture from the nearby mushroom farm having caused them to rust and corrode. Pole arms, spears, axes, maces, and many other weapons and shields are among the ruined items. The suits of armor displayed on the mannequins shows no signs of wear. They include: **2 suits of chain mail**, **2 suits of splint mail**, and a suit of heavily-fluted **plate armor** adorned with dwarven sigils. All are masterwork.

5. LABORATORY

- 1 blackclaw minion

A jumble of tables and shelves, crammed full of potions, bottles, beakers, jars, liquids, dried body parts, pickled heads, and other alchemical substances clearly identify this large chamber as a laboratory. A table near the room's middle is cluttered with implements of torture, many moist with blood.

This is Oga's work shop, and where she spends most of her time when not in Yroden. It is also where she is questioning Yrisa. Food and water enough for a few weeks is stored in the barrels in the corner.

Oga is usually in this chamber with Yrisa and the Blackclaw minion.

PARTICIPANTS

How the PCs approach this chamber determines what is encountered here.

If their **approach undetected**, Oga and the Blackclaw minion are with-in along with Yrisa. Yrisa is secured to the table, where she is being questioned. In this case, if she can, Oga flees through the mushroom patch with Yrisa, hoping to feed the girl to the green slime and escape back to Highhouse Yroden, trusting in her connection with Gantar to outweigh any accusations the PCs make.

If their **approach is detected**, and their countdown pool (see the Dungeon on Alert sidebar) is at 4, 5, or 6 dice, they will encounter only the Blackclaw minion in this chamber.

If their **approach is detected**, but their countdown pool is at 3 dice or fewer, they encounter the Blackclaw minion as well as 2 zombies and 2 skeletons.

BLACKCLAW MINION CR 4 (1,200 XP)

CE Large outsider (demon, gnom, native); **Speed** 30 ft., Fly 60 ft. (good)

Init +2, **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +10

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16

hp 34 (4d10+12)

DR 5/magic; **Immune** acid, electricity, paralysis, poison, sleep; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Melee elephant axe +7 (2d8+6/×3) and bite +5 (1d8+2) or bite +7 (1d8+6) and 2 claws +5 (1d6+2)

Special breath weapon (60-ft. line, 4d6 acid damage, Reflex DC 15 for half, useable every 1d4 rounds), smite good 1/day

Space 10 ft., **Reach** 10 ft.

Str 19, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 11, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 21

Skills Bluff +8, Fly +13, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Planes) +9, Perception +10, Stealth +7

Feats Iron Will, Multiattack

Languages Abyssal, Gnom

SHRIEKER

CR 1 (400 XP)

N Small plant; **Speed** 5 ft.

Init +0; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; **Perception** +1

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13

hp 5 (1d8+1)

Immune sonic, plant traits

Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0

Special shriek (DC 11 Fort, 1d4 sonic)

Str 9, **Dex** 10, **Con** 13, **Int** --, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +0; **CMB** -2; **CMD** 8 (can't be tripped)

Shriek (Ex) Light sources or movement within 10 feet of a shrieker causes it to emit a piercing sound that lasts for 1d3 rounds. All creatures within 30 feet of a shrieker when it emits this noise must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save or take 1d4 sonic damage each round. A creature that successfully saves is not subject to the same shrieker's noise for 24 hours. The save DC is Constitution-based.



SKELETON

CR 1/3 (135 XP)

NE Medium undead; **Speed** 30 ft.

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +0

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12

hp 4 (1d8)

DR 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

Fort +0, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

Melee 2 claws +2 (1d4+2)

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** --, **Int** --, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14

Feats Improved Initiative

ZOMBIE

CR 1/2 (200 XP)

NE Medium undead; **Speed** 30 ft.

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +0

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12

hp 12 (2d8+3)

DR 5/slashing; **Immune** undead traits

Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3

Melee slam +4 (1d6+4)

Str 17, **Dex** 10, **Con** --, **Int** --, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

Feats Toughness

SQ staggered

TACTICS

Depending on your preference, the Blackclaw minion will either await the PCs in the center of the room, goading them forward to combat, or charge the first person to round the corner. The beast loves combat and battle; use your best judgment to make the encounter exciting.

TREASURE

This chamber is a well-stocked alchemical laboratory. If the contents are boxed and sold (filling at least one wagon), they could fetch as much as 1,000gp to the right buyer.

Scattered among the many substances are a few potions, including:

- 3 *potions of healing*
- 1 *potion of poison*
- 1 *potion of acid resistance*

6. GRAVEYARD

- 6 zombies
- 6 skeletons

A scene of horror waits in this large, rectangular room. All around it, rotting corpses have been piled up in small heaps of threes and fours, their rank smell burning your nostrils. Some are intact, others hacked to pieces, and still others have been modified: an extra arm sewn on, or the head of a human sewn to the body of an animal. Scattered amidst this, and littering nearly every open space of the floor, are bones from an indeterminate number of donors.

- As PCs near this room they become aware of an **unnatural cold**.
- The room is **shrouded in darkness**.
- It is **impossible to know the number of dead** here, as their bodies are incomplete.
- Some of the corpses are **animate skeletons and zombies**.

This graveyard is the final resting place of most who die in Yroden. After their burial, Oga unearths the corpses, bringing them here where she animates them to serve her as guardians and slaves.

PARTICIPANTS

As with Area 5, how the PCs approach this chamber determines what they encounter here.

Dungeon on Alert (2)

Oga will prepare the undead in the graveyard (Area 6) for the intruders if she has time. If the PCs have not reached the graveyard by the time their countdown pool reaches 3 dice, Oga stops and commands some undead to go help the Blackclaw minion, some to stay and guard the graveyard, and the rest to follow her to her lair.

If they **approach undetected**, the undead horde rises up to face them, consisting of 12 undead (6 skeletons and 6 zombies).

If their **approach is detected**, and their countdown pool (see the Dungeon on Alert sidebar) is at 4, 5, or 6 dice, Oga is in this room along with the undead. Her placement depends on the countdown dice. If the pool is at 6 dice, place Oga just inside the room, right next to where the PCs enter. If it is at 5 dice, place her in the middle of the room. If it is at 4 dice, place her on the far side of the room, with the undead between her and the PCs. She doesn't stay to fight.

If their **approach is detected**, but their countdown pool is at 3 dice or fewer, they encounter only 4 undead here (2 skeletons and 2 zombies), the rest having been dispatched to help the Blackclaw minion or taken to Oga's lair.

7. TRAPDOOR

Rusted metal rungs driven into the western wall rise upwards to a chute in the ceiling that then ascends hundreds of feet to the village proper. Climbing this ladder is both tiring and dangerous (see Part 2, Area L).

8. OGA'S LAIR

- Oga
- Yrisa

This small chamber has the look of a bedroom. In one corner, a pile of furs and thatch serve as a bed, and in another, a desk cluttered with a smattering of books, scrolls, and fetishes. Much of the floor and wall are covered by arcane runes and patterns, scrawled in a mixture of chalk and blood, that draws the eyes to the pattern's center. There, where the pattern converges, is a pile of flesh and bones.

This room is Oga's bedchamber and where she does her private work. The arcane pattern on the floor and walls are part of a spell she's developing, intended to create a new type of undead that fuses the body and soul of its victims. She has made good progress on the spell, but is still decades away from completing it.

PARTICIPANTS

This room is usually empty, except when Oga is sleeping. If she fled here, that means the PCs countdown pool has emptied and she is likely accompanied by 2 zombies and 2 skeletons. She stabs Yrisa and immediately begins attempting a rushed animation of the pile of flesh and bones on the floor. This initiates a second countdown, as detailed in the Dungeon on Alert (3) sidebar.

If Oga is within casting her spell, read or paraphrase the following:

Several corpses in various states of decay stand guard in front of the witch Oga, who seems to be finishing some sort of ritual. In front of her, what at first looked like a pile of flesh and bone begins to heave and respond to her magic. The dismembered limbs and body parts of sev-

OGA

CR 2 (600 XP)

Cleric 3

CE Medium humanoid (human); **Speed** 30 ft.

Init -1; **Perception** +3

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12

hp 23 (3d8+6)

Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

Melee quarterstaff +3 (1d6+1)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 7/day (DC 13, 2d6), hand of the acolyte (6/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +6)
6/day-blast rune (1d6+1 energy damage, 3 rounds)

Cleric Spells (CL 3rd; concentration +6)
2nd-bold person (DC 16), magic mouth^P, spiritual weapon
1st-command (2, DC 15), erase^P, obscuring mist
0 (at will)-detect magic, detect poison, purify food and drink, stabilize

D Domain spell; Domains Magic, Rune

Str 12, **Dex** 12, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 12

Skills Intimidate +5, Perception +6, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +7

Feats Extra Channel, Scribe Scroll, Selective Channeling, Spell Focus (enchantment)

Languages Common

SQ aura

Combat Gear *potion of invisibility, scroll of comprehend languages, scroll of cure moderate wounds, scroll of darkness, scroll of find traps*, alchemist's fire (2), everburning torch, smokesticks (2); **Other Gear** *bracers of armor* +2, quarterstaff, silver unholy symbol, 537 gp

GROTESQUE AMALGAMATION

CR 6 (2,400 XP)

CE Medium undead; **Speed** 40 ft.

Init +0; darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;
Perception +0

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20

hp 65 (10d8+20)

DR 5/slashing; **Immune** undead traits

Fort +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7

Melee bite +12 (2d8+7)

Special Attacks breath weapon (15-ft. cone, 4d10 poison damage, Fortitude DC 17 for half, useable every 1d4 rounds)

Str 20, **Dex** 11, **Con** --, **Int** --, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 22 (26 vs. trip)

eral townspeople have been stitched together in a vague, quadrupedal form, its limbs bending at unnatural angles. Worst of all is its head, which is mostly unidentifiable chunks of flesh sewn together in a grotesque caricature of a dog's head, various bits of broken bone jutting from the raw meat to form teeth.

Dungeon on Alert (3)

If the PCs have not reached Area 8 by the time their countdown pool has depleted, Oga stabs Yrisa and begins hastily completing the animation of her grotesque amalgamation.

Start a second countdown pool of 5d6. This pool will tick down faster, however, and you should remove a die from the pool each time a 5 or 6 is rolled. When this pool is empty, Oga completes her grotesque amalgamation, making the encounter with her considerably more difficult.

Once again, when you begin counting down this pool, let your players roll the dice, but do not reveal what happens when the pool is emptied.

The grotesque amalgamation animates when the second countdown pool is depleted. If the PCs reach this chamber before that happens, you can decide if she abandons her attempt to animate it, or tries to finish the spell.

THE FATE OF YRISA

If Yrisa is encountered here, she's likely stabbed and bleeding to death. When the PCs enter, describe Yrisa's body laying in an increasingly large pool of blood. She is at -5 hit points, and has a Constitution score of 10. Her fate will be determined now by the dice, and the speed by which the PCs come to her aid.

TREASURE

Among Oga's things is a set of five heavy tomes covering the subjects of alchemy and herbalism. The set can be sold for 300gp or kept for reference. When answering questions relating to alchemy or herbalism, if the books are available to be referenced, the character can add his or her proficiency bonus to the roll.



CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the curse broken, the PCs have completed this adventure, but what happens next? They are likely to find Highhouse Yroden an unwelcoming locale.

Spearheaded by Goodwife Tonna, the villagers cast blame for the curse on Yrisa. If she's alive, Gantar will almost certainly try to seize Yrisa, with full intentions of executing her. PCs may find themselves faced with the unpleasant choice of fighting their way out of Clan Vasi lands, or giving Yrisa over to a fate as bad as that from which they just saved her.

If the PCs harmed Goodwife Tonna or her children, Gantar will spare no effort in seeing them brought to justice. The exact nature of that is left to you to decide.

If Oga escaped, things in Yroden go from bad to worse as she whips the villagers into a frenzy and aims them directly at the PCs. Oga claims collusion between the PCs and Yrisa, concocting a story that places her at its center, having just broken the curse and narrowly escaped with her life. The PCs have little chance of convincing the town of her lies; after all, Oga has been Yroden's wise woman for decades.

It may be best if, after saving Yrisa from the caves, the PCs make a quiet exit from Highhouse Yroden and Clan Vasi lands. Should they get Yrisa away alive, they'll have made an ally of a powerful oracle, someone you can use to spur future adventures. And don't forget, Zalintar is still after the girl...

THE END

APPENDIX 1: HORN OF MEMORIES

This encounter is appropriate for use early in Part 2: Yroden. It includes celebration and dancing, and should be played before the weariness of the curse has truly taken hold of the village.

HISTORY

In the time of the Founding, before the clans emerged, there lived a hunter called Gantar-Sul. He roamed the earth, seeking a home for his family. Finally, after decades of searching, he came to a high mountain pass illuminated by the rays of a wandering moon. Passing through, he set his eyes for the first time upon the valley. It was more than he could have imagined. Wild. Untamed. Unspoiled. Immediately, he knew this was the home he sought.

Life in the valley was easy. Game was plentiful and the waters of the valley were crystal clear and bursting with fish. It was everything Gantar-Sul had dreamed it would be. Soon, highhouses dotted the countryside.

Gantar-Sul's labors building a home for his people were interrupted by the appearance of a fire-haired warrior dressed in armor that gleamed as golden as the morning sun. He knew her only as the Champion, and she had come for his help. She spoke of evils as old as the world itself, evils intent on destruction. She had driven them before her, until they fled into this valley, and she would see them thrown down.

Gantar-Sul did not hesitate pledging his axe to her cause. He left with her that day, and as they passed each of the highhouses, he blew a long note on his horn and the warriors of the village issued forth to heed his call. Northlanders became the vanguard of the Champion's force, and indeed, in every engagement that followed, they could be found in the worst of the fighting.

Finally, after months of fighting, the day came when they stood before their true enemies: four evil creatures birthed in the forges of creation.

Felnir the Small

Decades ago, there lived among Clan Vasi a warrior called Felnir the Small. A short man, Felnir earned his honor young, when he slew a hill giant and saved a score of hunters. He went on to become a renowned giant killer.

They were surrounded by a demonic horde so massive that none could put a number to it. Once again, Gantar-Sul did not hesitate. He sounded his horn and called his warriors to his side. Their purpose: carve a path through the horde for the Champion. These Northlanders fought with reckless abandon, driving a wedge through the horrific army so the

Champion could make her stand.

The Northlanders, even with their warriors' hearts, began to quail before the power of those ancient beings.

But she did not. The Champion strode through the gap to face evil unimaginable. One by one, these lords of darkness met her steel, and one by one they were cast down.

Finally, with the setting sun came a calm. The long war was over, but the cost had been immense. Corpses of the dead lay everywhere. The fire-haired Champion was among them. Gantar-Sul gathered her body reverently and laid it in her tomb. Then he placed his horn at the tomb and swore that his family would ever come to her aid.

In time, the memory of her tomb was lost, but the horn persists. Now called the Horn of Memories, it is passed from skald to skald among the Northland tribes of the vale and can reveal the history to those who dare to blow it.

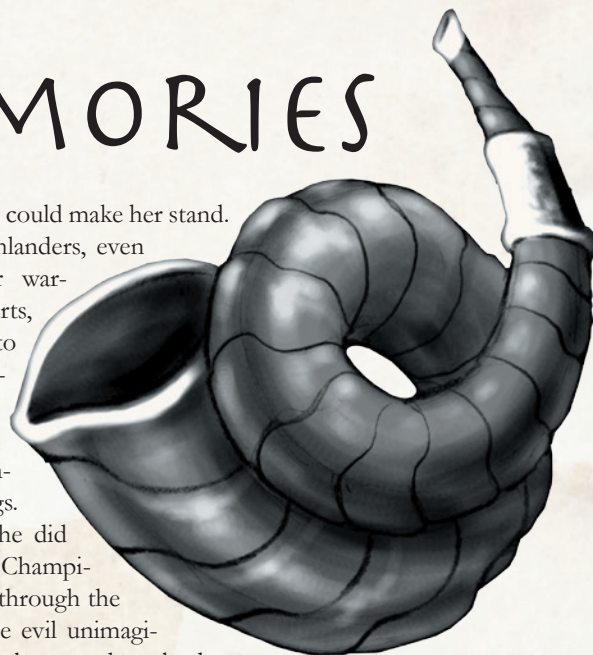
SUMMARY

The Horn of Memories is an ancient artifact. Its magic allows people to relive great moments of Northlander history. Those that blow the horn are transported to another place where they see their tribe's honor played out before them. Inside the cursed zone, however, the horn has become corrupted, its magic twisted from its original purpose. Instead of reliving moments of triumph, those that blow the horn instead may be transported into times of defeat and shame. Worse still, those who sound the horn find themselves facing true danger: death within these cursed visions may mean death in fact, or worse, removal from the memory of the world.

GETTING STARTED

After dinner, Aetom rises from his seat near the head of the table and speaks. Read or paraphrase the following:

As dinner winds down, Aetom the Skald rises. In one hand he brandishes a curved horn, "Tonight, my kinsmen," he says in a strong voice, "we celebrate our ancestors. With this horn we relive their glory, making it our own. Those brave among you, step forward." His voice booms now,



“Step forward and receive a blessing from the Horn of Memories.” As he finishes he gives the horn a shake.

Although the PCs may wish to volunteer, before they can, a young warrior named Atark leaps to his feet, two of his friends bounding forward with him. Anticipation is thick among the warriors as he accepts the Horn of Memories.

A Northlander you recognize as Atark blows a long, low note on the horn. Time seems to stretch out with the note, each second hanging, oozing towards the next. You feel yourself tumbling, tumbling, tumbling. Then you pitch headfirst into...

- The PCs are **looking down from a high point**, as if they were flying.
- They have **no physical form**, just an awareness of things.
- Far **below them, a grassy plain** stretches out, upon it a **stampeding herd of bison**.
- Behind the herd, driving the animals to stampede, are several **Northland hunters**.

The PCs are witnessing a scene that plays out over and over among the Northland tribes. Bison are cajoled up steep cliffs and then goaded over the edge where hunters wait to finish them off and claim them for their tribe. This time, however, something is terribly wrong. Waiting at the top of the ledge is an angry giant, a massive tree-trunk held in one gnarled hand. The giant waits to drive the herd back down the slopes upon the unsuspecting hunters.

A horn sounds, and your eyes are drawn to where Atark and his two companions, now sitting atop battle-trained raptors, are joined by a warrior you somehow know to be Felnir. The four of them have spotted the giant, and Felnir leads them up the mountain slope in a charge.

- The **battle is short** and brutal.
- The Northlanders, and their raptor mounts, **work together to bring the beast down**. They surround it, raptors nipping at the giant, while the Northlanders stab quickly with their spears.
- **Felnir** leaps from his mount to **deliver the killing blow**, bringing the giant to the ground with a thunderous thud.
- Together, they return to a nearby highhouse for a **vic-tory feast**. The honor of Felnir is on every tongue.
- Finally, Atark lifts the horn and **blows a long note**,

ending this memory.

As Atark blows the Horn of Memories time again begins to stretch out, but this time when it bounces back you are once more in the Great Hall of Yroden. Atark and his friends are also there, surrounded by Northland warriors who look upon the triumphant trio. A cheer goes up and Aetom takes the horn back.

When the cheering settles down, Aetom lifts the horn above his head and booms, “Who else will brave the Horn of Memories?”

If the PCs volunteer, proceed to First Memory below. If they do not, neither does anyone else. For a long stretch, Aetom stands in the center of the chamber, slowly turning in a circle. Finally, Gantar rises and takes the horn from him, moving to the PCs, he presents it to them and says:

Join in our history, my friends. Learn, and show us your courage.

If they still refuse, a young warrior steps forward and volunteers. Proceed to Aftermath below.

FIRST MEMORY: THE GOBLIN’S FURY

- 1 hobgoblin butcher
- 4 goblins
- 1 worg

You take the horn from Aetom and lift it to your lips, “Remember,” the skald says quickly as you do, “when the memory is over, sound the horn again to return to us.” With that, you blow a note and an eerie wail issues forth. The world blurs and time stretches thin. Just as the hall begins to fade from sight, you hear Highwoman Thora’s voice call out a warning and then a massive black form flashes overhead. The shadow blots out the light, and you are engulfed by blackness. When you can see again, you are in another place.

The PCs have been brought to the place that Clan Vasi scouts died while trying to bring warning of the impending invasion. They cannot leave the memory until after they defeat the hobgoblin butcher (see below).

Clan Vasi is a lesser clan, but it has not always been this way. There was a time, centuries ago, when Vasi was mighty; a leader among the clans. A goblin warlord called Skar shattered the power of Clan Vasi. Skar fought under the banner of a blood red moon and his forces boiled out of the mountains like ants, overwhelming and nearly destroying Clan Vasi. If warning had come, they could have prepared and, with the aid of others, turned back the assault, but no warning came despite scouts being sent into the mountains.

HOBGOBLIN BUTCHER CR 1/2 (200 XP)

Fighter 1

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid); **Speed** 30 ft.

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +2

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14

hp 17 (1d10+7)

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Melee cleaver +4 (1d8+2/19–20)

Str 15, **Dex** 15, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5

Feats Toughness, Weapon Focus (cleaver)

Languages Common, Goblin

GOBLIN

CR 1/3 (135 XP)

Warrior 1

NE Small humanoid (goblinoid); **Speed** 30 ft.

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** -1

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 14

hp 6 (1d10+1)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** -1

Melee short sword +2 (1d4/19–20)

Ranged short bow +4 (1d4/×3)

Str 11, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 12

Skills Ride +10, Stealth +10, Swim +4

Feats Improved Initiative

Languages Goblin

WORG

CR 2 (600 XP)

NE Medium magical beast; **Speed** 50 ft.

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent;
Perception +11

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12

hp 26 (4d10+4)

Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Melee bite +7 (1d6+4 plus trip)

Str 17, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 6, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19 (23 vs. trip)

Skills Perception +11, Stealth +9, Survival +5

Feats Run, Skill Focus (Perception)

Languages Common, Goblin

- The PCs are in the **back of a large, squalid cage** with wooden bars.
- There are about a **dozen others** in the cage with them.
- A **fat hobgoblin stands outside** the cage at a butcher's block, chopping meat into chunks.
- **Human, goblin, and worg parts** are mixed about the block and nearby floor.

Before the PCs have time to orient themselves to the situation, continue:

One of the others locked in with you whispers fiercely, "It's now or never, we've got to warn the Highman!" With that, he hurls himself against the door of the cage. It groans and then shatters beneath the force of his blow. The others with you seem too stunned by the sudden flurry of action to react.

These are Clan Vasi scouts sent into the mountains to stand watch for goblins. Unfortunately, goblins found and captured them instead. The man that burst from the cage is their leader Artome.

RUNNING THE SCENE

While the PCs are free to act, they cannot actually physically interact with the vision yet. Artome lunges at the hobgoblin, but the butcher swats him down and then hacks him to pieces. No matter what the PCs do, the hobgoblin will kill Artome. When it's finished, the creature leaves the room. If the PCs try to follow, or leave the chamber in any way, they find the way blocked by an invisible barrier. Moments later, the body of Artome begins to decompose rapidly, first rotting away to a pile of bones, and then disintegrating into dust.

When the time is right, one of the other prisoners speaks to the PCs asking, "Where'd you come from? Help us please! Before they come back. I'm not going to just wait to be put on their chopping block, are you?"

The PCs have a short time to talk to the captives. These warriors have overheard the goblins talking, and know they intend to launch a surprise attack on Clan Vasi. It's urgent the clan be warned.

When they're finished talking with the Northlanders, continue:

Suddenly footsteps ring from behind you and the hobgoblin butcher walks back into the room. As he sees you, he snarls, "Ah, more fresh meat for the larder!" and hefts his cleaver, "Guards!" he shouts as he charges forward.

- **4 goblins and 1 worg rush into the tent** at the butcher's call for help.

If the PCs defeat the Butcher, they can then exit the chamber where they find themselves in a vast cavern with hundreds of cages and legion upon legion of goblins. They are quickly noticed and an alarm sounded. The goblin horde is innumerable, and the PCs are near its center. They cannot hope to fight their way out, and stealth is not likely an option either. Their best hope lies with the Horn of Memories; blowing a note on it will end this memory and draw them into a new one.

SECOND MEMORY: THE BRIDGE OF THUNDER

The ringing of the horn lingers in your ears as you gaze out over the Valley from a high mountain pass. When the scene forms fully, you hear the thunderous roar of a great waterfall from somewhere ahead. Nearly lost in this din another sound, laughter, originating from just around a nearby bend.

The PCs have been brought to the place where two Northland heroes, Ribalf and Svenna, died. They cannot interact with the couple, or leave this memory, until both Northlanders are killed. When the PCs investigate the source of the laughter, continue:

Around the bend, beneath a rocky outcropping, two Northlanders are splashing in a hot spring, both in a state of undress.

- The pair are Ribalf and Svenna.
- Ribalf's rune-covered axe and Svenna's composite longbow rest on the shore, along with their clothing.
- They take no notice of the PCs.

When you are ready, continue:

The woman climbs out of the spring, pulling her furs on and snatching up the bow before turning back to the muscled man, "Ribalf," she says, "we'd best reach the cave before night falls and we have to sleep out on these peaks." The man nods his agreement and climbs out of the water.

Ribalf and Svenna follow the path around a bend to where a wide chasm gives view to a massive waterfall that cascades down the mountain. An ancient, weathered bridge spans the gap, covered with slick moss along much of its surface. The PCs can go no further than the near side of the chasm until Ribalf and Svenna disappear into a cave on the far side. The two Northlanders cross the bridge carefully, choosing their steps deliberately as they cross the mossy areas. Once on the far side, they begin scaling the mountain towards a small cave about fifty feet up, working at it with rope and piton. Finally, they disappear into the darkness of the cave.

YOUNG PTERODACTYL CR 1/3 (135 XP)

N Small animal; **Speed** 10 ft., fly 50 ft. (clumsy)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision, scent;
Perception +6

AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 13

hp 13 (2d8+4)

Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +0

Melee bite +3 (1d4)

Str 10, **Dex** 19, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 13

Skills Fly +6, **Perception** +6

Feats Dodge

RUNNING THE SCENE

After Ribalf and Svenna enter the cave, the PCs are free to explore the area. They're high in the mountains that ring the valley, in a place of extraordinary natural beauty. There is nothing to discover, however, until they enter the cave and learn the fate of Ribalf and Svenna.

Walking on the bridge is dangerous. It crosses a 50-foot gorge, and at two places slick moss coats it for a span of 15 feet. PCs can jump these patches or carefully cross them with a successful **Acrobatics check DC 15**. On the first failure, the character slips to the edge of the bridge, tottering over a drop of about 100 feet. A second failure means the character must make a **Reflex DC 10 saving throw** or fall, suffering 10d3 damage when they hit the water below. Success on this saving throw leaves the character dangling off the side, grasping one of the small shrubs that grow from cracks in the bridge. Two characters working together to cross the bridge give each +2 on checks relating to this challenge.

On the far side, the PCs can climb to the cave using the rope and pitons left by Ribalf and Svenna, easily reaching the pterodactyl nest.

Ribalf and Svenna are names every Northlander knows, renowned for defending the Pass of Hjorn where, for two days, they stood alone against hundreds of goblin invaders. After earning their honor, and the axe *Ascent*, at the pass, they vanished suddenly and without trace. Their fate has long been a mystery.

PTERODACTYL NEST

- 6 young pterodactyl

Once the PCs reach the cave mouth, the nature of the dream changes and once again the PCs cannot interact with anything.

As you crest the cave and peer in you hear an urgent whisper, “Grab the last two eggs Svenna, I think I hear something outside.” Suddenly a gust of wind erupts from behind you, and a shadow falls over the cave entrance. A massive pterodactyl alights on the ledge, its wicked beak snapping at the pair in its nest.

- **Ribalf takes up his axe** and rushes to confront the beast. He gets one good hit in before the **pterodactyl kills him**, cleanly snapping his head free of his shoulders with a bite.
- **Svenna**, upon seeing her lover killed, **flies into a rage** and lunges at the creature with her spears. The pair exchange blows, but **she too is killed**.
- Moments after Ribalf and Svenna die, their **bodies disintegrate into bone and then ash**, just as Artome did earlier.

The scene then shifts further, taking on form and substance. The PCs feel the change, and know they can now interact normally with the memory again. They’re standing on the ledge, just outside the cave holding the pterodactyl nest. The body of the large pterodactyl now lies rotting in the nest, Ribalf’s runed axe jutting from its corpse. The eggs have all hatched, and six small pterodactyls feed on the corpse.



The PCs can leave the memory at any time by blowing the Horn of Memories, or they can deal with the baby pterodactyls and claim Ribalf’s axe.

TREASURE

- *Ascent* (see Appendix III)

FINAL MEMORY:

DEATH OF VIGI

- 1 murder of crows

The final “memory” has nothing to do with Clan Vasi. Instead, the horn has brought the PCs to the moment of Vigí’s death, after being questioned by a Blackclaw Minion. Vigí feels for Yrisa much as she feels for him. When Zalintar’s gnolls attacked, Vigí was killed, as the PCs will witness. If they encounter the apparition of Vigí in the nightmare, they will recognize him from this memory.

Your ears feel as if they may burst as the horn blast fades. A blood-red sky casts an ominous pallor over the landscape where, in the gloom, you can just make out a large, gnarled tree. Like a withered hand, the black tree seems to have clawed its way free of the surrounding grasslands. A murder of crows sits silently, their beady eyes intently watching a scene unfold below them.

MURDER OF CROWS CR 3 (800 XP)

N Tiny animal (swarm); **Speed** 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +11

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12

hp 27 (6d8)

Fort +5, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities half damage from slashing and piercing weapons, swarm traits

Melee swarm (2d6 plus distraction and eye rake)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Str 1, **Dex** 15, **Con** 10, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +4

Skills Fly +12, Perception +11, Stealth +0

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Perception)

Eye-Rake (Ex) Any living creature damaged by a murder of crows must succeed on a DC 13 Reflex save or be blinded as the swarm scratches and tears at the victim’s eyes. The blindness lasts for 1d4 days or until healed with remove blindness. The save DC is Constitution-based.

A young man is tied to the tree, bloody and beaten. The manner of his dress marks him as a Northlander, but not of Clan Vasi. Before this man stands a massive, winged creature, one part gnoll and one part something else...

"Tell me," the gnoll-beast snarls in a voice heavy with power, "Tell me where she went." As it speaks, bat-like wings upon its back stretch out reflexively and it reaches forth with one muscled arm, black scales running along it, and extends a clawed finger to draw a line of blood from the Northlanders scalp to his chin.

With an effort the man opens his mouth and spits blood in the beasts face, "You will never find her, dog! I would rather die!" The conviction in his voice leaves no doubt of the truth of his words.

The gnoll-beast growls, "So be it." Without warning, it brings a massive elephant axe to bear, opening a wound in the warrior's belly before bounding into the air and vanishing into darkness. For a heartbeat, the man hangs limply in his bonds, blood flowing freely from the wound. Then the crows alight, flying down to pick at his body, tearing strips of flesh from the helpless warrior.

The PCs are now free to act. They can simply blow the horn and leave the memory; if they do, proceed to Aftermath below. If they instead try to help Vigi, and succeed in driving the crows away, he'll speak to them:

The dying man looks at you through eyes glazed with death. He reaches a hand forth, pressing a leather bracelet into yours, and coughs up blood, "Keep her safe, Grim Wolf," he says, "promise me you won't let any harm come to Yrisa." As soon as he finishes, his body quivers one last time and he dies.

The only thing remaining is to blow the horn and leave the memory. Proceed to Aftermath below.

TREASURE

- *Bracelet of Need* (see Appendix III)

AFTERMATH

With the final sounding of the *Horn of Memories*, the PCs reappear in the great hall of Clan Vasi. The horn is gone, its magic having transported it to the hands of another Northland skald. All around the chamber the warriors of Clan Vasi are awaking

as if from a deep sleep. The PCs are free to finish the revelry or to tell tale of the memories they witnessed. If they have brought back proof, such as the axe *Ascent*, they are welcomed as heroes for avenging fallen tribesmen, and rewarded with 500 gp and 1d4+2 *healing potions* from the wise woman's reserves. The PCs are now free to investigate the shadow of the dragon that fell over the hall during the celebrations and to discover the source of the curse.

If the PCs refused to blow the horn, they awaken groggy and tired with the other warriors of Clan Vasi, having blacked out. The evil power of the curse is victorious this night, and it demands a heavy toll in blood. In the center of the great hall is the bloody and broken body of the warrior that sounded the horn. She still clutches the Horn of Memories in one hand, now cracked and broken. The skald Aetom sits in his chair, his body a desiccated husk, his life taken by the curse when the horn was destroyed.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

If things go terribly wrong in the visions, use this section to guide how you respond.

A PC DIES WITHIN THE VISION.

The cursed visions are intended to present a true danger, just as they allow the opportunity for the acquisition of a true reward. At your discretion, however, death within the visions could affect them as if they had been killed by an apparition. If you remove the danger, you should also not allow them to bring treasure back from the memories.

A PC IS SEPARATED FROM THE PARTY.

If the party becomes separated, and the horn is sounded, you have a few options. The easiest is to simply move everyone together to the next memory. However, if you're up for a bit of adventure beyond the scope of this text, the separated characters become lost in the memory. If they cannot find their own way back, they become lost to true reality, their memory fading as though they never existed.

EVERYONE DIES.

If everyone dies in the visions, it's best to have them awake beaten and bruised and affected as though killed by an apparition. Whether the PCs survive this event, the horn is destroyed and Aetom killed, just as if they PCs chose to not participate in the memories.

APPENDIX II: NEW MONSTERS



BLACKCLAW GNOLLS

A new breed of gnoll has awoken within the feral race. They call themselves Blackclaw gnolls. These servants of the Abyssal prince Zalintar Blackclaw are noted for their cunning, ferocity, and the massive elephant axes they wield.

Conquerors. Unlike their kin, Blackclaw gnolls seek to conquer and settle, and hope to establish a kingdom for themselves and their master in the world. To this end, they form a much tighter structure than other societies of gnolls, with connections between far-flung outposts.

Seekers. It is the hope of every Blackclaw gnoll to find one of the five blades of the legendary sword *Quin-Slon* and present it to their master Zalintar. Zalintar considers the blade, forged at the creation of the world to kill gods, his property.

Selfish. Blackclaw gnolls learn to look after their own interests directly from their lord Zalintar. Their evil is more focused, and less chaotic than others of their kind.

Draconic Affinity. Blackclaw gnolls have an affinity for black dragons, which are themselves often found in service to Zalintar.

BLACKCLAW GNOLL CR 1 (400 XP)

CE Medium humanoid (gnoll); **Speed** 30 ft.

Init +0, **Senses** darkvision 60ft.; **Perception** +2

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16

hp 11 (2d8+2)

Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0

Melee elephant axe +3 (1d12+3/×3)

Ranged spear +1 (1d8+2/×3)

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Skills Perception +2

Feats Power Attack

Languages Gnoll

BLACKCLAW MINION CR 4 (1,200 XP)

CE Large outsider (demon, gnoll, native); **Speed** 30 ft., Fly 60 ft. (good)

Init +2, **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +10

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16

hp 34 (4d10+12)

DR 5/magic; **Immune** acid, electricity, paralysis, poison, sleep; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Melee elephant axe +7 (2d8+6/×3) and bite +5 (1d8+2) or bite +7 (1d8+6) and 2 claws +5 (1d6+2)

Special breath weapon (60-ft. line, 4d6 acid damage, Reflex DC 15 for half, useable every 1d4 rounds), smite good 1/day

Space 10 ft., **Reach** 10 ft.

Str 19, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 11, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 21

Skills Bluff +8, Fly +13, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Planes) +9, Perception +10, Stealth +7

Feats Iron Will, Multiattack

Languages Abyssal, Gnoll

BLACKCLAW MINIONS

Among the Blackclaw gnoll tribes, there are those who have been touched by Zalintar, often spending time in the Abyss itself. These are the captains and generals of the legions of Zalintar, and they are greater than their kin. Through unholy rites, they have been infused with the power of the Abyss, their very essence changing until they resemble demon as much as gnoll.



APPENDIX III: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

ASCENT

Aura faint transmutation; **CL** 3rd
Slot none; **Price** 19,100 gp; **Weight** 6 lbs.

This legendary +1 *battleaxe* was passed along a long line of warriors, until it vanished, along with the hero Ribalf who wielded it. While in your possession, you gain a +5 competence bonus on Acrobatics checks made to climb or jump. Additionally, for up to 10 minutes each day, you gain a climb speed of 20 and a +8 racial bonus on Climb skill checks.

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *spider climb*;
Cost 9,550 gp

BRACELET OF NEED

Aura moderate conjuration; **CL** 8th
Slot wrist; **Price** 2,600 gp; **Weight** 6 lbs.

This simple cord of leather can be used to either heal 4d8+7 points of damage or produce an effect identical to a *restoration* spell. In any event, it holds enough magic for one use only, after which it becomes nonmagical.

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *cure critical wounds*, *restoration*;
Cost 1,800 gp

HELM OF RESILIENCE

Aura moderate abjuration; **CL** 8th
Slot head; **Price** 10,360 gp; **Weight** 30 lbs.

This heavy spangenhelm is made of stone and includes cheek flaps and a full face mask worked in the likeness of a dwarven hero. It weighs 30 pounds. If you are not a dwarf, donning the helmet reduces your speed by 10.

While wearing the helm, your skin hardens, taking on a sheen like rough stone. You gain a +1 natural armor bonus to AC.

One time a day, as an immediate action, you can activate the power of the helm to gain DR 10/adamantine until the end of your next turn.

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *stoneskin*, creator must be a dwarf; **Cost** 5,180 gp

APPENDIX IV: LEADS AND CLUES

TONNA IS INVOLVED

Tonna is a villain. The leads and clues that bring the PCs into contact with her, and reveal her true nature include:

- Oga's absence means Tonna has taken up residence in her home, and is the village's most obvious source of help against this time of curse.
- The town's cemetery does not actually hold bodies.
- PCs may notice that neither Tonna nor her family exhibits any exhaustion as does the rest of the village.
- In private and when alone with outsiders, Tonna drops her facade and acts more openly and brazenly.
- Tonna and her family are the only group of four that live alone in Yroden. They number two adults and two children. The family mirrors the cultist apparitions.
- The smith Gunnald has encountered Tonna in the western woods near the old caves on numerous occasions and interrupted her with Armod and Erlend.

OLD DWARVEN CAVES

To finish the adventure, the PCs must make their way to the old dwarven caves. It doesn't actually matter if they realize they are going there to rescue Yrisa. Clues and leads pointing to the caves include:

- Almost everyone in town knows the caves exist and that children sometimes play near them.
- Alric and Gunnald have encountered Tonna near the old dwarven caves on several occasions.
- Armod and Erlend take bodies to the cave at the behest of Oga and Tonna regularly.
- Thorald knows the truth about Oga and about the caves.
- Un knows that Oga is involved in a demonic cult and that she uses the old dwarven caves for rituals.

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YRISA'S NIGHTMARE

*A 2nd-level adventure for use with
the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*

Highhouse Yroden has been cursed. Apparitions stalk the streets, gnolls lurk in the wilds, and a dragon has taken interest in the village. Yet, the curse runs deeper. Nightmares plague townsfolk's dreams and madness grips their waking minds. To make matters worse, just when she's needed most, their wise woman has left.

Yrisa's Nightmare is an adventure for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, intended for four characters of levels 2-3. In Yrisa's Nightmare, the player characters are drawn into a curse afflicting Highhouse Yroden where, to survive, they must unravel the mystery and rescue the young oracle at its center.

