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## The Desolation, Part 1: The Edge of Oblivion By Greg A. Vaughan



Perched on the verge of the war-torn wasteland known as the Oesolation stands a settlement of dire reputation. Known only as The Camp, this wretched collection of criminals and scoundrels, the desperate and the hopeless, all eking out an existence on the far fringes of civilization make this truly a place of new beginnings and horrific endings. Now things stir within the Oesolation and call to heroes seeking secrets and treasures lost to the knowledge of men. The promises of reward dare the brave and the foolish both to seek their fortune in The Camp—out on the very edge of oblivion.

# Introduction

"Many hundreds of years ago, the forces of good allied to destroy the main Temple of Orcus in the ancient city of Tsar. With their temple in ruins, the surviving priests of this accursed demon-god fled the city with an army of enemies on their tail..." - R1: Rappan Athuk, The Dungeon of Graves: Upper Level

"This world is mine!"

- Orcus, Demon Prince of Undead (ca. 10,000 years ago)

Slumbering Tsar: The Desolation is the first in a three-part series of adventures set in around the ancient, ruined temple-city of Orcus first introduced in R1: Rappan Athuk—The Dungeon of Graves: The Upper Levels. It is designed for a party of four to six 7th-level characters. Upon completion the party will be around 11th level. It consists of three parts to be released sequentially: Part 1—The Edge of Oblivion, Part 2—The Ghosts of Victory, and Part 3—The Western Front. The other adventures in the series are Slumbering Tsar: Temple-City of Orcus and Slumbering Tsar: The Hidden Citadel.

A good mix of character classes is beneficial to the successful completion of this adventure series. However, this is an extremely dangerous adventure—**characters will die**! There are several opportunities throughout the series for lost characters to be recovered, but players should be prepared for the creation of new characters if their own prove to be unrecoverable. If your players have favorite characters that they won't want to part with, it would perhaps be a good idea for them to create different characters for this adventure series.

More than just adventures, this series is a mini-campaign that can take your players' mid-level characters far on their careers, provided they survive. Each of three over-arching adventures is playable as a stand-alone module, but to truly reap all of the rewards and grasp the fullness of the threat at hand, they work best as a complete series. The adventures are set in and around the environs of the ruined templecity of Orcus known as Tsar, where a great battle was fought between the disciples of Orcus and the forces of good. The first adventure encompasses a settlement known simply as The Camp, which the party explores initially and most likely uses as its base camp during their explorations in and around the Desolation, a vast field of death and destruction left by the long-ago war. The second and third adventures in the series explore the ruins of the city of Tsar itself, the massive Citadel of Orcus within the city, and finally the hidden Caverns of the Barrier deep beneath the citadel. Each of these adventures is like the layers of an onion that the party peels back as they progress in their exploration until, finally, they reach the ultimate goal of their quest and discover the sinister and true purpose and history of this ancient redoubt of vile wickedness.

While set in a generic world, these adventure do draw on background and information presented in the *Rappan Athuk—The Dungeon of Graves* series and *Bard's Gate* by Necromancer Games as well as numerous other Necromancer Games products. Those adventures are not necessary to run this adventure or any in the series. If you would like to remove this adventure to your own campaign world entirely, you can do so with little effort by ignoring the fate of Orcus's followers and the pursuing Army of Light following the Battle of Tsar or tailoring it to fit the history of your own setting.

## Adventure Background

The northern wall of Bard's Gate looks out over a vast river valley disappearing into purple hills in the hazy distance. The mighty gates fixed in that wall rarely open anymore. On the few occasions when the north gates do open to allow entrance to the occasional merchant caravan or especially daring traveler, they reveal a wide road, paved

## A Word About Slumbering Tsar

What you have before you is the culmination of a five-year project that began as a single mega-adventure, was split into a three-adventure series, turned into three mega-adventures, got lost on a boat to China, eventually became a single pdf release, and ultimately reached the format you have now. With this in mind, a word of warning: the *Slumbering Tsar Saga* was never intended to be a serialized adventure series but rather three huge connected adventures, each a complete individual adventures in its own right. These three adventures have been divided into manageable parts for release, but you will immediately notice that each of these individual parts is not necessarily a stand-alone adventure by itself. They can be used without the others, but due to the sandbox style of the adventures, the story is not complete without at least the others from that portion of the trilogy.

It is, therefore, recommended that you obtain all the parts to an individual adventure before you begin to run that adventure for your players. Otherwise avenues for exploration may not be open, and references to other areas in the adventure may not make sense without those parts to reference. However, if you have access to all three parts of the initial adventure, *Slumbering Tsar: The Desolation*, for instance, you will be able to fully appreciate and play the possibilities presented therein while accumulating the parts for the next adventure and so on. Regardless of how you wish to organize and use the adventures, best wishes for you and your players' enjoyment.

with great stone flags forming a smooth and level traveling surface striking due north for the hills. However, closer inspection reveals the signs of a lack of maintenance, and after a few miles the road deteriorates into little more than a wide dirt track, overgrown with weeds and with only the occasional stone paver visible in the hard soil. It obviously sees little travel and even less care.

Few stand atop Bard's Gate's north wall and gaze out upon that hazy vista or care to think about what lies beyond those distant highlands. Fewer still are brave or foolish enough to make the journey in that direction. Bard's Gate relies on its commerce from other roads in other directions and pays no mind to the north, for to the north, beyond the village of Taverlan and the distant purple hills and across many leagues, lies the reminder of one of the most tragic moments in the history of the civilized kingdoms. To those who even care to remember, the north gate leads only to bad memories or mournful legend. To the rest it leads to where only madmen would dare to go—the ruined city of Tsar and the great Desolation that surrounds it.

Tsar, the great temple-city to the Demon Prince of the Undead, stood for centuries as a bastion of evil and hate. Foul beings of all kinds flocked to its mighty walls and found succor and purpose within. At its heart stood the great Citadel of Orcus, the black heart of Orcus worship on earth. Countless evils were perpetuated in those corrupt precincts, and equally countless wicked plots were hatched and carried out therein.

Finally the goodly kingdoms could stand the presence of this festering boil in their midst no longer. The churches of Thyr and Muir led a delegation of good and neutral faiths to Graeltor, the last overking. Only with the backing of the nations' secular armies would the holy churches be able to erase such a blight. In his last major pronouncement before the overthrow and fracturing of the kingdoms into the independent nations they are today, Overking Graeltor called for a mighty crusade to tear down the walls of Tsar and forever end the presence of Orcus worship in the world.

This crusader army, raised from all nations and almost every non-evil faith, became known as the Army of Light and marched for Tsar. In command of this army Graeltor placed his most trusted advisor, the archmage Zelkor. Supported by innumerable knight commanders, wizards, church patriarchs and scores of heroes of renown, Zelkor quickly advanced his army from its staging ground of Bard's Gate, through Tsar's outermost defensive positions and into the great plain that surrounded the temple-city itself. Flush with their many quick victories, the Army of Light suddenly found arrayed against itself seemingly endless legions of every sort of vile warrior-race and fell outsider imaginable called up from all over the multiverse and lining the battlements and fields before their redoubt—one of the greatest fortresses and citadels ever erected in that time. The beginnings of doubt seeped into the ranks of the Army of Light.

However, hope was not lost as the heavens opened up and flight upon flight of angels and celestial beings descended from on high to swell the ranks of the Army of Light. With grim determination in both camps, battle was joined on the plain before the gates of Tsar. The war raged for over a year, the Army of Light advancing to the very foot of the walls and then being pushed back by a new surge of demonic power. The disciples of Orcus led by the Grand Cornu, Orcus's single highest-ranking priest on the mortal planes, threw every vile attack they could at the Army of Light in defense of their city. Rains of horrific fire and acid fell from the skies or belched from fissures in the ground, great constructs crushed their foes before them, terrible clouds of poisonous gas choked entire regiments, and heretofore unknown plagues swept through the troops causing thousands of horrible deaths among the Army of Light. Nevertheless the forces of good persevered and fought on.

Finally, though the battle seemed no closer to victory, the fates seemed to smile on the Army of Light. Unexpectedly the city fell. In a single night the entire city virtually emptied of defenders as they all were magically transported to a point several miles outside the city's walls, complete with baggage train and mounts for many. The magical expenditure necessary to complete this miraculous maneuver cost the Grand Cornu his very life in sacrifice to Orcus, but the legions of the demon prince had broken free from the Army of Light's cordon. They immediately took flight before the stunned Army of Light, heading south.

Zelkor and his fellow commanders were immediately suspicious of this sudden retreat but could not afford to allow the combined followers of Orcus concentrated in one place to escape and spread their insidious evil again. A cursory sweep of the city by scouts proved that the withdrawal was no ruse, so Zelkor left one of his most powerful knights, the paladin Lord Bishu, with a company of knights to secure the citadel and hold it until the Army of Light could return and properly destroy it. Then, still with a seed of doubt niggling in his mind, Zelkor ordered the Army of Light in pursuit of the fleeing legions.

The tale of that long pursuit is an epic in and of itself. Finally the Army of Light cornered the forces of darkness in a forest near a rugged coastline. In anticipation of a great victory, the forest was prematurely named the Forest of Hope. The naming proved to be a cruel irony, for in the forest the followers of Orcus had been preparing a great trap for years in case just such an occasion ever arose. Both armies disappeared into the forest. Neither ever emerged. The Army of Light was lost to a man.

The shock of the loss of so many heroes, nobles, and leaders of renown reverberated throughout the kingdoms. The overking was overthrown in the unrest that followed. Minor wars erupted as new factions took over old power bases bereft of their leadership. When all was done and a semblance of peace returned, the lands looked much more like they do today. Some said the loss of so many was worth it for the eradication of the foul cult of Orcus. Others said it had been a scheme concocted by the demon prince all along to destroy his most powerful enemies and sow hate and dissension throughout the civilized nations. Years later when a terrible graveyard and thriving dungeon complex devoted to Orcus was discovered in the Forest of Hope, popular opinion agreed with the latter theory. It seemed Orcus had not been eradicated after all, just relocated, and once again his insidious evil began to spread throughout the lands.

For the past century some attention has been turned to delving into the so-called Dungeon of Graves and rooting out the evil now entrenched there. That complex is detailed in the Necromancer Games adventure Rappan Athuk Reloaded. However, what remained of the temple-city of Tsar was a vast, abandoned ruin surrounded by miles and miles of poisoned and scarred wasteland left behind by the battling armies. It was all but forgotten as a bad memory of despair with no value save as an eyesore and wilderness home for strange and fearsome beasts that moved into the desolate area. The knights of Lord Bishu, left behind at Tsar, were likewise forgotten as they, too, were never heard from again. In the wake of the great tragedy at the Forest of Hope, no one thought to check into the ruins themselves, and all who knew about this relatively small group that had been sent to the city had perished in Orcus's trap. The people of the civilized nations went on with their lives with, perhaps, a little less hope and optimism than before. Tsar was forgotten, and the land around it shunned and remembered only as the Desolation

While the rest of the world looked southwards for the future. some few remembered the distant exotic markets of the far north. Those brave or foolish enough to try reopened the trade road that passed through the Desolation to once again reach those far lands. Those that survived such treks and were able to trade the rare items they brought back made fortunes, but most who attempted the dangerous passage died-lost to the hazards of the Desolation. Eventually a small settlement of cutthroats and the worst kind of profiteering entrepreneurs sprang up on the southern fringe of the Desolation. This hole-in-the-wall known simply as the Camp serves as a staging ground for travelers to hire mercenary guards or fast mounts for the perilous run through the Desolation. Likewise it serves as a point of relative safety for those few managing to make it through from the north with or without goods in tow, often with denizens of the Desolation in hot pursuit. There is little to this unruly, fringe settlement, and many meet their fates on its dirty streets without ever making it to the Desolation. Regardless, it manages to just barely eke out an existence serving as a stopping point for those few travelers who dare to make the run.

Now no one but these miscreants and fortune-seekers pay any attention to the area and then only so they can pass through the Desolation as quickly and safely as possible. The temple-city's ruins are universally avoided and little thought of. Why would anyone wish to go to almost certain death? What could still exist in the unknown holes and broken towers of Orcus's greatest earthly bastion? What could lie undisturbed, awaiting some possibly preordained time to awake in the ruins of slumbering Tsar?

## Adventure Summary

The adventure begins as the party arrives in the Camp and gets a taste of the regions deadly nature from a run-in with a local guide just returned from an unsuccessful mission into the Desolation. While dealing with the local inhabitants and arranging accommodations, the party also gathers information about the Desolation and the perils to be found there. They can contract with various locals for advice or guidance in navigating the hostile terrain that is the Desolation. Some of these locals are helpful, but some are in league with the menaces that now inhabit the arid wasteland and instead attempt to lead the party into traps or ambushes. In addition, the party begins having fleeting encounters with a strange midnight peddler who gives them cryptic clues about the Desolation and the haunted temple-city.

Eventually in *Part 2—The Ghosts of Victory* and *Part 3—The Western Front,* the party begins making forays into the dead lands of the Desolation following leads given to them by contacts in the Camp or perhaps even the midnight peddler himself as they attempt to get an idea of the lay of land and the dangers they will face. Many small side quests present themselves as they continue to probe the mysterious interior of the wasteland, returning to the Camp as needed to rest and resupply. This is the bulk of adventure, the various chapters dividing up the major encounter areas. Finally when the party has gained levels and power sufficient to do so, they travel to the very walls of the ruined city to face the guardian there, a great tar dragon blocking entry into the temple precincts. There the first adventure ends as the party is finally able to attempt entry into the city beyond. That portion is covered in the next adventure in the series, *Slumbering Tsar: Temple-City of Orcus.* 

## Adventure Hooks

There are myriad reasons why a party of adventurers might come to this locale to test themselves against the challenges that await.

- 1. To Boldly Go: The Desolation is a largely ignored and unexplored wasteland where two massive armies virtually smashed themselves to pieces. Those who have braved its depths have hurriedly passed through studiously ignoring the battleground around them and the ruined city it surrounds. Surely something of value remains to be gleaned from such a cataclysmic conflict of old. In this instance, the party, having gained enough power to attempt it, can be one of the few to have ever tried plumbing the great unknown that is the Desolation. Most have deemed it too dangerous or devoid of anything of value, but there are always legends of some great knight who fell on the battlefield clutching his powerful sword that was never recovered or some powerful wizard whose mighty staff disappeared in the melee and must still be lying out there somewhere. Perhaps the party just wants to be the first to have successfully braved the farthest corners of the Desolation and lived to tell of it. Parties of a less lawful bent might be interested in the rumors of burial mounds that were erected for noble warriors who fell in battle and were interred with portions of their riches.
- 2. Trail Blazers: A party of this level has many connections gained over their career. One of these, a merchant-lord and sometimes patron of their expeditions, has his eye on the lucrative trade of the distant north. There are fortunes to be made but the risks and expense are too great to make caravans through the Desolation worthwhile. However, if a party of proven adventurers could tame the area and open a safe trade route, a monopoly on the new route could be established and a fortune made by all. Maybe he wants someone to clear the monsters out of the Desolation altogether, or perhaps he just wants a safe route to be found that can easily be controlled and kept secret. Either way such an endeavor has never been successfully accomplished, but if the right group could be persuaded to undertake the task...

- **3. Land Grant:** Rewards come in many forms to parties of successful adventurers, not always just heaps of gold and magic items. For the successful completion of a recent mission a king has bestowed upon a member of the party noble title and grant to land at the farthest flung reaches of his holdings. The land just so happens to be in the Desolation. The party must come to the Desolation to try and not only bring order to the Camp but tame the wilds of the Desolation as well in order to establish their fiefdom. A variation on this theme is that a newly ennobled baron has just received such a grant and needs to hire a party of adventurers to reclaim his lands for him. Perhaps minor titles and land grants await them if they are successful.
- **4. Save the Forest:** If the party is of a more naturalist demeanor (druids, rangers, barbarians, etc.) they could come to the Desolation in order to erase the centuries-old blight from the lands. Common wisdom says that surely some source of evil taint remains to keep the land corrupted, so if such a taint were discovered and removed the forces of Nature could begin their process of rehabilitating the accursed ground. Players following this track could have some interesting interactions with the Reclaimers at Area A5.
- Sleepless Knights: A cleric of Muir has located in the temple archives a set of orders issued by Zelkor during the Battle of Tsar that somehow survived and were transported back to civilized lands. These orders detail the assignment of the paladin lord Bishu and his company, adherents to the faith of Muir, to hold the city of Tsar and await relief from the Army of Light. Lord Bishu was always thought lost in the Dungeon of Graves like the rest of the Army of Light. The fact that he never returned and the possibility that he or some of his command may have survived for some time at Tsar holding to their duty has ignited the church hierarchy. What did Bishu accomplish during his time in the city? Do his bones, surely now sacred relics of the church, still rest there awaiting repatriation? Could he or any of his knights somehow by the grace of the gods have survived all the intervening span of years and man their posts still awaiting relief? The church cannot afford to send any of its own on a possibly foolhardy mission into unknown danger with only a small hope of success, but adventuring parties are often to known to undertake such assignments.
- 6. Sinister Secrets: Zelkor was not the only one suspicious of the disciples' sudden withdrawal from the city after the Battle of Tsar. The record of that event is well-known and has been pondered by many since that day. Was it all just to trap to destroy the Army of Light at Rappan Athuk? If so why not reoccupy Tsar, a vast and defensible temple-city along a lucrative trade route, instead of settling for a dingy hole in the ground in some far flung forest. Could the entire withdrawal and debacle in the Forest of Hope have been a ruse within ruse to draw attention away from seemingly abandoned Tsar for some other, altogether unguessed reason? Questions such as these and more have been on the minds of the patriarchs of the temples of Thyr and Muir for some time. Now they wish to send in a small group to infiltrate the unplumbed ruins and discover what sinister secret may have been kept so well for so long. This hook works well with parties of a noble or holy content. It could also be used in conjunction with Adventure Hook 5 above.

## **DM** Notes

This module, and in fact the entire series, are designed to provide the players with great freedom in where they go and what they do. Familiarize yourself with the entire adventure including the NPCs and their motivations. Many of the seemingly friendly NPCs and potential allies have nefarious connections with various encounter areas. These NPCs and the many clues and encounters can guide the players in what directions they might go, but allow them to make their own choices. Don't be afraid to let foolish players suffer for poor decisions if they get in over their heads, but if innocent mistakes or unlucky roles are to blame you might allow a well-played party the opportunity to withdraw from overwhelming encounters (if they are wise enough to do so).

#### INTRODUCTION

As the party progresses through the various encounter areas, allow them to add experience points and level up if applicable whenever they stop to camp or rest for any significant period of time. A good way to adjudicate this is to allow let them add their experience points to their characters any time they stop long enough for the spellcasters to regain their spells. The encounters in the adventure grow increasingly difficult, and the party will need those levels and the added abilities in order to defeat the tar dragon in the adventure's final encounter. However, the encounters in the adventure can be played in any order the characters see fit even if they come face to face with opponents who are too powerful for them. As mentioned earlier, characters are likely to die and opportunities to recover those characters or introduce replacement characters have been written into the adventure. Regardless of the order that the encounters are run, the tar dragon bars entrance to the temple-city covered in the next adventure, so it is necessary for the party to overcome or avoid it somehow if they wish to proceed with the series.

# Chapter 1: The Camp

Regardless of the party's reason for coming to this godsforsaken corner of the world, they are likely to know some or all of the history of the area before they arrive. Anyone native to the lands around Bard's Gate or from lands allied with the great trade city knows at least a general overview of the events described in the Adventure Background. Depending on the party's purpose for coming to the region, as mentioned in the Adventure Hooks in the Introduction or one of your own devising, they know as much or as little as you see fit to reveal beyond the well-known legends of the great battle and epic pursuit. If you wish to make the players earn their information, require them to have their characters make Knowledge (history), Diplomacy, or bardic knowledge rolls, and then reveal information based on the success of their efforts. These rolls can signify the research done by the characters around Bard's Gate and other localities in preparation for their journey to the Desolation. A check for one of the above skills succeeding at a DC 25 or above is worthy of having the Adventure Background read to them verbatim.

The adventure assumes that the characters are traveling from the known lands to the south and arrive at the Camp on the fringes of the Desolation before actually entering that hostile territory. This gives them an opportunity to get their bearings, gather information and make their plans before jumping straight into the encounters. However, this "downtime" is not without its perils as the party quickly discovers the inimical nature that exists within the inhabitants of the Camp themselves. This chapter details encounter areas in the Camp. The next chapter deals with events that occur while the party is visiting the settlement.

The Camp exists at the edge of civilization, on the very brink of the Desolation's southern edge. The ancient trade road, now little used, runs directly through the Camp and on into the Desolation itself. The Camp gained its name from its origins as being little more than a stopover spot near a good well to prepare for a run across the Desolation or to recover from such a run. When a permanent settlement sprang up, it retained the name since its function really hadn't changed. The locale consists mainly of stony, hard-packed soil that barely supports the few garden plots grown by the Camp's inhabitants. The one notable exception to this is the garden at Area 9 which thrives with a strange fecundity for some unknown reason. A few stunted trees and scrub brush grow in the area, but not enough to qualify as any actual woodland. Most that were within easy walking distance of the Camp have been used for fuel. The climate is arid and warm, getting hot in the dry depths of summer. However, when winter winds howl down from the north without any foliage to serve as windbreaks, the temperature plummets to well below freezing and can remain there for weeks at a time. It is during these months that the population of the Camp diminishes as the folk abandon the inhospitable place or die of exposure. It is also during this season that dust storms are prone to sweep in off the Desolation dropping up to 2 feet of sediment and forcing everyone to stay under cover as much as possible. For the purposes of this adventure assume that the party has arrived in the calm months of late spring and early summer before the worst of the heat has arrived. This corresponds to the wet season, though rainfall is always sporadic at best. Only occasionally do the wadis of the Desolation fill with flash floods. If you prefer to set the adventure in some other season, feel free to adjust the descriptions accordingly.

The Camp is a sprawling cluster of crude shanties and dilapidated hovels. The standard materials for most of these buildings are pieces of plywood scavenged off of crates and wagons, broken branches and sticks, thatch, sod turves, some fieldstones, and copious amounts of mud. Many of the structures are little more than lean-tos. All are in poor condition due to the laziness and apathy of their current occupants and are held together by little more than spit and good luck. A

## The Camp

**The Camp (Hamlet):** Nonstandard (Modified Anarchy); AL CN; 100 gp limit; Assets 1,750 gp; Population 355; Mixed (68% human, 10% orc or half-orc, 6% dwarf, 5% goblinoid, 3% halfling, 3% gnome, 2% elf or half-elf, 2% other races, 1% giant).

Authority Figure: The Usurer, male lich Wiz11/Exp5 (moneychanger and blacksmith)

*Important Characters:* The Bender Brothers, male gnomes Rog6/Asn3 (landlords); Clantock, male half-orc Ftr8/ Rog3 (mercenary captain); Father Death, male hobgoblin Clr8 (Nerull); Finnelaus, male elf Bbn6 (livery master); Griswald, male ghast (undertaker); Lucky Bjorc Balsam, male orc Exp10 (tavern keeper); Mama Grim, swamp hag (apothecary); Sammar, male human Brd4/Ari1 (diplomatic agent); Simon, male half-elf Mnk7 (hermit); Skeribar, male human Rgr10 (guide)

*Others:* Rgr5 (x7); Clr3 (x2); Ftr1 (x5); Rog4 (x3); War5 (x3); War4 (x18); War2 (x3); War1 (x21); Adp1 (x4); Exp3 (x10); Exp2 (x12); Exp1 (x36); Com3 (x16); Com2 (x41); Com1 (x161).

truly hard windstorm (thankfully rare south of the Desolation) could flatten most of the dwellings, and a heavy rain would cause many of them to simply melt.

The folk of the Camp lead an indolent existence spending most of their time sitting around making great plans to get ahead (usually at another's expense) but taking action only to do the bare minimum effort necessary in order to survive. Most that come here are vagrants, hopeless ne'er-do-wells, or the criminally insane, so there is very little sense of community. They do come together in order to thwart any immediate threats to the town's survival, though their uncooperative and chaotic attitude makes these efforts somewhat ineffective at times. This is the Camp's third incarnation, the preceding two both having been utterly destroyed by raids from the creatures of the Desolation in centuries past. Fortunately these raids come only rarely, as the Desolation's denizens are usually content to stick to their own ground. Each time the Camp is destroyed, however, another trickle of vagabonds and ruthless profiteers comes back to the area and starts over, picking up the pieces left by the previous inhabitants.

During the day, the inhabitants of the Camp can be encountered out and about by the party using The Camp Random Encounter Table Below. Otherwise, the characters have to visit an individuals abode to have the opportunity to meet them. At night, no one is out as explained under Area 1 below.

The Camp is unofficially run by the Usurer, see Area 7 below. As the hamlet's moneychanger, blacksmith, and arguably the most powerful individual, he sets customs that the rest go along with. One of these rules is that the inhabitants only deal in the town's own currency, iron coins minted by the Usurer himself which are known as "bits" or "iron bits". This is explained further in his section, but all of the townsfolk strictly adhere to this regulation and refer newcomers to him to purchase currency. They support this convention because it comes out to their own great advantage economically.

The closest settlement of any size to the Camp is the free city of Bard's Gate that lies hundreds of miles to the south (the exact distance is left to what works best for your campaign. If you wish to allow the PCs to travel to such a center of civilization to rest or resupply, its specifics are included in the following sidebox. For a more detailed treatment see *Bard's Gate* by Necromancer Games.

## Bard's Gate

**Bard's Gate (Large City or Metropolis):** Conventional, Nonstandard, and Magical; AL CG; 80,000 gp limit; Assets 10,000,000 gp; Population 25,000; Integrated (39% human, 8% halfling, 12% elf, 12% dwarf, 5% gnome, 20% half-elf, 3% half-orc, 1% other).

Authority Figure: Cylyria, NG female half-elf Brd13 (elected high burgess); Imril, LG male human Pal9 (Captain of the Lyreguard); Jared Strann, NG male human Clr9 [Oghma] (High Priest of Oghma); Duloth, NE male human Ftr5/Rog5 (head of the Wheelwright's Guild and the Black Market)

*Important Characters:* Bofred the Just, LG male human Clr9 [Thyr] (high priest of Thyr); Barahil the Faithful, LG male human Clr6/Pal2 [Muir] (high priest of Muir); Lauriann Danyr, NG female half-elf Brd7 (head of Bard's College); Andrigor, NG male human Wiz12 (diviner and member of the Fellowship of Note); etc.

Provided below is a list of rumors that can be obtained through use of Gather Information or Knowledge (local) checks while in the settlement. A check should be made each time a character asks a specific question to see if he is able to learn the information related to his query. Checks should also be made when the characters are interacting with the townsfolk while fishing for information in general. Have them make their check and select a rumor from the highest level at which their roll was successful. Characters can make 1d3 of these general checks per day spent in the Camp. Each encounter area also provides information that can be obtained from that particular location through Diplomacy or Intimidate checks.

#### DC 10:

"The only place to stay in the Camp is the boarding house. It's run by the Bender Brothers, a coupla' gnomes. They serve meals also, though you can get those at the Sip O'Blood, too." This is largely true, though a secretly rolled Sense Motive (DC 20) detects that there is more to it than is being told. If pressed the speaker can give no further information, because he or she truly doesn't "know" anything more. There are only suspicions as to what truly goes on there.

"The guy in charge of the Camp is the Usurer. I'm not sure what that word means, but it sounds official. He's also the local moneychanger and blacksmith. Some people say he doesn't sleep but just sits around all night thinking up new ways to make money." This is mostly true.

"Don't cheat at cards while you're in the Camp. Leastwise not unless you can whip everyone else whose playing. The last feller who done it is still swinging in the breeze." True (see Area 1 of The Camp).

"You can't use gold or silver in the Camp. You've got to go to the moneychanger and trade it in for 'bits', coins made out of iron. That's all that will spend here." True.

"Need supplies or other such things? The place to go is the Celestial Emporium. It was established by angels and has heavenly prices (spoken in true used car salesman fashion). Need armor or weapons? Talk to the Usurer. Need horses? Finn's Livery. A cold drink or a bit o' company? Head on down to the Sip of Blood Tavern." Mostly true (except for the bit about the Emporium).

"Don't go out on the Desolation. There's no better way to get dead." Definitely a possibility.

"The Ashen Waste is a desert hellhole of choking dust and evil spirits. If you die there your soul wanders forever without finding rest." The first part is true.

"The Dead Fields get their name from the bones of the dead that are stacked like cordwood across the whole plain. Sometimes they get up and walk." True.

#### DC 15:

"If you're looking for a guide to take you out in the wastes, nobody knows it better than Skeribar and his men. They charge steep, but they come home alive so that counts for something." True, but there is, of course, more to the story (see Area 9 of The Camp).

"Nobody goes out much at night here in the Camp. People that do tend to disappear. I think it's the doings of that death church myself, but don't tell 'em I said so. I don't want them coming after me. Funny thing is, anyone who stays inside is usually alright, even if it's just in a tent or a lean-to." True about the disappearances but wrong about the reasons. See Area 1 of The Camp for details.

"If you travel the roads of the Desolation at night, you're sure to run into the Lost Caravan...all that's left of the unluckiest merchants to ever try to cross the wastes. You'll see and hear strange things that can't be explained, but that's okay. Just step aside and let 'em pass, and more than likely they'll go on by, though a few people do disappear. Those that bother them, though, are doomed to join their cursed journey forever." Mostly true.

"If you're hurt or sick and need help, go see Mama Grim. She'll fix you right up. Just don't feed the goblin bears." Very true.

"Them gnomes that run the boarding house are twins. Most folks can't tell 'em apart. Heck I've never seen them both at the same time... maybe there's only one of them just pretending to be two..." False. There are actually three gnome brothers. See "Camp Hospitality" in Chapter 2.

"The catfish aren't alive, they're undead. And they're coming for us...oh yes, they're definitely coming for us." This guy is obviously insane.

"The Sip of Blood Tavern is run by a vampire. His name's Lucky Bjorc and drinking other people's blood is how he stays so lucky. I'd stay away from the sangria if I were you." Not even close. Also they don't serve sangria at the tavern.

"Gurg the hill giant used to run the best protection service in town. Looks like those Bard's Gaters are the last fee he'll ever collect. I wonder if his ogres did in the whole lot of them out in the middle of the Desolation." False.

"A fellow passed through here a few months ago heading out to the Desolation. He looked familiar to me from my days as a bandi...er, I mean merchant. Yeah, that's it, a merchant. Anyway, this guy was dangerous. He's wanted in several cities, and I'm sure there's a nice reward for him." True, this refers to the bandit lord at Area C7 of The Chaos Rift in the Desolation. A DC 17 Intimidation check on this informer can ring out of him that the bandit's name is Bartileus, the Butcher of Eamonvale.

"Past the crossroads are the Boiling Fields and the Chaos Rift, lands so tortured by evil magic that they no longer even look like part of the earth." True.

#### DC 20:

"A strange peddler comes through town from time to time. He's the only one I've heard of that seems to be able to cross the Desolation without trouble. He only sells to people he chooses, and it's said that those who buy his wares receive good luck." True.

"That hermit in the bark tent don't ever come out in the daytime. He's a vampire I tell ya'. He's come to kill Lucky Bjorc for stealing his bar:" Completely false.

"My pappy warned me not tangle with Old Death in his hollow. His breath brings stony death." This is true, though it stems from local legend rather than any firsthand knowledge. The speaker does not know who or what Old Death is or where his hollow lies.

"Nobody ever goes to the old ruins of Tsar and lives to tell of it. They

say its walls are still guarded by the ancient defenders who kill anyone who comes within a bowshot. How would I know if nobody who went ever survived to come back and tell? Well, I hadn't really thought about that..." This is largely true, though it is mainly just guesses.

"When the winds blow hard through the Chaos Rift it means a gate to Hell has opened and that something very bad is about to come out." This is not true but does touch on some of the unique properties of the rift.

"An army lies asleep beneath the Desolation ready to awake and complete the destruction of Tsar." This is an exaggeration of the actual situation at Area A4 of the Ashen Waste in the Desolation.

#### DC 25:

"I'm not surprised Gurg is dead. I think Clantock was trying to do him in. Gurg and his bunch were running Clantock and his mercenaries out of business. I saw Clantock myself consorting with some winged devil outside of town one day. When they were done talking that devil took off and flew out into the Desolation. Clantock didn't see me and it's none of my business. I just think it's strange, that's all." This is true. The devil was actually a spitting gargoyle (see Area 14 of The Camp and Area C6 of The Chaos Rift in The Desolation).

"The Usurer's in charge of the Camp because he was here first. No one alive was around when he came here. He's a lot older than he looks." True, he's a lich (see Area 7 of The Camp).

"There's something alive at the crossroads. It only appears at the stroke of midnight. It can grant you your every desire, but the price is steep. Don't bargain with the thing that comes in the night at the crossroads if you value your soul." This is fairly close to the truth (see Area R1 for details).

"Don't camp at the crossroads out in the Desolation. There's still a lot of restless spirits who haunt that road leading to the Black Gates, and they don't take kindly to visitors." False, though there are dangers other than restless spirits to contend with.

"There's something out there in the Desolation that hunts in the night. It devours travelers and even comes to the Camp sometimes in its hunts. It looks like a giant wolf, and seeing it means your death!" True, this refers to the greater barghest at Area B3 of The Boiling Lands in The Desolation.

## DC 30: (If they roll this high, the characters are getting the really good stuff)

"Want to know why the rangers' garden grows so good. The answer is blood. I'm not kiddin', and I don't touch those tomaters they sell at the Emporium." This is chillingly true (see Area A5 of The Ashen Waste in The Desolation for more information).

"The say what really caused the Desolation was the death of a god. I don't know who it was, but if that's true the place is a whole lot worse than just some zombies and monsters wandering around." This is actually largely true. More information is detailed in later adventures in this series.

"The last living Justicar of Muir died in the Battle of Tsar and is buried out in the Desolation. Anyone who locates his tomb and helps him finish an uncompleted task will gain a powerful boon from the gods." True. See Area C8 of The Ashen Waste in The Desolation.

"There's a lich out there somewhere in the Desolation, and the Usurer wants it dead. If anyone destroys the lich, the Usurer will surely reward him greatly." This is true. The Usurer is aware that there is another lich in the Desolation and is uncomfortable with the presence of another being of such power dwelling so close. Anyone who brings him the phylactery of a lich (and he certainly knows how to recognize one) is rewarded with 10,000 gp (actual gold!) and a Friendly attitude from him in future dealings. (See Area D6 of The Dead Fields in The Desolation for more information).

"There are many secrets of Tsar and the Desolation, but the key to all of them lies with the bell of the old citadel, if you can find it." This is largely true and is explained in more detail in *Slumbering Tsar: The Hidden Citadel*.

## The Camp Random Encounter Table

Anytime the player characters are out and about in the Camp during the day or even inside at a public place (such as The Celestial Emporium – Area 2 or The Sip of Blood Tavern – Area 6), roll on the table below to determine what Campies they may encounter. Roll as often or as little as you like in order to move the players through the adventure at the pace that best suits your tastes. If you roll an individual who has been killed or is already present, either reroll or treat it as no encounter. For generic Campies, choose a race from those in "The Camp" sidebar" above.

Roll 2d12	Encounter		
2	Lincounter		
3	Skeribar and Redtooth (Area 9)		
3	1d6 merchants, Com3, from the		
	Celestial Emporium (Area 2)		
4-5	Lucky Bjorc Balsam (Area 6)		
6-9	1d6 Campies, Com2, going about their		
	daily business		
10	Skeribar and 1d3 rangers (Area 9)		
11	The Usurer (Area 7)		
12	Father Death and 1 acolyte (Area 10)		
13	Griswald (Area 15) tending to the		
	body of a recently deceased Campie		
14	Jeblie or Jashanah Bender (Area 11)		
15	1d4 rangers with war dogs (Area 9)		
16	Finnelaus (Area 4)		
17	Mama Grim and 1 goblin bear (Area 13)		
18-19	Drunk Campie, Com1, sleeping		
	off a binge		
20	Clantock and 2d4 mercenaries (Area 14)		
21	Simon the Hermit (Area 3)		
22	Pickpocket, Rog4, plying his trade		
	(+11 Sleight of Hand)		
23	<b>1d4 mercenaries</b> (Area 14)		
24	1d2 barmaids (Area 6) on break		

## Keyed Areas of The Camp

Following are the numbered locations found on the map of the Camp. Each entry gives a description of the location as well as the NPCs to be found there. It also includes the information that can be gleaned through interaction with the NPCs at that location. Feel free to add additional keyed areas with interesting NPCs to liven up the PCs visit.

## I. The Common (CR 5)

This hard-packed dirt yard serves as the central focus of the hamlet. Its main feature is a bent, old gallows, crudely constructed and leaning with age. Dangling from this by a frayed rope is a desiccated corpse, its broken neck askew and its leathery face frozen into a rictus grin beneath empty eye sockets. Occasionally crows alight to peck at it. Nailed to its breast is a sign bearing the word "Cheater."



Anyone going anywhere eventually passes through the Common, and several of the camp's prominent buildings and businesses open directly onto it. During the day there is usually some traffic as the inhabitants go about their daily lives. Refer to The Camp Random Encounter Table to determine who may be present. At night no one ventures onto the Common as explained below.

Creature: The unfortunate upon the gallows committed the ultimate sin in the Camp some time ago. A rogue out of Bard's Gate, it was not the cheating at dice that did him in, it was getting caught and not being able to outfight those he was fleecing. Campies (as the locals are known) respect brute power if nothing else. He was subsequently dragged out of the tavern and lynched. None have come to take him down because of a peculiarity that followed. His angry spirit refused to depart his corpse and he became a form of undead known as a **hanged man**. During the day he is inactive, content to dangle from his yardarm. At night he descends and stalks the settlement, bent neck and dragging his frayed rope, looking for anyone foolish enough to be out wandering around. However, he does not enter dwellings, not even flimsy lean-tos, in his nightly prowls. His daily acquiescence and nightly restrictions are largely enforced by the will of the Usurer whom he fears above all else. No one comes out and explains this situation to the PCs other than through the hints provided in the Rumors section.

#### ADVANCED HANGED MAN

XP 1,600 Advanced HD hanged man *(The Tome of Horrors II 91)* Medium undead Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+1 Dex, +7 natural) hp 49 (9d8+4) Fort +7; Ref +6; Will +3 Immune undead traits

Spd 30 ft. Melee 2 claws +11 (1d4+5) Ranged rope +8 touch (entangle) Special Attacks drag

Str 20, Dex 13, Con —, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 13 Base Atk +6; CMB +11 (+16 drag); CMD 22 Feats Ability Focus (entangle), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (rope) Skills Climb +14 (+24 with rope), Escape Artist +3, Perception +12, Stealth +15 Languages Common (cannot speak)

**Drag (Ex)** If the hanged man entangles a foe with his rope attack, it drags its opponent 10 feet closer as a standard action on each subsequent round that it succeeds on a CMB check (including a +5 racial bonus) without provoking attacks of opportunity. When an opponent is dragged within 5 feet, the hanged man can attack with both of its claws in the same round. It gains a +4 attack bonus against opponents entangled in its rope.

**Entangle (Su)** The hanged man's noose is a 20-ft. length of rope that entangles opponents of any size as an animate rope spell (CL 15th, DC 21). A hanged man can lash its rope outward 20 feet with no range penalty. The rope functions only for the hanged man it belongs to and no other. It has AC 22, hardness 10, hp 10, and DR 5/slashing. If the rope is severed, both it and the hanged man are destroyed. The save DC is Strength-based.

**Tactics:** When he hunts at night, the hanged man attempts drag victims with his rope back to the gallows and string them from the crossbeam to slowly suffocate. Each round that the hanged man successfully drags someone or manages to lift them off the ground at the gallows (requiring two rounds with successful drags to throw the rope over the crosspiece and haul the victim up), that individual is unable to breath. See the "Suffocation" section in Chapter 13 of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game. The creature remains inert during the daytime unless he is attacked or someone attempts to take him down. He then clambers atop the crossbeam and proceeds to attack as described above.

**Old Wooden Gallows:** 8 in. thick post, 10 ft. high; Hardness 5; hp 80; Break (DC 25); Climb (DC 20, 15 if using the rope).

## 2. The Celestial Emporium (CR varies)

This strange market consists of dozens of tarps and coverings supported at random places and angles by crooked or poorly repaired poles. This results in a haphazard tangle of poles at all angles and awnings at all heights creating a shadowy maze punctuated by bright shafts of sunlight streaming through gaps. Within the hot, musty interior are simple tables and stalls set up to display wares.

This grandiosely named place is nothing more than the Camp's pitiful attempt at a marketplace for anyone in the Camp who fancies himself an entrepreneur. Just enough trade and scavenging occurs

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within the Camp to provide any items in the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game that fall within the hamlet's gold piece limit. However, any items purchased here are of uniformly low quality and battered condition, not to mention dubious means of acquisition. Prices are standard, though DC 25 Diplomacy or Intimidate checks reduce the price to 75%. Of course, all transactions with the merchants must be made in the settlements own iron bits. Anyone without such coinage is directed to the Usurer at Area 7. Roll on the Random Encounter Table to determine what townsfolk are present here on any given day.

## 3. The Hermit (CR 6)

A simple wickiup of tree bark stands by itself here showing signs of greater care and attention than found elsewhere in town.

**Creature:** This is the abode of a local figure known only as the Hermit. He keeps to himself emerging only for occasional supplies and exercise routines at the edge of the Desolation east of the settlement. If approached, he is cautious at first but quickly warms up to an obviously good or lawful party. The interior of the wickiup holds only a simple fire pit, a reed sleeping mat, a small cabinet holding food and homemade cooking and eating utensils, and a battered old backpack holding his few possessions.

SIMON THE HERMIT XP 2,400 Male half-elf monk 7 LG Medium humanoid (elf) Init +4; Senses low-light vision; Perception +16

AC 20, touch 20, flat-footed 20 (+1 class, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 Wis)

**hp** 56 (7d8+14 plus 7)

Fort +7; Ref +9; Will +9 (+13 enchantment)

**Defensive Abilities** evasion, purity of body, slow fall 30 ft., still mind; **Immune** disease, sleep

#### Spd 50 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +7 (1d8+5) or flurry of blows +7/+7/+2 (1d8+5), or +1 flaming quarterstaff +6 (1d6+3 plus 1d6 fire) and +1 frost quarterstaff +6 (1d6+2 plus 1d6 cold)

Special Attacks ki pool (7 points), stunning fist 7/day (stun or fatigue, DC 17)

**Str** 15, **Dex** 19, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 11 **Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +7 (+9 trip); **CMD** 27 (29 vs. trip)

**Feats** Acrobatic, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows<sup>B</sup>, Dodge<sup>B</sup>, Improved Trip<sup>B</sup>, Improved Unarmed Strike<sup>B</sup>, Skill Focus (Acrobatics)<sup>B</sup>, Snatch Arrows, Stunning Fist<sup>B</sup>, Two-Weapon Fighting

**Skills** Acrobatics +19 (+26 jump), Climb +12, Fly +6, Perception +16, Sense Motive +14, Stealth +14

Languages Common, Elven, Terran

**SQ** elf blood, fast movement, high jump, wholeness of body **Gear** +1 *flaming/+1 frost quarterstaff*, pouch with 47 iron bits

*Personality:* Simon is an outcast in every since of the word. Born unwanted into a human family as a half-breed, he was given to a

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CR6

monastery to be raised. Upon reaching maturity, he was turned out from the monastery to fend for himself with few social skills or abilities to get along in the wide world. Eventually wandering here, he obviously did not fit in with the typical Campie. However, he did find a certain solace here at the edge of the world, so to speak, so he decided to stay. He keeps to himself having little interaction with the other villagers and has little cause to raise their ire. He is mostly simply ignored. Finding kindred spirits causes him to open up, and the party can gain his confidence with relative ease.

Simon is intended to be a potential substitute for a player character lost elsewhere in the adventure. He can be taken as is and given to the player, or you can insert another character of your own devising into his place in the adventure and adjust his history as necessary. Regardless, whoever resides here is intended to be a potential ally to the party. In addition to general rumors about the Camp he knows the following information and can relate it to the party.

"Don't trust the mercenaries and guides you can hire in the Camp. I think all of them harbor secrets and agendas that come before those they have been hired to protect. Ironically, I think the giants were the most trustworthy of the lot, though I fear we have probably seen the last of them." True. Simon has picked up these assumptions merely through quiet observation of those around him. He is a remarkable judge of character.

"I've seen giant wolf tracks at the outskirts of the Camp. One night there were screams. The next morning I found a shack at the edge of town smashed and splattered with blood. The wolf tracks were there." True. These are traces of the greater barghest, Tlolox, when he hunts (see Area B3 of The Boiling Lands in The Desolation).

## 4. Finn's Livery (CR 5)

An adobe house in very poor repair fronts a fenced paddock. A few broken down nags munch on the sparse grass within. A large barn of faded planks stands next to the crumbling adobe with a sign painted on its side in large pink letters stating that this is Finn's Livery.

Creature: The owner's actual name is Finnelaus, an atypical elven drunkard. The sign's paint was originally red but has faded in the sun much to Finn's embarrassment. However, he is too lazy to repaint the lettering. He employs five of the locals (Com3, hp 9, Handle Animal +7) part-time to help him break and train riding horse and draft animals. During the day 1d4 of these hired hands are present. The horses are sold or rented to caravans who are passing through the Desolation and need fresh animals to increase their speed. He currently has only 2 heavy horses and 3 light horses available at standard Pathfinder Roleplaying Game prices. Unfortunately all of these animals are in bad condition (Con 8) requiring at least a week of rest and regular feeding in order to be back to their normal condition. All of Finnelaus's better stock was purchased by the Bard's Gate caravan that departed a few days ago. Based on the return of Gurg, Finnelaus assumes that most of his stock will be returning soon. Typically the denizens of the Desolation ignore the horses in favor of the riders, and the animals eventually find their way home. Everyday 1d2+1 heavy or light horses return to the livery to a maximum of 10 of each. However, all are slightly wounded and exhausted requiring at least three days of rest before they are ready to be sold again. Stabling is also available at regular prices, but feed and grooming are the responsibility of the owners. Mounts left unpaid for over a week become the livery's property in the eyes of the barbarian proprietor.

#### FINNELAUS XP 1,600

**CR 5** 

Male elf barbarian 6 CN Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +5; Senses low-light vision; Perception +10

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+1 armor, +5 Dex) hp 56 (6d12+6 plus 6)

**Fort** +6; **Ref** +7 (+9 traps); **Will** +1 (+3 enchantment) **Defensive Abilities** improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; **Immune** sleep

Spd 40 ft.

**Melee** +2 shortspear +12/+7 (1d6+5) or club +9/+4 (1d6+3) **Ranged** +2 shortspear +14 (1d6+5) or club +11 (1d6+3) **Special Attacks** rage (14 rounds/day), rage powers (animal fury, raging leaper, roused anger)

#### Str 16, Dex 20, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 14 Base Atk +6; CMB +9; CMD 24

Feats Power Attack, Skill Focus (Survival), Weapon Focus (short-spear)

Skills Handle Animal +11, Perception +10, Ride +14, Survival +11 Languages Common, Elven

SQ fast movement

Gear padded armor, +2 shortspear, club, pouch with 2 iron bits

Personality: As mentioned Finn as a rarity among the elves in that he is hopelessly addicted to hard liquor. Driven from his wood elf tribe by his habit and the bad temper associated with it, he eventually found his way to the Camp. With little cash and plenty of time on his hands, he began venturing to the edges of the Desolation to gather up the stray horses of those lost to the Desolation's hazards. His affinity with animals enabled him to retrain the horses and make them suitable for sale. This new trade brought him income and the ability to buy drink once again. Prosperity leaves him enough cash to get drunk, which is the condition he usually stays in until he has lost his shirt. With the recent influx of cash from the Bard's Gate delegation he has yet to sober up completely. Unfortunately his animals tend to suffer while he is in this condition due to neglect as is evidenced by their current condition. His hired hands only do the minimum labor needed to keep the animals alive before heading home to avoid his drunken rages. Finn deals with the party, but should be considered Unfriendly and a Diplomacy or Intimidate check is necessary to learn the information below. If provoked to hostility, Finn's fighting skills are unaffected by his inebriated state. He does not pursue beyond his property, however. It will be a good two weeks before he fully dries out.

"Yep, all them ogres and Bard's Gaters is surely dead. But the critters out in the Desolation don't eat horses so much. They prefer to eat what the horses is carryin'. I expect my stock'll start tricklin' back in a day or two." He has a reasonable understanding of the motivation of the Desolation's denizens.

## 5. Abandoned Camp

The remains of campfires, midden pits and tent stakes show that this is a regular campsite that was recently abandoned. An inordinate amount of garbage and stinking wastes show that the inhabitants were giantkind. This is the traditional location of the mercenary band known as The Pounders. Led by the hill giant, Gurg, this band of 8 ogres, hired out as mercenary guards and guides to protect caravans as they crossed the Desolation. Their brawn and general demeanor ensured that they were the premier group providing these services and were slowly driving Clantock's Furious Fourteen out of business (see Area 14). However, after The Pounders' recent ill-fated expedition with the Bard's Gate caravan, it appears that the rival half-ore's fortunes are about to improve. Searching the campsite with a DC 15 Perception check reveals a total of 73 iron bits scattered about.

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### 6. The Sip of Blood Tavern (CR varies)

This old structure appears to have been rebuilt several times. The bottom third of the outside walls are of stacked fieldstones and apparently remain from the original building. Above that the walls and roof are a mud-splattered wattle and daub construction with numerous chinks through which tiny plumes of smoke escape. The placard above the door depicts a pointyfanged fellow about to take a drink of some dark, red liquid in a mug.

Originally built and run by a vampire, that creature was long ago staked by adventurers passing through, and the tavern is now the demesne of the Camp's luckiest resident. Inside, the tavern consists of a large, L-shaped common room with a small kitchen and living quarters in the northern wing. A menu on the wall sells assorted drinks and meals of roast pigeon, horsemeat, turtle soup, and coyote, along with whatever stale breads and overripe vegetables remain from the last caravan to pass through. All are at Pathfinder Roleplaying Game prices, but like everywhere else in town only iron bits are accepted as payment. The Campies gather here to eat, drink, and smoke their foul local pipeweeds prodigiously. A constant stuffy haze fills the room from dawn until nightfall when the establishment closes.

**Creatures:** The proprietor of the place, **Lucky Bjorc Balsam**, runs the bar with the help of six local wenches (Com1, hp 4) who cook, wait tables, sometimes clean, and perform other services out back during their breaks. When the doors are open there are always 2d6+5 locals here. Roll on The Camp Random Encounter Table to determine who may be present. They can all relate information off of the general list of Camp rumors. None of Bjorc's customers ever get too drunk to drag themselves home for fear of passing out in the Common after dark.

#### LUCKY BJORC BALSAM XP 2,400

CR 6

Male maimed orc expert 10 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary "Orc")

NG Medium humanoid (orc) Init –3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

AC 7, touch 7, flat-footed 7 (-3 Dex) hp 85 (10d8+30 plus 10) Fort +9; Ref +1; Will +7 Defensive Abilities ferocity Weaknesses light sensitivity

**Spd** 5 ft. **Melee** crutch +1 (1d4–2)

Str 7, Dex 4, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 15 Base Atk +7; CMB +5; CMD 10 Feats Catch Off-Guard, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus

(Craft [brew]), Toughness

**Skills** Appraise +14, Craft (brew) +17, Diplomacy +16, Knowledge (local) +14, Perception +13, Profession (tavern keeper) +13, Sense Motive +13

Languages Common, Orc

Gear crutch, *stone of good* luck, money belt with 45 iron bits and 3 bloodstones (65 gp each)

*Personality/Description:* "Lucky" Bjorc is quite a specimen. Never a looker to begin with, his head is now hairless on the left side with a missing eye and ear and massive scarring there also. His right arm ends in a stump above the elbow, and his left hand has only a thumb and two fingers. His left leg ends in a ragged stump just below the knee, long healed, but with exposed bone at the end. Fortunately, the former leg was largely useless anyway having ended in a twisted club foot. Needless to say, Bjorc has had a rough life including runins with dragons, elven torturers, a troll's cook pot, and for a short time the inside of a gelatinous cube. Regardless, Bjorc may be the most cheerful orc alive—though his missing tongue prevents him from verbally expressing his joy much. He does have a complicated series of hand signs that his waitresses can use to translate for him with customers. The rest of the Camp's inhabitants hold him in awe for all of his obviously narrow escapes from death and believe he leads a charmed life. He is quite popular, and many Campies are even jealous of him and his luck. Bjorc relates the rumors and information below with a simple DC 5 Diplomacy check.

"He says, 'It's best to stay inside after dark and not test the spirits. This whole place was a battleground once, and the dead rise at night and take anyone they find wandering around.' That...oh, that was just a scratch." False in the Camp, though there are many such restless spirits out in the Desolation.

*"He's saying that for 50 iron bits he'll let you rub his lucky rock."* True, though touching his stone of good luck provides no benefits.

"Um...I think he's saying 'Beware the Black Beast in the Pit.' Either that or 'There's blackened beef on the spit.' I'm not sure which; I haven't worked here very long..." He is, of course, referring to Old Death at Area C4 of The Chaos Rift in the Desolation. How he knows...who knows?

## 7. The Usurer (CR 17)

This simple plank building is nonetheless of the finest construction in town (other than the well house—Area 8). A wellcrafted stone chimney rises at the southern end, which boasts a well-fitting door facing the Common. The opposite end sports a pair of sliding double doors that likewise face the Common. During the day, these doors are open revealing a well-equipped blacksmith's workshop within. The other half of the building consists of the smith's dwelling. A sign above the double door depicts a gray coin and an anvil.

Creature: This is the business and residence of the Camp's de facto leader, the Usurer. This man is tall and lean with a great hooked nose and a wide mouth full of seemingly too many teeth fitted tightly together. A shock of pale hair covers his head and watery blue eyes look like two mirrors revealing nothing of what goes on inside the head behind. During the day this lanky man pounds away at his anvil or finishes metal goods, pausing only to deal with customers or exchange money. He can create any metal goods found in the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, including armor or weapons that are within the Camp's gold piece limit. He can make items of greater value, even masterwork quality if the materials are provided to him. A little known secret is that he can also enchant masterwork items and will do so for the proper fee-paid in iron bits of course. He keeps a chest of 1,000 iron bits and 500 gp in his workshop locked with an arcane lock (CL 11th). Inside his house another 10,000 iron bits are hidden in various hidey-holes (DC 25 Perception check to locate 1d6x1,000 at a time). He manufactures the crude iron bits himself from bars of pig iron.

The Usurer—his true name is unknown—changes money at a rate of 5 gp to 1 iron bit. He does not haggle, refusing the exchange to anyone who becomes too belligerent, knowing they will soon be back if they wish to purchase any goods or services in the Camp. Anyone wanting to cash their iron bits back to gold, however, finds that he'll only pay 2 gp to 1 iron bit. Locals needing gold to purchase from travelers, however, receive a straight 1 for 1 rate from the Usurer. In this way, the Usurer keeps the Camp's stagnant economy alive from just the occasional trade with desperate caravans and travelers passing through. He also makes short term loans for collateral equaling 50% of the loan amount and 25% interest compounded daily. Anyone wanting to take issue with the Usurer or trying to intimidate or rob him is asking for trouble.

CR 17

#### THE USURER

**XP** 102,400

Male human lich wizard 11/expert 5 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary* "Lich")

NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid) Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +23 Aura fear (60-ft. radius, DC 21)

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +5 natural) hp 138 (11d6+33 plus 5d8+15 plus 27)

Fort +9; Ref +7; Will +12

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4, rejuvenation; **DR** 15/ bludgeoning and magic; **Immune** cold, electricity, undead traits

#### Spd 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk cold iron smith's hammer +13/+8 (1d10+6), touch +7 (1d8+8 plus paralyzing touch)

**Special Attacks** paralyzing touch (DC 21)

Spells Prepared (CL 11th, ranged touch +11):

6th—quickened invisibility

5th—*cloudkill* (DC 19), *dominate person* (DC 19), *seeming* (DC 19)

4th—enervation (DC 19), greater invisibility, lesser globe of invulnerability, stoneskin

3rd—*explosive runes* (DC 18), *fly, greater magic weapon, haste, vampiric touch* (melee touch +12)

2nd—cat's grace, hypnotic pattern (DC 17), acid arrow, stilled magic missile, summon swarm

1st—*identify* (x2), *magic missile* (x2), *protection from good, shield* 0 (at will)—*acid splash, dancing lights, detect magic, read magic* 

#### **Str** 18, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 20, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16 **Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 25

**Feats** Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand<sup>B</sup>, Craft Wondrous Item<sup>B</sup>, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (smith's hammer), Great Fortitude, Improved Counterspell, Quicken Spell, Scribe ScrollB, Skill Focus (Craft [weapons]), Still Spell, Toughness

**Skills** Bluff +17, Craft (alchemy) +19, Craft (armor) +19, Craft (weapons) +19, Diplomacy +17, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (history) +19, Knowledge (local) +19, Perception +23, Profession (blacksmith) +14, Sense Motive +23, Spell-craft +19, Stealth +19

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal, Undercommon

#### SQ arcane bond (ring of major spell storing)

**Gear** *bracers of armor* +4, masterwork cold iron smith's hammer (as greatclub), *crystal ball, ring of major spell storing* (CL 11: teleport x2), spell component pouch, belt pouch with 11 pearls (100 gp each) 50 iron bits, spellbook

**Spellbook** All arcane spells in Chapter 11 of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game 0–4th level, prepared spells, plus: 5th–*baleful polymorph, blight, break enchantment, dismissal, false vision, permanency, teleport*; 6th–*analyze dweomer, chain lightning, circle of death, disintegrate, greater dispel magic, legend lore.* 

*Personality:* The Usurer is perhaps the most interesting character in the camp since he is actually a 700-year-old wizard, now a lich. He uses a seeming to maintain his mortal appearance and suppress his fear aura, though the inside of his shop and home always seem chill due to his dreadful presence. He came to the Camp for reasons of his own a generation ago and rebuilt it into its current incarnation. As cover for his actions he took up smithing as a trade and found the work strangely satisfying to his undead psyche. He has actually become quite skilled at it. After dark, out of deference to his mortal neighbors, he ceases his banging at the anvil. He then sits silently in the darkness of his residence until dawn when he resumes his labor. He provides only general rumors of the Camp since he does not wish to reveal too much or provoke visitors into staying for long.

**Treasure:** The Usurer keeps a great hoard of wealth hidden in a cavernous cyst in the ground 100 feet below his house. It is here that

he stores the vast majority of the gold he uses in his exchanges. Total wealth in this cavern equals 100,000 gp in coins, gems and magic items. His phylactery is hidden among this hoard (DC 50 Perception to locate) and resembles a small sphere of iron bands (much like iron bands of binding). Unfortunately the cavern is completely sealed, requiring a well-aimed teleport to reach it, and it is airless, which poses no problem at all for the undead wizard.

## 8. Well House

This building is unlike any other in town. Of tightly fitted mortared stone, it is obviously ancient but has weathered the years well. It consists of an octagonal building with a conical roof, also of stone. A stout wooden door—not the original opens towards the Common.

This edifice is a relic of the long ago war. When the Army of Light first arrived on the field that would later become the Desolation, they dug many wells in order to adequately water their huge force. As the battle dragged on and greater and greater escalations of violence and mayhem occurred, the disciples of Orcus poisoned many of their water sources. To protect these precious resources, stout fortifications were built around them and strong garrisons were stationed to protect them. This well house survives from that time. Its location and ease in defending has dictated this as the continued location of the Camp for generations. The well itself is 150 feet deep with 30 feet of water. A crank pulls a long chain bringing the steel well bucket to the surface. Anyone is free to use the well as long as they close the door against wild animals. Anyone purposely vandalizing the well or ruining the drinking water draws the deadly ire of the entire population of the Camp.

## 9. Skeribar's Ranger Guides (CR varies)

A collection of crumbling adobe buildings, lean-tos, and tents surround a patch of surprisingly healthy and bountiful garden. The mud-brick adobes are of obviously ancient construction and have many gaps in their walls and roofs covered by stretched animal hides and blankets.

These are actually the last remnant of the garrison structures that were built here to guard the well house (Area 8) during the Battle of Tsar. Of poorer construction, they have not weathered the years as well as the well house but remain habitable, if not comfortably so.

Creatures: This is the camp of Skeribar the ranger and his group of guides. There are always 2 trained war dogs napping in the shade here that raise their hackles at the approach of strangers, alerting those present. There is also another war dog for each ranger present. These guides hire themselves out to anyone wishing to cross the Desolation or even explore its inner reaches. They will take anyone as far as the far edges of the Desolation or even up to (but not within) the tar pits that ring the walls of Tsar itself. Since they provide only guide services, not protection, they are not in direct competition with Gurg's or Clantock's companies. Skeribar has 7 ranger guides working for him. At any given time 1d4+1 of them are in the Camp, and Skeribar is present 70% of the time. They charge 50 iron bits per day for the services of one guide. Partial days count as full, and an estimated payment is required in advance to be settled up upon the guide's return. More than one guide can be hired at a time. A war dog accompanies each ranger at all times. Skeribar is accompanied by his wolf animal companion. They also sell vegetables to the emporium from the abundance of their garden plot to support themselves during slow times.

CR 1/2

CR 4

CR9

#### WAR DOGS (1d4+3, 9 total) XP 200

hp 13 each (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary "Dog, Riding")

RANGER GUIDES (1d4+1, 7 total) XP 1,200 Male or female human ranger 5 N Medium Humanoid (human) Init +7; Senses Perception +9

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +1 deflection, +3 Dex) hp 52 (5d10+15 plus 5) Fort +8; Ref +10; Will +3

#### Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 longsword +8 (1d8+3/19–20) Ranged mwk shortbow +7/+7 (1d6/x3) Special Attacks favored enemy (humanoid [human] +4, outsider [chaotic] +2) Spells Prepared (CL 2nd): 1st—endure elements, longstrider

Str 14, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10 Base Atk +5; CMB +7; CMD 21

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, EnduranceB, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Rapid ShotB, Self-SufficientB

Skills Climb +10, Handle Animal +8, Heal +11, Knowledge (nature) +8, Perception +9, Stealth +11, Survival +11 (+13 tracking) Languages Common

**SQ** combat style (archery), favored terrain (desert +2), hunter's bond (companions), wild empathy +5

**Gear** masterwork leather armor, *ring of protection* +1, *cloak of resistance* +1, +1 *longsword*, masterwork shortbow, 20 arrows, belt pouch with 1d12 iron bits

#### SKERIBAR

XP 6,400 Male human ranger 10 N Medium humanoid (human) Init +4; Senses Perception +19

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +4 Dex) hp 89 (10d10+10 plus 20) Fort +8; Ref +11; Will +5 Defensive Abilities evasion

#### Spd 30 ft.

**Melee** +1 ghost touch longsword +14/+9 (1d8+5/19–20), mwk short sword +13/+8 (1d6+2/19–20)

**Ranged** mwk composite longbow (+3 Str bonus) +15/+10 (1d8+3/x3)

**Special Attacks** favored enemy (humanoid [human] +6, outsider [chaotic] +4, undead +2)

Spells Prepared (CL 7th):

2nd—*barkskin, bear's endurance* 

1st—animal messenger, magic fang, summon nature's ally I

#### **Str** 18, **Dex** 19, **Con** 13, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 7 **Base** Atk +10; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 28

**Feats** Alertness, Diehard, Endurance<sup>B</sup>, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting<sup>B</sup>, Quick Draw, Toughness, Two-Weapon Fighting<sup>B</sup>, Two-Weapon Rend<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Focus (longsword)<sup>B</sup>

Skills Bluff +8, Climb +22, Handle Animal +11, Heal +15, Knowledge (geography) +15, Knowledge (nature) +15, Perception +19, Profession (farmer) +15, Sense Motive +4, Stealth +22, Survival +15 (+20 tracking)

Languages Common, Giant, Terran; link with animal companion SQ combat style (two-weapon combat), favored terrain (desert +4, forest +2), hunter's bond (Redtooth—wolf animal companion), swift tracker, wild empathy +8, woodland stride

**Combat Gear** potion of plant growth, 3 potions of cure moderate wounds; **Other Gear** +2 studded leather armor, +1 ghost touch longsword, masterwork short sword, masterwork composite longbow (+3 Str bonus), cloak of elvenkind, ring of climbing

#### REDTOOTH

XP —

Male wolf animal companion (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary "Wolf")

CR —

N Medium animal

Init +4; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +8

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 18 (+2 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural) hp 45 (6d8+18) Fort +8; Ref +9; Will +3 (+7 enchantment) Defensive Abilities devotion, evasion

Spd 50 ft. Melee bite +8 (1d6+3 plus trip)

#### Str 16, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Base Atk +4; CMB +7; CMD 24 (28 vs. trip) Feats Dodge, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (bite) Skills Perception +9, Stealth +9, Survival +3 (+7 scent tracking) Languages link with master SQ share spells, tricks (defend, guard, track) Gear *earring of protection* +2 (as ring)

*Personality:* Skeribar and his rangers are more than simple guidesfor-hire. They are actually clandestine members of The Reclaimers in Area A5 of The Ashen Wastes. As such they always try to steer those who hire them into eventually visiting The Reclaimers' lair out in the Desolation. They do this through the hints and rumor they provide as detailed below. An opposed Sense Motive check to their Bluff check reveals that they have some agenda but not what it might be. They pass off party suspicions of their activities as being due to their single-minded dedication to scouring the dangers of the Desolation and making sure Nature recovers there (which is actually true). The information they can give the party is as follows:

"The worst of the Desolation's horrors are in the Boiling Lands where Nature has been warped and twisted beyond recognition. We go there the least because of the great dangers involved. However, we have made some progress in the Ashen Waste and have cleared out many of the most dangerous encounters. It has the most potential for successful adventuring and could probably be cleared of dangers with a concerted effort." Some truth to this, though it is mostly selfserving.

"Most of the fighting occurred in the Dead Fields, so there are a large number of undead and a minimum of treasures. The great encampments of soldiers were in what is now the Ashen Waste. That is where we have discovered many valuable treasures in the past. The soldiers went off to die and left their valuables behind in their camps where they still lie unclaimed." Once again, some truth, but it is mainly self-serving.

"We have established safe havens in the Ashen Waste. If you see a grove of healthy trees growing in the wastelands, it is a sign that our sanctuary is near and can provide respite." Mostly true, but leaves out a lot of important details.

# 10. Chapel of the Dying Light (CR 7)

Two round mud-brick towers connected at the base and roofed by stretched tarps form this building. The mud walls have been stained a charcoal gray, and a large skull and scythe above a setting sun have been painted on the door in red.

This is a church of Nergal, an ancient and now largely obscure god of death, and also happens to be the only religious establishment in the Camp. As such the Campies are none too comforted by its grim presence but tolerate it nonetheless. The interior of this church is one large dark room with ceilings rising 40 feet into the darkness above where heavy thatching below the tarps ensures that no light can creep in. Crude wooden benches face an altar to the death god, and the only illumination is provided by red tapers that burn in black iron sconces mounted to the walls. Running along the walls are prayers and obeisances scribed in Infernal with red paint.

**Creatures:** The chapel is administered by the cabalistic **Father Death** assisted by **2 acolytes**. These parishioners provide curative magic, last rites and other clerical services for the Camp. They charge double the standard price for spells and scrolls (See the "Spellcasting and Services" section in Chapter 6 and the "Magic Items" section in Chapter 15 of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game). A secret door below the altar (DC 25 Perception check to locate) leads to a sub-cellar where they reside.

#### FATHER DEATH

**XP** 3,200

Male hobgoblin cleric of Nergal 8 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary* "Hobgoblin")

NE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4 Aura evil

AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex) hp 55 (8d8+8 plus 8) Fort +7; Ref +6; Will +12

#### Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 wounding scythe +9/+4 (2d4+4/x4 plus 1 bleed) Ranged sling +10 (1d4+2)

**Special Attacks** channel negative energy 5/day (DC 16, 4d6), spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)

8 rounds/day-master's illusion

7/day—bleeding touch, copycat

Spells Prepared (CL 8th):

4th—*confusion* (DC 18)<sup>D</sup>, *cure critical wounds, repel vermin* (DC 18), *unholy channel*\*

3rd—animate dead<sup>D</sup>, bestow curse (DC 17), cure serious wounds, magic vestment, speak with dead (DC 17)

2nd—bear's endurance, death knell (DC 16)<sup>D</sup>, lesser restoration, sound burst (DC 16), spiritual weapon (+10/+5 attack, 1d8+2 damage)

1st—bane (DC 15), cause fear (DC 15)<sup>D</sup>, command (DC 15), cure

## New Spells

**CR 7** 

These spells in Father Death's repertoire originally appeared in *Relics & Rituals* by Sword & Sorcery Studios. They included here for your convenience.

#### CONDEMNED

School necromancy; Level cleric 4

Casting Time 1 round

**Components** V, S, M (powdered skull, graveyard mold, and a dead man's blood)

Range touch

Target one living creature

Duration permanent

Saving Throw Fortitude negates; Spell Resistance yes

A victim struck by this touch attack that fails its save cannot benefit from the healing effects of positive energy (cure spells, channel positive energy, etc.) until the condition is removed by a *dispel magic* or *remove curse*. Natural healing still works normally. It does not, however, prevent the damaging effects of such spells and abilities to undead creatures.

#### DEAD MAN'S EYES

School divination; Level bard 2, cleric 2, sorcerer/wizard 2 Casting Time 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, M (50 gp gem placed over each eye of the corpse) **Range** touch

Target one dead creature

**Duration** 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw none; Spell Resistance no

By peering into a dead creature's eyes, you may see 1 minute/ level preceding the corpse's death as seen by the dead creature (for example, if the creature died in its sleep there is likely little to see). You see these events in compressed time, 1 round for every minute of the corpse's past. A successful DC 15 concentration check gives near-perfect recall of the events; failure indicates fuzzy recall and partial details. A roll of a natural 1 indicates a mangled, inaccurate version of events.

You may dismiss the spell at any point, but if you witness the creature's final moment and it was a violent death, you immediately suffer 2d6 points of nonlethal damage from the empathic resonance of the death.

#### **GRIM FEAST**

School necromancy [evil]; Level cleric 1 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level) Target up to one fresh corpse/level Duration instantaneous Saving Throw none; Spell Resistance no

You can cure yourself of 1d4 lost hit points per affected corpse by casting this spell on the bodies of size Small or larger, formerly living, creatures that died within the last hour. Dead bodies used in this way shrivel up and become unusable for anything else, including animation.

#### UNHOLY CHANNEL

School necromancy [evil]; Level cleric 4 Casting Time 1 round Components V, S, DF Range touch Target one undead creature Duration 1 hour/level (D)

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes

With this spell you may establish a link with an undead creature that you command. Through this link you may cast any single-target inflict spells to heal the undead creature as long as it is within long range (400 ft. + 40 ft./level). If you are also undead, any cure spell cast upon you has a 50% chance to harm either you or the undead recipient of your unholy channel, regardless of who was the original target of the spell. If the cure spell requires a Will or Reflex save, then the targeted creature must make the saving throw to determine the effects of the spell. If the spell allows a Fortitude save, then the creature affected must make the saving throw.

You can only have one *unholy channel* in effect at any given time. An unholy channel cannot be established with a living creature.

*light wounds* (x2), *sanctuary* (DC 15)

0 (at will)—create water, purify food and drink, read magic, stabilize

**D** domain spell; **Domains** Death, Trickery

#### **Str** 15, **Dex** 18, **Con** 13, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 15 **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 24

Feats Alignment Channel (chaos), Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration

Skills Diplomacy +13, Heal +14, Knowledge (religion) +9, Stealth +8, Spellcraft +10

Languages Common, Goblin, Infernal

SQ death's embrace

**Combat Gear** 2 divine scrolls (CL: cure moderate wounds), divine scroll (CL: cure critical wounds), divine scroll (CL: neutralize), divine scroll (CL: bull's strength), divine scroll (CL 8: glyph of warding), divine scroll (CL 8: condemned\*, dead man's eyes\*, grim feast\*); **Other Gear** black and rust-red robes, masterwork studded leather armor, ring of protection +2, +1 wounding scythe, sling, pouch with 10 bolts, holy symbol, healer's kit, pouch with 158 iron bits.

\*See sidebox

#### ACOLYTES (2)

CR 2

XP 600 Male and female human cleric of Nergal 3 NE Medium humanoid (human) Init +1; Senses Perception +3 Aura evil

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex) hp 23 (3d8+6) Fort +5; Ref +2; Will +6

#### Spd 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk silver sickle +4 (1d6–1) **Special Attacks** channel negative energy 4/day (DC 12, 2d6), spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Domain Spell-like Abilities (CL 3rd):

6/day— bleeding touch, copycat

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):

2nd—*death knell* (DC 17), *invisibility*<sup>D</sup>, *spiritual weapon* (+5 attack, 1d8+1 damage)

1st—*cause fear* (DC 16)<sup>D</sup>, *cure light wounds, deathwatch, doom* (DC 16)

0 (at will)—create water, detect poison, purify food and drink, virtue

D domain spell; Domains Death, Trickery

#### **Str** 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 13 **Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13

Feats Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy), Weapon Focus (sick-le) $^{\rm B}$ 

Skills Craft (alchemy) +6, Heal +9, Knowledge (religion) +6, Spellcraft +6

Languages Common

**Combat Gear** divine scroll (CL: cure moderate wounds), potion of bull's strength; **Other Gear** black robes, masterwork silver sickle, holy symbol, pouch with 3d6 iron bits

*Personality:* This grim hobgoblin paints his face bone white and wears only black hooded robes, yet has a surprisingly dry sense of humor. He came to this place and set up a shrine at the dictates of his deity. The vast sweep of death comprising the Desolation required some sort of homage to the Lord of the Dead. Despite his vocation, he's a very likable fellow. He's in no hurry to send others on to meet his god, because he is extremely patient. Here on the edge of the Desolation he assumes that everyone in the Camp is as good as dead, and he is content to let them all meet their ends as fate has decreed. He and his acolytes do perform strange night-

time rites, but they do not include sacrifices as rumored by other Campies. Father Death or his acolytes can impart the following information to the party:

"The Desolation is beautiful. It provides death in more ways than you can imagine: sudden death, slow, lingering death, death by sword and tooth, death by poison, the wracking death of disease, or the extended painful death from thirst. Think about it...what ways must exist to meet death out there that haven't even been discovered yet?" Very true.

"Certain death lies before the walls of the ruined city. You must first face the smaller deaths available throughout the Desolation to prepare yourself for the confrontation with death incarnate. Otherwise you will surely be slain most horribly. Isn't it wonderful?" True, he refers to Malerix at Area R4 of The Crossroads and Tsar.

"Death is as much a part of Nature as is life. Sometimes death is necessary to create life. Some are more vehement in this pursuit than others." This is a veiled hint as to the activity of the Reclaimers at Area A5 in The Ashen Waste, which he has managed to piece together.

### 11. Bender Bros. (CR varies)

This rambling plank structure appears to be comprised of the dismantled remains of dozens of freight wagons and other assorted scrap lumber. Stenciling above the door names it as "Bender Bros."

This structure was constructed of abandoned wagons that have broken down in the Camp or have been left behind by merchants who never made it out of the Desolation. This is the sole establishment in town with rooms to let for travelers who don't wish to camp outside at the mercy of the denizens of the night. Within are a series of rooms with low, 6-foot, ceilings and wooden floors. Despite its ramshackle appearance it is fairly sound and one of the nicer buildings in town, complete with shuttered windows. It is a bit cramped for Medium characters but otherwise serves as fair accommodations.

**Creatures:** The boarding house is run by twin gnome brothers known as the **Bender Brothers**, since no one can tell them apart or remember their first names. Bender is short for Benderkaupft since most Campies don't bother to try and pronounce the entire surname. They charge 5 iron bits per night for a single room only large enough to accommodate one Medium character, and then none too comfortably. However, the rooms all have locks on the doors, and no one tries to rob guests of the Bender Brothers. For an additional iron bit they throw in an evening meal in the common dining room, though they often provide the first night's meal free to new guests in order to gain their business.

JEBLIE and JASHANAH BENDER	<b>CR 8</b>
<b>XP</b> 4,800	

hp 71 each (See Chapter 2, Event 2)

*Personality:* These rough-looking gnomes wear the same black leather armor and bear the same scraggly black beards beneath their bulbous noses. They have perpetual sneers yet behave very cordially towards their guests. They run their boarding house well, keeping it moderately clean, and Jashanah is an excellent cook. However, hostelry isn't their primary occupation. What they really enjoy doing is murdering guests and robbing their corpses. They keep a stash of treasure beneath the floorboards of the boarding house accumulated from such endeavors. Characters staying at the boarding house are subjected to just such an attack as described in Event 2 in Chapter 2. They make small talk with their guests but only relate rumors from the general table for the Camp above.

## 12. Bard's Gate Embassy (CR 4)

This is a sod house complete with thatched roof and fieldstone chimney. Deeply recessed windows are blocked by heavy wooden shutters. There are signs of recent repair to this structure.

**Creature:** This is the residence of Bard's Gate's new diplomatic envoy to the Camp. **Sammar** arrived a few weeks ago with the Bard's Gate caravan intent on reaching the exotic northern lands beyond the Desolation in order to set up an established trade route. This old house was refurbished, and Sammar was left behind as liaison and coordinator for the trade route. When the caravan left with Gurg and his ogre band everything seemed fine. Ever since the return of the deranged and wounded Gurg (see Event 1 in Chapter 2), Sammar has become highly worried over the fate of his comrades.

SAMMAR	<b>CR 4</b>
<b>XP</b> 1,200	
Male human bard 4/aristocrat 1	
NG Medium humanoid (human)	

Init +1; Senses Perception +9

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+2 deflection, +1 Dex, +1 natural) hp 26 (4d8 plus 1d8)

Fort +2; Ref +6; Will +8; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

#### Spd 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk rapier +5 (1d6/18–20)

Ranged mwk hand crossbow +5 (1d4/19-20)

**Special Attacks** bardic performance 13 rounds/day (countersong, distraction, fascinate [DC 15], inspire competence +2, inspire courage +1)

Spells Known (CL 4th):

2nd (2/day)-detect thoughts (DC 15), tongues

1st (4/day)—*alarm, charm person* (DC 14), *undetectable alignment, sleep* (DC 14)

0 (at will)—daze (DC 13), know direction, light, message, read magic, resistance

Str 11, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 16

Base Atk +3; CMB +3; CMD 16

**Feats** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow), Persuasive<sup>B</sup>, Quick Draw, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +11, Diplomacy +13, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (nobility) +11, Perception +9, Perform (oratory) +11, Profession (diplomat) +9, Sense Motive +9

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven

 $\mathbf{SQ}$  bardic knowledge +2, versatile performance (oratory), well-versed

**Gear** *amulet of natural armor* +1, *ring of protection* +2, masterwork rapier, masterwork hand crossbow, 20 crossbow bolts, *cloak of resistance* +1

*Personality:* Sammar is an experienced career diplomat. Unfortunately he fell out of favor with the government of that city and was assigned to this post as punishment. He is ambitious enough to see that if a lucrative trade route is established he will regain favor and be set for life. However, he finds the living conditions of the Camp very distressing (he is terrified of the hanged man and won't go outside anywhere close to dusk), and things have only become worse since his trade caravan disappeared. He eventually approaches the party for their assistance in locating the missing caravan as described in Event 4 in Chapter 2. Being a relative newcomer, he cannot relate any but the most basic of information provided in the general rumors table.

## 13. The Apothecary (CR 9)

An old, artificial mound rises 20 feet into the air here. Its sides are badly eroded from weathering, and a gaping hole opens in one flank beneath a heavy stone lintel. It has the look of an old tomb about it other than the garland of wildflowers and herbs hung around the door frame.

**Creatures:** This is, in fact, an old barrow left over from the time of the Battle of Tsar. Whoever was buried in it has long since been forgotten, its contents removed. Its dark, cavelike interior now serves as the abode of the Camp's local apothecary, **Mama Grim**, a swamp hag with baggy greenish-brown skin and sickly, jaundiced-looking eyes. Her hair is a massive tangle of greasy black locks into which she has tangled bits of feather, bone, and assorted detritus. She is accompanied at all times by at least one of her **2 goblin bear** pets, giant creature resembling massive wolverines with toothy snouts, long, sharp claws, and reddish-brown pelts. They are trained to fight to the death to defend Mama Grim and her barrow.

Mama Grim brews potions for all of the spells she can cast of 3rd level and lower. She sells these at the standard prices listed in the "Magic Items" section of Chapter 15 in the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game but only accepts iron bits in payment. Her home is a clutter of worktables, benches, drying racks, patches of growing mushrooms, and distilleries with the occasional end of a bone protruding through the dirt walls. One side is occupied by the fur-covered debris that serves as a lair for her 2 pets. The entire place has a heavy, swampy stench to it. Griswald the undertaker would very much like to have this location as his abode. He rightly assumes there are many corpses still interred in the walls. He has not yet figured out a way to remove the apothecary, though, in light of her own prowess and that of her goblin bears.

#### MAMA GRIM XP 1,600

CR 5

Female swamp hag (Creature Collection 100) LE Large monstrous humanoid Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size) hp 66 (7d10+28) Fort +6; Ref +8; Will +9 Immune disease, poison

**Spd** 40 ft., **swim** 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +9 (1d8+3), 2 claws +9 (1d6+3) **Space** 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Spells Prepared (CL 7th):

4th-giant vermin

3rd—*dominate animal* (DC 15), *spike growth* (DC 15)

2nd—barkskin, summon nature's ally II, summon swarm, warp wood (DC 14)

1st—*calm animals* (DC 13), *charm animal* (DC 13), *entangle* (DC 13), *magic fang, speak with animals* 

0 (at will)—create water, detect poison, know direction, stabilize

#### **Str** 17, **Dex** 16, **Con** 19, **Int** 17, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 11 **Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 24

Feats Brew Potion, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Craft [alchemy]), Skill Focus (Survival)

**Skills** Craft (alchemy) +16, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (nature) +13, Perception +12, Stealth +14 (+24 in swamps), Survival +15, Swim +11

Languages Aklo, Common, Giant, Gnoll

SQ camouflage

Combat Gear potion of neutralize poison, potion of pass without

*trace, potion of hide from animals, 3 potions of endure elements, potion of barkskin +2, potion of bull's strength;* **Other Gear** homespun robe, teeth and bone necklace

**Camouflage (Ex)** The skin of a swamp hag can change color to blend in perfectly with her surroundings. When in swampy terrain, they gain a +15 racial bonus to Stealth checks; the bonus is +5 in all other terrain.

**Spells (Sp)** Swamp hags cast spells as a 7th-level druid but do not gain the other abilities of a druid.

#### **GOBLIN BEARS (2)**

CR 6

XP 2,400 Creature Collection 80 N Large animal Init +4; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +2

AC 22, touch 9, flat-footed 22 (+13 natural, -1 size) hp 95 (10d8+50) Fort +12; Ref +7; Will +3 Immune fear, mind-affecting attacks, nonlethal damage

#### Spd 60 ft.

Melee bite +11 (1d10+5), 2 claws +11 (2d6+5) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. Special Attacks neck-breaking shake, shoulder spines

Str 21, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 5 Base Atk +7; CMB +13; CMD 23 Feats Alertness<sup>B</sup>, Improved Initiative<sup>B</sup> Skills Perception +2, Sense Motive +2

**Neck-breaking Shake (Ex)** If a goblin bear succeeds in making a critical hit on its bite attack, it gets a good enough hold with its teeth to shake its victim violently from side to side, intending to break the victim's neck or spine. This deals 2d10+5 points of damage in addition to the normal damage from the critical hit. The victim is released immediately thereafter. Freedom of movement provides immunity against this ability.

**Shoulder Spines (Ex)** Goblin bears have twin ruffs of barbed spines running from the points of their shoulders all the way to their hips. Whenever an opponent hits a goblin bear with a melee attack from an adjacent square, the gobbling bear may make an attack of opportunity as a free action with these spines with a +11 attack bonus and dealing 1d6+2 points of damage on a successful hit. This is an autonomic response, so the goblin bear can make as many of these attacks as called for per round without affecting its normal attack of opportunity limit.

*Personality:* Mama Grim, as she is known by the townsfolk, has lived in the Camp for several years providing them with potions and salves. She is seen as a benevolent, if strange, giant standing at nearly nine feet tall. She has come to like the Camp well enough but still burns with anger at her cousins (a storm hag and a moon hag) who kicked her out their covey and home in the ruins of Tsar (*Slumbering Tsar: Temple-City of Orcus* for more details). Anyone bringing proof that they have slain these hags receives a reward of 10 potions of their choice provided she can make them. She can provide the information below.

"Oh yes, Dearie, the Desolation is dangerous, but it's just the doorstep. Beyond the threshold lies the truly dangerous. The ruined city is far from abandoned, and those that abandoned it are far from forgetting it. You be careful out there, Dearies. Such pretty young morsels like you would make a fine meal for those that guard secrets not meant to ever see the light of day." Her condescending speech is true and alludes to things to be discovered in the later adventures in this series; **Slumbering Tsar: Temple-City of Orcus**.

"My cousins still call the ruined city home. They threw me out, they did. It's jealous of my beauty they were. By a blue well in the shadow of a green wall they still dwell. We misses them, Dearies. Bring me their heads and rewards will be yours." This is all true and refers to Mama Grim's history mentioned above. She refuses to give them any further information about the city or its inhabitants (quite frankly, she has forgotten a lot of it).

## 14. Clantock's Furious Fourteen (CR 11)

This is a collection of hide tents clustered together around a rudimentary parade ground.

**Creatures:** These serve as the quarters for the mercenary company led by the half-orc **Clantock**. His mercenary company is known as the Furious Fourteen even though it consists of only himself and **12 mercenaries**. Whether this discrepancy is due to Clantock's inability to count or if there were once more surviving members of the company no one knows. No one has bothered to disabuse the half-orc of his misnomer. These were once the premier mercenaries in town (after the loss of Granville's Pyrotechnic Platoon in battle with a fire lizard), but they were ousted from the top spot by the formation of The Pounders led by the hill giant Gurg. Ever since then Clantock has struggled to survive as the second-best mercenary escort company in the Camp. Fortunes seem to have changed of late, however.

Clantock hires out his company for 100 iron bits per day plus the cost of provisions (which usually runs another 10 iron bits per day). The entire group accompanies the employer. If the employer wants to move fast, he'll have to procure mounts for the mercenaries as well. They don't act as guides, and they are likely to run if they get in over their heads in a battle.

CLANTOCK XP 9,600 Male half-orc fighter 8/rogue 3 CN Medium humanoid (orc) Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+7 armor, +1 Dex, +1 natural, +2 shield)

**hp** 147 (8d10+40 plus 3d8+15 plus 19)

**Fort** +14; **Ref** +6; **Will** +3 (+5 vs. fear)

Defensive Abilities bravery +2, evasion, ferocity, trap sense +1

#### Spd 30 ft.

**Melee** +1 keen scimitar +18/+13 (1d6+7/15-20)

**Ranged** light crossbow with +1 shocking burst bolts +12/+7 (1d8+1/19–20 plus 1d6 electricity)

**Special Attacks** rogue talent (bleeding attack), sneak attack +2d6, weapon training (heavy blades +1)

#### Str 21, Dex 13, Con 20, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8

Base Atk +10; CMB +15; CMD 26

**Feats** Cleave<sup>B</sup>, Endurance, Great Cleave<sup>B</sup>, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative<sup>B</sup>, Point Blank Shot<sup>B</sup>, Power Attack<sup>B</sup>, Rapid Reload, Toughness, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

**Skills** Bluff +9, Climb +13, Disable Device +0, Intimidate +5, Perception +10 (+11 locate traps), Stealth +9

Languages Common, Orc

SQ armor training 2, orc blood, trapfinding

**Gear** +2 scale mail, masterwork heavy steel shield, amulet of natural armor +1, +1 keen scimitar; light crossbow, 20 +1 shocking burst crossbow bolts, pouch with 74 iron bits and a garnet (50 gp)

#### MERCENARIES (12)

**CR 2** 

**CR 10** 

XP 600 Male half-orc or orc warrior 4 CN Medium humanoid (orc) Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception –1

20

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield) hp 30 (4d10+4 plus 4) Fort +5; Ref +2; Will +0 Defensive Abilities ferocity

Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk battleaxe +9 (1d8+3/x3)Ranged heavy crossbow +5 (1d10/19-20)

#### Str 16, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8 Base Atk +4; CMB +7; CMD 18

Feats Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (battleaxe) Skills Climb +3, Intimidate +8, Survival +3 Languages Common, Orc

SQ orc blood

Gear chainmail, heavy wooden shield, masterwork battleaxe, heavy crossbow, 20 crossbow bolts, pouch with 5d4 iron bits

Personality: Clantock has a serious inferiority complex. He rallied his band of mercenaries and left the orcish tribal lands to the east after being bested in single combat while trying to overthrow a chieftain. Arriving shortly after the destruction of the Camp's previous mercenary group, he quickly settled in as a bully and monopolized the protection racket. With the arrival of Gurg, he found himself in second place again but didn't dare challenge the clearly more powerful mercenary leader. Instead he eventually hit upon a more sinister plan to eliminate his rivals after encountering a clan of spitting gargoyles out in the Desolation. With his recent success, he is considering going into business full-time to lead employers to their dooms at the hands of the gargoyles at Area C6 in The Chaos Rift and then splitting the booty with them. If employed by the party he initially serves as hired, but each day there is a cumulative 10% chance that he decides to sell them out to the gargoyles instead, at which point he tries to subtly lead them to the gargoyle lair. Clantock and his band can provide the following information to the party:

"Lots of good treasure out there. I can take you to it. You just pick it up off the ground while we keep you safe. Easy as that, huh? No one knows the place as good as me. You got money, huh?" Not hardly.

"It's not easy out there. That giant think he was tough, but you know better. The things out there, they kill giants easy, just swoop down and BAM! But not like that wit' Furious Fourteen. We know place and what's out there. We know how to win. We win against competition, huh?" These statements are true and provide some tantalizing unintended admissions as to Clantock's nefarious dealings leading to the destruction of the Pounders.

(This only occurs after the Furious Fourteen have been guiding the party for a while and Clantock has made up his mind to betray the party to his gargoyle allies.)

"This no good. These treasures we find are small. I know where the biggest treasures are. They're in the big canyon. I can take you there, huh? We go now. Not far from here. It not even guarded, huh?" A fairly obvious ploy to get the party to follow him. Wise players should be on their guard. However, his relative lack of intelligence could lead the party to believe he is just trying to get them to help him kill something that he's too scared to take on by himself. Such an assumption could very much lead to the party's detriment.

## 15. The Undertaker (CR 2)

Out away from the rest of the Camp sits a long, low structure with a rounded roof composed of poorly cured hides lashed to sticks. A horrible death smell permeates the entire area, obviously emanating from the structure.

**Creature:** This is the dwelling of **Griswald** the Undertaker. He eventually arrives on the scene anytime someone dies in the Camp. Townsfolk know he is coming from the stench that precedes him, for Griswald is a ghast. He is quite urbane for a carrion-eating undead beast, wearing a threadbare but well-cared-for formal suit and speak-

ing with a pleasant, high-class accent.

The Campies put up with Griswald and his stench because he provides a necessary service, and he otherwise leaves people alone. He transports away unsightly corpse from the streets and dwellings of the Camp and promises them a proper burial outside of town free of charge. No one really believes that he doesn't turn around and just eat the corpses, but then no one really cares one way or the other. And the price is certainly right. Anyone entering his abode finds only a small living space near the doorway. Beyond it is packed tight with corpses in various stages of decay and consumption. He likes to stock up against the hard times.

#### GRISWALD THE UNDERTAKER CR 2 XP 600

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Male ghast (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary* "Ghoul") CE Medium undead

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+1 deflection, +4 Dex, +4 natural) hp 17 (2d8+8)

**Fort** +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2; Immune undead traits

#### **Spd** 30 ft.

**Melee** bite +5 (1d6+3 plus disease and paralysis) and 2 claws +5 (1d6+3 plus paralysis)

**Special Attacks** paralysis (1d4+1 rounds, DC 15), stench (10-ft. radius, DC 15)

#### Str 17, Dex 19, Con —, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 18

Base Atk +1; CMB +4; CMD 19

Feats Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Climb +8, Disguise +9, Perception +9, Sense Motive +9, Stealth +9, Swim +5

Languages Common

**Gear** threadbare tuxedo, *ring of protection* +1, 13 iron bits in waist-coat pocket

*Personality/Description:* Griswald originally hailed from the Desolation, but he grew tired of the slim pickings on the battlefield among his undead brethren. When he found a fancy suit in a grave, he immediately took it and headed for civilization playing the part of a high society professional. The party won't have much interaction with the undertaker except as clean-up to any combats they have in town or if one of their number dies. He will try to claim that corpse as well, though he will certainly not stoop to violence to gain it. They had best not leave the body unattended while they leave town, though. If anyone has the stomach to converse with the creature, he can relate the information below.

"Hard times out on the Desolation, indeed. There's simply not enough food to go around. What's a self-respecting carrion eater to do? Why go into business, of course!" Sure, why not.

"If you go out there, you might see some of my brethren. Don't trust them. As pretty as we ghasts may be, they are not all as urbane as I." True.

"Say, are you feeling alright? You don't look so well to me. Perhaps just a touch of the flu, but then again it could be something fatal (unconsciously licks his lips)." Probably nothing, but PCs shouldn't accept any invitations to dinner from him.

# Chapter 2: Events in The Camp

This chapter covers the events that occur while the party is visiting the Camp, whether it their first visit or if they are using it as a base camp and returning to it periodically. Other than Event 1 that occurs when the party first arrives in the Camp and gives them a taste of what they have gotten themselves into, the events can be run at any time in any order. In fact, not all of the events should occur the first time the characters arrive in the Camp, but rather some should occur on subsequent visits. Space them out as you see fit to keep the players interested while their characters visit the settlement. At no time should the Camp simply be a generic stop in game for the characters to rest and recuperate. While they should be able to recover in relative safety during their stays in the Camp (especially after having dealt with some of the immediate threats early on), it should still have a constant sense of subtle menace for them and a touch of intrigue. The characters will largely never know exactly who is a friend and who is an enemy and who might just snap and go homicidal at any moment.

## Event 1: A Rude Welcome (CR 10)

The long, dusty road from Bard's Gate has finally brought you to your destination, a settlement on the very edge of the vast region of ruin known as the Desolation. Before you sprawls a pathetic collection of hovels that appear to be composed of whatever materials happened to be lying around. Here, a building that had an impressive beginning as a stone structure peters out a few feet above the ground where its walls become muddaubed sticks with bunches of straw stuffed into the chinks. There, wooden poles support walls of woven thatch and roof that is little more than an old hay tarp patched in places with tar. Beyond you can make out a ramshackle wooden structure, obviously the scavenged remains of several merchant wagons as evidenced by the axles and wheels still mounted at places on the outer walls and the hitching tongue protruding above the lintel and supporting a tattered awning.

The trail you are on proceeds straight through the center of this collection of dwellings and travels on into the dusty wasteland beyond, disappearing into the shrouding haze of windblown debris. In the center of the settlement stands an old gallows hanging far askew. A dark form turns slowly in the breeze, suspended from this leafless tree. Few people seem to be out on the hard-packed streets of this village, though you can see some activity to one side at an area of pole-supported awnings that appear to comprise some sort of shaded market.

Before you a scraggly buzzard perches atop an old plank sign. Crudely painted upon this placard is simply "The Camp".

The still afternoon is shattered by a great bellowing cry of rage. From the north road charges a massive figure. Those few people on the street quickly scatter at its approach. It is a hill giant covered in dust and blood. A great spiked club swings in its hand. Its face is a mass of recent wounds and horrible burns, perhaps caused by acid. One thing is evident, though; the look in its eyes as they focus on you is one of pure insanity. This event occurs as the party first arrives in the Camp on the south road from Bard's Gate. Refer to the map of the Camp for details.

**Creature:** The beast charging towards the party is a hill giant guide named Gurg. A resident of the Camp, **Gurg** would hire himself and his band of ogre mercenaries out to caravans traveling through the Desolation to provide both guidance and protection. He has just returned from a less-than-successful foray into the Desolation where his band and the caravan that employed him were slaughtered to a man by an attack of spitting gargoyles. He narrowly escaped but suffered some nasty wounds and acid burns. The horror of the attack and the lone trek across the hostile landscape has broken his nonetoo-stable psyche and sent him into a homicidal rage upon entering the Camp. Unfortunately for the PCs, they are the first people he sees and are thus the objects of his attention. The rest of the Camp's inhabitants recognize the hill giant but wisely head indoors to avoid his wrath and let the newcomers deal with him.

#### GURG (RAGING)

**CR 10** 

**XP** 9,600 Male hill giant barbarian 3 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary* "Giant, Hill")

CE Large humanoid (giant) Init +0; Senses low-light vision; Perception +6

AC 20, touch 7, flat-footed 20 (+4 armor, +9 natural, -2 rage, -1 size)

hp 190 (10d8+90 plus 3d12+27 plus 3), currently 183 Fort +19; Ref +4; Will +7 Defensive Abilities rock catching, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

#### Spd 50 ft.

Melee +1 keen spiked greatclub +22/+17 (2d8+17/19–20) or 2 slams +20 (1d8+11) Ranged javelin +9 (1d8+11) or rock +10 (1d8+16) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

**Special Attacks** rage (17 rounds/day), rage power (quick reflexes), rock throwing 120 ft.

**Str** 33, **Dex** 10, **Con** 28, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10 **Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 32

Feats Cleave, Intimidating Prowess, Martial Weapon Proficiency (greatclub), Power Attack, Step Up, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greatclub)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Climb +15, Intimidate +9, Linguistics –1, Perception +6, Survival +6

Languages Common, Giant

SQ fast movement

**Gear** chain shirt, +1 keen spiked greatclub (spikes cause piercing damage as well as bludgeoning damage allowing weapon to be keen), 5 javelins, decanter of endless water

**Tactics:** This is a straightforward fight for Gurg. His approach to town was blocked from view by the well house. Upon rounding the corner and sighting the party at the southern edge of the Commons, he immediately rages and charges them swinging his spiked great-club. He fights to the death.

**Development:** Following this fight the party notices a few of the townsfolk observing them curiously, but no one comes to assist them

or interferes in any way. Approaching someone and succeeding at a DC 15 Diplomacy check turns their attitude to friendly, and they can relate that the hill giant led a band of ogres who hired out as protection to caravans passing through. He and his band joined a diplomatic caravan out of Bard's Gate five days ago and entered the Desolation. Based on his appearance alone, it seems that the caravan probably did not make it. Use of speak with dead does not glean any additional information. If questioned about the body, any townsperson simply says to leave it, and the undertaker will take care of it. If the party waits around for 20 minutes, the undertaker arrives on the scene to remove the body. See Area 15 for details on the undertaker.

## Event 2: Camp Hospitality (CR II)

This encounter occurs when and if some or all of the party elect to rent rooms at the Bender Bros. boarding house (Area 11 in The Camp). Refer to the map of the boarding house. Rates and information on the boarding house are provided at the area's description in Chapter 1.

Upon checking in to the boarding house, the Bender Bros. show the characters to separate rooms at random. They currently have no other boarders, so they do not object if the party members want to group their rooms together. Characters are not able to share a room unless they size Small or smaller due to the limited space available in the individual rooms and overall stuffiness they create. The Bender Brothers give their guests a short tour including the guest rooms, the dining room, the kitchen, and the privy. Once the characters get used to the mustiness and low ceilings, they find the conditions livable.

Each of the guest rooms has a secret door (Perception DC 30) in the floor that leads to the crawlspace below the building. If discovered and the gnomes are questioned, they merely explain it as an access hatch to effect repairs and replacement of rotten floorboards, etc.

After the character or characters have settled into their rooms and finished any explorations of the town they wish for the day, the gnome brothers invite them to dine at the boarding house for free this evening. They explain the normal charge for the meal but state that the first night's meal is always free to guests because they hope to retain them as paying customers and impress them enough to convince them to buy future meals from the dining room. The boarding house only serves an evening meal, so the party members are on their own for the rest of the day.

If the guests accept the meal invitation, the dining room is opened as darkness falls, and the brothers begin laying out the meal while guests seat themselves at the table. The gnomes and guest all eat together family style at the boarding house. Other than rather crass manners and less than appetizing appearances, the brothers otherwise serve as excellent hosts. The meal smells delicious and consists of wild hare heavily spiced with garlic, a lamb chop (actually goat, but a rarity in the Camp nonetheless), fresh greens, assorted nuts, and a custard dessert. Served with the meal are mugs of a fine, stout ale. Anyone who eats finds that the food lives up to its toothsome smell. The gnome brothers eat heartily right alongside the party members.

Overly suspicious characters may suspect poison or drugs in their food, and they would be right, though there is nothing that will show up to casual inspection or detect poison. This is due to the fact that rather than a poison being added, it is actually that the hare meat has gone bad, which does not detect as a poison. The flavor has been masked by the heavy garlic so that it is unnoticeable. Roll a secret Fortitude save (DC 22) for every character that partakes of the meal. Rather than asking what each person eats, just assume that eat some of everything unless they specifically state otherwise. The gnome brothers do not have to make this save because their digestive tracts have grown accustomed to eating far worse here on the edge of the Desolation.

The effects on those who failed the saving throw does not become noticeable until several hours later in the middle of the night. They are suddenly awoken by severe stomach cramps from the bad meat. They are considered sickened and begin suffering bouts of nausea and diarrhea. This can be eliminated by a neutralize poison and will otherwise pass by morning. Unfortunately, unless neutralized they find themselves in extreme discomfort, excreting various substances, and in a very small, cramped room. Their options are to mess their own living quarters (never a good idea), take it outside (making them subject to attacks by the hanged man—see Area 1 of The Camp), or using the lone privy. The gnomes are banking that at last one party member will head to the jakes. If this happens proceed to the "Tactics" section below.

**Creatures:** The Bender Brothers harbor a secret that no one else in the Camp knows (though the Usurer suspects). They are actually triplets, not twins. The third brother, **Joshiah Bender**, is a rogue/ illusionist rather than just a rogue/assassin, however. With their complementary abilities they ply their trade of murdering guests, robbing them, and making them disappear. The rest of the Camp suspects these activities but has never caught them in the act and doesn't want to raise the ire of the assassin brothers by informing newcomers of the danger. Some of them actually profit when the Benders spread the wealth around and encourage travelers to stay at the boarding house. None of the locals will spend the night there, though.

#### JASHANAH and JEBLI BENDER XP 4,800

**CR 8** 

Male gnome rogue 6/assassin 3 CE Small humanoid (gnome) Init +4; Senses low-light vision; Perception +9

AC 19, touch 17, flat-footed 19 (+2 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 size)

**hp** 71 (6d8+18 plus 3d8+9)

**Fort** +6; **Ref** +11; **Will** +2; +1 vs. poison, +2 vs. illusions

**Defensive Abilities** defensive training, evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge

#### Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk rapier +13/+8 (1d4/18-20)

**Ranged** dart +11/+6 (1d3)

Special Attacks death attack (DC 12), gnome magic, hatred, sneak attack +5d6

Spell-like Abilities (CL 9th):

1/day— dancing lights, ghost sound\* (DC 14), prestidigitation, speak with animals

\* Illusion spell

#### **Str** 11, **Dex** 18, **Con** 17, **Int** 12, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 16 **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 21

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Persuasive, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +15, Appraise +6, Bluff +15, Climb +8, Craft (carpentry) +5, Craft (traps) +11, Diplomacy +14, Disable Device +17, Disguise +13, Escape Artist +13, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (local) +8, Perception +9 (+12 locate traps), Profession (hostler) +4, Stealth +22

Languages Common, Gnome, Orc, Sylvan

**SQ** poison use, rogue talent (fast stealth, stand up), trapfinding

**Gear** black leather armor, *ring of protection* +2, masterwork rapier, 10 darts; Jebli has a *gem of seeing* 

#### JOSHIAH BENDER

CR 8

XP 4,800 Male gnome illusionist 7/rogue 2 CE Small humanoid (gnome) Init +8; Senses low-light vision; Perception +13

AC 19, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+2 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 size)

**hp** 52 (6d7+12 plus 2d8+4)

**Fort** +4; **Ref** +9; **Will** +6; +2 vs. illusions

Defensive Abilities defensive training, evasion

Spd 20 ft.

**Melee** mwk rapier +10 (1d4/18–20) **Ranged** dart +9 (1d3)

**Special Attacks** extended illusions (+3 rounds), gnome magic, hatred, sneak attack +1d6

Spell-like Abilities (CL 9th):

1/day— dancing lights, ghost sound\* (DC 14), prestidigitation, speak with animals

Spells Prepared (CL 7th, 10% arcane spell failure):

4th—arcane eye, phantasmal killer\* (DC 18)

3rd—*blink, deep slumber (DC 16), displacement\*, slow* (DC 16) 2nd—*alter self, blur\*, invisibility\*, mirror image\*, scorching ray* (ranged touch +9)

1st—animate rope, color spray\* (DC 15), disguise self\*, hypnotism (DC 14), magic missile, shield

0 (at will)—flare (DC 13), ghost sound\* (DC 14), mage hand, message

\* Illusion spell

**Opposition Schools** Abjuration, Necromancy **Arcane Spell-like Abilities** (CL 7th): 6/day—*blinding ray* (ranged touch +9)

Str 11, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 16

Base Atk +4; CMB +3; CMD 19

**Feats** Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Scribe Scroll<sup>B</sup>, Silent Spell<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)<sup>B</sup> **Skills** Climb +8, Craft (alchemy) +17, Disable Device +17, Disguise +15, Knowledge (engineering) +11, Perception +13 (+14 locate traps), Spellcraft +15, Stealth +20

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant, Gnome, Orc, Sylvan

**SQ** arcane bond (*ring of protection* +2), rogue talent (weapon training), trapfinding

**Gear** black leather armor, *ring of protection* +2, masterwork rapier, 10 darts, 50-ft. silk rope

**Spellbook** All prepared spells, plus: 0–all; 1st—grease, mage armor, sleep, shocking grasp, ventriloquism\*; 2nd—acid arrow, bear's endurance, cat's grace, darkvision, locate object; 3rd—daylight, fly, haste, invisibility sphere\*, lightning bolt; 4th—confusion, greater invisibility\*, illusory wall\*, shout

**Tactics:** The Bender Brothers have their strategy down to an art. The door to the privy opens at such an angle that it must be closed before the jakes can be used, and there is only room inside the tiny room for one creature, whether Small or Medium (Large won't fit at all). The back wall of the room, directly behind the jakes is actually an *illusory wall* created by Joshiah (Will save DC 18 to disbelieve if interacted with). Behind it is a cubby accessed by a secret passage. Jebli waits in this small space for someone (most likely unarmed and unarmored) to come into the privy and close the door. Then whether seated on the jakes or leaning over it, Jebli has a direct shot at the character's head in the darkness to make a surprise death attack after 3 rounds of observation with his *gem of seeing*. If this attack is successful at killing the victim or rendering him unconscious, unless somebody is actually listening at the door while it occurs with a DC 20 Perception check, the attack is not heard outside the privy.

Since there is unlikely to be a lone party member staying at the boarding house, the brothers have come up with a plan to deal with the others. Party members not afflicted by the stomach problems do not awake from their sleep and are considered to be Taking 0 on their Perception checks each round. They can be awoken by sounds of their fellows talking or retching (DC 10), the sounds of battle or knocking at their door (DC 5), or by being attacked (automatic). The brothers assume that most PCs sleep unarmored, so while sick characters are attending to themselves, Jashanah silently crawls through the floor of one of the rooms where the PC still appears to be sleeping. If there are none, or he is successful, he then emerges trying to use Stealth to attack others in support of his brothers.

Joshiah is charged, in the plot, with dealing with any guards who remained awake or other characters waiting outside the privy while one of their number is within. To prepare for this he waits in the dark dining room having cast the following spells: *alter self* (to appear as a drow warrior), *blur* (to become a blurry drow warrior), *mirror image* (to become several blurry drow warriors), and *invisibility* (to mask the lot of them from sight). Assume he is successful in casting these initial spells, but roll for spell failure normally on all other castings. When a target presents itself he attempts to maneuver silently to make a sneak attack, thus becoming visible as several drow warriors. He then attacks with weapon and spell hoping for his brothers to quietly move into flanking positions to make sneak attacks. Due to the low ceilings, two-handed weapons cannot be effectively used by Medium characters indoors. All of the brothers know that if anyone escapes their ambush their jig is up, so they fight to the death to try and eliminate all witnesses.

Development: Assuming the characters eliminate the Bender Brothers, they face some unusual consequences. They are approached by the Usurer the next day. He states that the Benders were a vital cog in the welfare of the Camp by providing a much needed service for travelers. If the boarding house closes down, the Camp will suffer. Since the party eliminated the Benders, he states it is their responsibility to replace the Benders to keep the establishment open for business. Being presented with evidence of the brothers' crimes is irrelevant to him. In fact he says if the party wishes to continue the same practices at the boarding house, it is their business. If the party refuses to take over the boarding house, he advises them that they will be unwelcome in the Camp and being on the edge of the Desolation with no place of refuge is a dangerous prospect at best, perhaps fatal. Any townsfolk who are asked back the Usurer up on this point. Unless the party is willing to leave a character behind to take care of the place, they must hire a caretaker to manage it in their absence. The Usurer can recommend several townsfolk for the job. The salary for such a position, he advises is 10 iron bits per week. Plus there is the expense of keeping it stocked and in good repair which comes to another 10 iron bits a week. He further adds that if they run the boarding house for a month's time they will be considered citizens of the Camp and will receive the locals' rate of exchange for iron bits. If the party goes with one of the people the Usurer recommends, the individual performs an adequate job. If they happen to befriend Sammar (Area 12 of The Camp) later he can do it for them and at half the price due to his efficiency. Regardless, there are no further travelers through the Camp during the tenure of this adventure, unless you choose to add some, so no initial profit will be made.

**Treasure:** Hidden in the brothers' room and located with a DC 25 Perception check are treasures that have been accumulated from their years of murder and larceny. This hoard is the party's for the taking and includes: 880 iron bits, 1,200 gp, a +1 dagger, two silver urns (20 gp each), 6 assorted gems (2,800 gp total), and tapestry depicting a griffon rampant on a field of clouds made by Filini of Bard's Gate (5, 000 gp).

## Event 3: Whispers in the Dark (CR 6)

This encounter occurs many times while the party stays in the Camp, though it only occurs during the darkest watches of the night. It can also occur when the party is camped out in the Desolation during later chapters. Have the characters make a DC 12 Perception check and proceed with the boxed text when one is successful making any necessary changes if the party is not sleeping indoors. Modify the boxed text as necessary for subsequent visits by the midnight peddler.

In the still of the darkest watches of the night, you detect a faint squeaking coming from the north, perhaps somewhere out on the Desolation. As you strain to listen the squeaking becomes louder and is clearly the creaking of some wooden conveyance. What ever it is, it is steadily approaching.

Allow the PCs to wake their comrades, prepare their weapons and spells, or whatever. Other than the party members no one else has been awoken, and no one can hear the squeaking noise. Proceed with the following if anyone goes outside to discover the source of this noise.

Emerging into the darkness you can make out little in the pitch blackness. Then as the squeaking grows louder, you see through the thin night mists the silhouette of a dark figure pushing a handcart. The wheels of the cart produce the squeaking sound. As it approaches directly toward you, you can see that the figure is swathed in a long, hooded robe of coarse, gray cloth. His face is not visible, though you can just make out the shape of a protruding lower jaw. The cart appears to full of all sorts of mundane items and junk, certainly nothing that appears to be threatening. If you were in any other place at any other time, you would think this a rather ordinary traveling peddler.

The cart stops before you, and the dark figure begins rummaging through it saying only one word in a low, gravelly voice, "Buy?"



**Creature:** This strange figure is a **midnight peddler**. He is an outsider that only appear at certain times to certain people. No one else in the camp heard his approach because it is the party he is coming to see. His motivations are his own, but in exchange for buying his wares he provides important information or clues for the successful completion of the adventures in and around the ruins of Tsar. If attacked he uses his death chill once and then plane shifts away. He can be encountered again later, however, despite how the initial meeting goes. If the hanged man (see Area 1 of The Camp) is still around, it does not molest the peddler or those in contact with him. It can sense the peddler's power and otherworldly nature and chooses not to confront such a foe. Once the peddler leaves, if characters are still outside in the Camp after about 5 minutes the hanged man approaches and attacks, no longer sensing the peddler's fearsome presence.

#### MIDNIGHT PEDDLER

**XP** 2,400 *The Tome of Horrors Revised* 264 N Medium outsider (extraplanar) **Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural) hp 52 (7d10+14) Fort +6; Ref +6; Will +9

Spd 20 ft.

Melee touch +7 (death chill) Special Attacks death chill

#### Str 11, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 15 Base Atk +7; CMB +7; CMD 19 Feats Alertness, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative Skills Bluff +12, Craft (wood) +12, Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +16, Profession (peddler) +10, Sense Motive +16, Survival +10 Languages Common, Celestial, Abyssal, Terran SQ divination, plane shift

**Death Chill (Su)** The touch of the midnight peddler deals 1d4 negative levels to a living creature. The DC is 15 for the Fortitude save to remove a negative level. The save DC is Constitution-based. The midnight peddler gains 5 temporary hit points for each negative level bestowed.

**Divination (Su)** The peddler provides advice and answers correctly any one question asked of him by any creature who buys something from his cart. This ability functions similar to a divination spell (caster level 12th).

**Plane Shift (Su)** The midnight peddler can plane shift to any inner or outer plane as a move action. His cart (and any non-living matter contained therein) shifts with him. This ability otherwise functions as the spell of the same name.

On this, his first visit he pulls an old, dried codfish out of its cart. A DC 18 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that there is not a body of water supporting such a fish for several hundred miles in any direction. How it came to be in a peddler's cart on the edge of the Desolation is anybody's guess. It demands 50 gp (not iron bits!) for this item. It does not haggle and does not allow any other items to be purchased. If refused, he leaves, quickly disappearing into the darkness. If the purchase is made, the buyer finds nothing special about the fish—in fact it's so old it is no longer even edible—but in addition to the purchase the peddler related the following cryptic information:

"Not only old dead guard Black Gates but something greater as well. From blackest pits of pitch and bile a new guardian arose both foul and vile. Beware his breath of clinging death."

This refers to the tar dragon that has made its lair before the walls of the city of Tsar (Area R4). It also provides a clue to the creature's primary mode of attack giving the party opportunity to prepare to counter its adhesive bile in advance.

Development: Why the midnight peddler has chosen to appear to the party and assist them is unknown. However, it continues to do so throughout the adventure. Stage additional encounters with him whenever you choose, though they should always occur after dark when the party has stopped for the night. Each time select some worthless trinket that the peddler offers to sell for 50 gp in exchange for another cryptic clue (rather than the use of his divination ability as he would ordinarily do). Items that he has available for sale in his cart include a tropical orchid that instantly wilts and dies, a worthless iron coin (not a bit), a bag of sand, a set of two left shoes, etc. Select from the clues provided below and make up additional ones if you like. Use clues that reference an area before the party actually travels there in order to keep them relevant and useful to the party. The midnight peddler should remain a mysterious benefactor with unfathomable motives who appears to the party at seemingly random intervals.

"Relentless seekers face restless sleepers. Old betrayals walk with new life and hide their shame 'neath dark of night."

This refers to the drama playing out at Area D6 between the dwarves of Thane Fenris and the nightly undead attacks that assault their camp. The peddler's clue provides a cryptic hint to the treacherous nature of the evil force attacking the dwarves and its motive in doing so to hide its shame from its former kinsmen.

**CR 6** 

"Deep in shades of twilight, behind guards and wards of demonic might lies hope chained in darkest night. Free hope for the sake of Light. Gain boon by setting all aright."

This refers to the Tomb of the Last Justicar at Area C8 deep in the Chaos Rift. It gives hint to the nature of the guardians that the party will face and that the party can receive a reward for assisting the ghost of Gerrant. Hidden in the clue is a second clue alluding to the captive hope at Area C8-5 that has been magically bound and forced to battle those who could rescue it.

## "Giant of the earth lies beneath, in repose brings life, awake brings grief."

This refers to the stick giant buried at Area A5-4 and its role in providing a life-bringing elixir to the Reclaimers. However, it also refers to the consequences should the sleeping giant be awakened.

"Old Death lives yet, but all is not as it seems. The second sculptor waits for the unwary past the false webs of despair. Beware the voice in the cave that brings great danger."

This clue refers to the lair of the dracolisk Old Death at Area C4. It warns that there are two creatures capable of petrifying their foes and that the second one waits to catch the adventurers unawares after the first has been dealt with. It also provides warning of the derro known as "The Whisperer" that assists Old Death in his lair.

## Event 4: A Plea for Help (CR 4)

This event occurs at some time after the characters have been in the Camp for a day or two and proven themselves to be capable adventurers (say defeating Gurg, the hanged man, and/or the Bender Brothers). If the party has not already encountered Sammar (see Area 12 of The Camp), he eventually steels up the nerve to approach them with a desperate proposition.

The man before you wears the finely tailored, though travelstained garb, of an official diplomat. The lyre crest on his tunic identifies his allegiance to Bard's Gate. He is middle-aged with only a touch of gray in his hair. The worry lines on his face seem to have deepened recently. He begs your leave to speak with you and ushers you aside to a more private place before explaining.

"I am Sammar of Bard's Gate, recently installed diplomatic agent to the Camp. My masters have elected to reopen the northern trade route through the Desolation, and I have been instructed to set up an embassy here to oversee the city's interests in such a venture. I arrived here with a caravan some weeks ago and set up facilities to serve in the interim until a caravan route could be successfully established and lucrative trade opened up. My caravan departed north not a week ago to open that route and seek valuable trade with the exotic lands of the north. They are not expected back for several months, but I fear ill fortune has befallen them.

"Though the caravan had its own contingent of guardsmen, for added security they hired a band of ogre mercenaries led by a hill giant to safely escort them across the Desolation. As you are aware, the giant leader of that band returned in none-too-good-ashape and without his ogre warriors. It is too soon for the giant to have escorted the caravan all the way across the Desolation and already returned to the Camp. Therefore, I fear the worst.

"It is my understanding that you are adventurers who seek to enter the Desolation anyway. All I ask is that you search for the lost caravan and return with any survivors or news of its fate if there are none. For this task I can assure you that you will be richly rewarded by my government. Bard's Gate is a rich and powerful city with vast wealth from its commerce. It knows how to repay those who give it assistance. Please, will you help me?" Sammar cannot promise a specific amount for a reward, though he says he suspects the greater the success in finding and returning survivors the greater the reward will be. When the party has completed their search-and-rescue mission he will have to send word to his superiors in Bard's Gate and see what they send back as a reward. He assures the party that it will be generous, though. If the characters balk at such an open-ended offer, he reminds them that they were apparently headed into the Desolation anyway for their own reasons. He says that the caravan would surely be easy to find since it would have stayed on the main track northbound through the Desolation. If the party still refuses to assist him in his plight, you can have Sammar depart himself to search after a few days and utterly disappear. Perhaps he shows up later as some sort of vengeful undead bent on repaying the unhelpful PCs.

SAMMAR XP 1,200 hp 26 (See Chapter 1, Area 12)

If the party undertakes the quest, they can locate the remains of the caravan and the lair of its attackers at Area R3 of The Crossroads and

area C6 of The Chaos Rift in the Desolation (see Chapter 5).

## Event 5: Tlolox's Revenge (CR 8)

This event occurs only after the party has visited Area B3 of the Boiling Lands in the Desolation (Chapter 6). As a result Tlolox (Area B3-15 of the Boiling Lands) has come for revenge and is willing to risk the ire of the inhabitants of the Camp in order to obtain it. Tlolox comes regardless of whether he survived his previous encounter with the party or not. Even if the party just entered the encounter area and never actually met the barghest, he discovers their scent and follows nonetheless. He appears even if he was killed because of a pact he made with a powerful devil many years ago. In exchange for a service, the devil provided him with a wish to return him to life should he be slain.

In this event, Tlolox heads to the Camp to locate the party that invaded his lair and possibly killed him. He assumes dire wolf form, abandoning his equipment, for this task. He has visited the outskirts of the Camp before in his dire wolf form, and there is more than one whisper in the camp of a great beast that comes on the darkest nights to prey upon the populace. This time, however, he comes in the middle of the day, braving the inherent dangers of such an appearance, in order to seek his revenge. He correctly assumes that the citizens of the Camp will choose not to get involved in an altercation.

This encounter can occur whether the characters are inside or outside at the time. Adjust the boxed text accordingly. If the party is too powerful, add some poisonbearer ghouls to increase the difficulty as necessary.

A piercing howl cuts through the noises of the day. (*There is a crash as the door bursts open, and*) You see a huge creature with blue-tinged fur. It resembles a massive dire wolf save for the glowing eyes and look of fiendish intelligence they bear. People scatter as it slavers from its power jaws and locks its demonic gaze upon you.

Knowing that his lair has been discovered, and fearing that the local populace will band together to drive him away, Tlolox does not retreat from battle. He believes this is an all or nothing gambit that threatens his hunting grounds on the Material Plane. He stays only long enough to destroy the party (and drag one away to devour) and then heads back out to the Desolation secure in the knowledge that his reputation will prevent pursuit by the Campies.

CR 4

**TLOLOX XP** 3,200

#### **CHAPTER 2: EVENTS IN THE CAMP**

**CR 7** 

**CR** 4

hp 85 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary "Greater Barghest")

POISONBEARER GHOUL XP 1,200 Creature Collection III 93 CE Medium undead Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural) hp 39 (6d8+12) Fort +4; Ref +4; Will +7 Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2; DR 5/silver; Immune undead traits

Spd 30 ft.

Melee bite +6 (1d8+2 plus paralysis, poison, and disease) and 2 claws +6 (1d4+2 plus paralysis) Ranged spit +6 touch (poison) Special Attacks death spray, disease, paralysis (1d4+1 rounds, DC 15, elves are immune), poison

Str 15, Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14 Base Atk +4; CMB +6; CMD 19 Feats Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack Skills Acrobatics +8, Climb +11, Intimidate +11, Perception +11, Stealth +11 Languages Common, Infernal

**Death Spray (Su)** The instant a poisonbearer ghoul is killed or destroyed, pustules on its skin all burst simultaneously, so that all creatures within 5 feet are exposed to its ghoul fever.

**Disease (Su)** *Ghoul Fever:* Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 15; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1 day; *effect* 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Charisma-based. A humanoid who dies of ghoul fever rises as a ghoul at the next midnight. A humanoid who becomes a ghoul in this way retains none of the abilities it possessed in life. It is not under the control of any other ghouls, but it hungers for the flesh of the living and behaves like a normal ghoul in all respects. A humanoid of 4 Hit Dice or more rises as a ghast.

**Poison (Su)** Spit (20 ft. range)—contact or bite—injury; *save* DC 15; *frequency* 1/round 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Constitution damage and ghoul fever; *cure* 2 consecutive saves, magical means must overcome SR 19. The save DC is Charisma-based.

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# Chapter 3: A Desolation Primer

The Desolation is a vast expanse of wasted, war-torn fields. They felt the tramp of countless soldiers' feet and drank the blood of humans and other creatures beyond imagining. Mighty engines of war and works of horrific magic slammed into the armies maneuvering across the countryside and left only death in their wake. So powerful was the magic involved, so pervasive the terrors unleashed that even now, centuries later, the lands remained indelibly marked by the legacy of battle. Where once were verdant plains and fertile fields now are only ashes and boiling craters of ooze. The Desolation does not bear the characteristic fires and brimstone of what many would consider in the traditional sense, but it is often likened to the Hells nonetheless. Smoking fumaroles and burning gas vents would actually enliven this land. Instead there is only the depressingly bleak landscape of gray fading into the haze of the horizon. Even the devils

## The Army of Light

No description of the Desolation would be complete without an explanation of those who once fought here. No one knows for sure what all and how many fought from within the stained walls of Tsar, unless Orcus keeps such a tally somewhere on his own abysmal plane, but the forces arrayed against the Demon Prince are well-documented in the dusty archives of the last overking. A brief overview of that panoply follows.

As previously mentioned, the impetus for the crusade came from an alliance formed by the patriarchs of the holy churches of Thyr and Muir. Why these sibling faiths chose to approach the overking at that time, no one recalls (it is discussed in greater detail in the latter adventures of the *Slumbering Tsar* series). Yet they managed to catch the ear of the aged Overking Graeltor, and his backing put all the civilized kingdoms behind it as well as almost all of the good and neutral faiths.

To remove any suspicion of divisive religious zealotry or hidden agendas, the entire force was placed under the secular command of Graeltor's most trusted advisor and strategist, the archmage Zelkor. Though the religious stamp was left off of the overall crusade, the troops certainly welcomed the addition of celestial allies when the battle was finally joined. Immediately below Zelkor were his own advisors and *aides de camp*, a who's who of the greatest heroes, generals, and war captains of that day. They each commanded a section of the army and did much of the day-to-day planning and tactics while Zelkor, with their assistance, created and implemented the overall strategies and maneuvering of the Army of Light.

The patriarchs Grennell of Thyr and Phestus of Muir stood high among the officers of the army, for it was they who originally petitioned the overking and led to the army's muster. Strangely, equal to them in influence within the Army of Light was the church of Hecate, lawful evil goddess of magic, and her high priestess Akbeth. Many within the Army of Light opposed the addition of this evil faith to their ranks, yet Law is ever opposed to Chaos even within the Lower Planes. The followers of Hecate despised the chaotic followers of Orcus as much as did the goodly faiths, and since the legions were under the secular control of Zelkor the patriarchs of the good churches were forced to grudgingly accept the services offered by the magic goddess. It proved much to their benefit when the Battle of Tsar entered its most deadly stage as magical attacks and plagues rained down from the priests and wizards of Orcus. Then the powerful clerics and sorcerers of Hecate were able to respond with attacks against the foe of a kind the goodly-aligned spellcasters were unable or unwilling to make. One other reason existed that Zelkor willingly allowed the seemingly incongruent followers of Hecate to join in the crusade. That reason was Akbeth's lover, the peerless archmage Agamemnon, who joined in the fight and served as a wild card on the battlefield that the followers of Orcus had neither expected nor prepared for.

The patriarchs and matriarchs of other faiths held prominent positions as well over their crusader followers: Kirba of Mitra, Tondallah of Vanitthu, Virrikus of Oghma, and Dawnery of Arn to name a few. Other commanders of the forces of light included the heroic paladinlords Navarre and Bishu, the Justicars of Muir Alaric of Tircople and Gerrant of Gilboath, the knight commanders Saracek, Brandt Dracobane, Argos the aasimar-knight, and Carileus, Grezell the incomparable swordsman, and the elven warrior-maiden Shelfaer. Augmenting these martial heroes were other personages of renown including the powerful cleric and wizard twins Plethor and Xillin, the wizardess Deserach, consort of Lord Navarre, the priest-mages of Hecate Nemethiar and the elf Phalen, the sorceress Itara, and the mysterious wizard Me'Nak. Of the dwarves came King Kroma leading his doughty warriors. The elven lords Ulo and Tarrazal brought archers and spearmen from the Green Realm. The storm giant Thraestos brought a troop of his brethren and lesser kin. Even Queen Tyrissta of the Small Kingdoms brought contingents of gnomish and halfling skirmishers. But the nonhuman forces were not limited to the mortal realms. From the heavenly planes, leading legions of celestial allies, were the empyreal angel Naphrathoth, the leonal Lord Karask, the hound archon Amaleal, and the planetar general Nimrod. In all over 140,000 soldiers, wizards, clerics, and knights - human, elven, dwarven, giantish, gnomish, halfling, and celestial - stood on the fields before the stained walls of Tsar.

Most controversial of all those allied with the Army of Light was the sorcerer Slavish. A powerful spellcaster - some said the equal of Zelkor or Agamemnon even - Slavish was also a devoted follower of the infernal lord Baalzebul. Like Hecate, Slavish's devil-liege was also lawfully aligned and therefore opposed to the demonic chaos of Orcus, but the forces of good were unwilling to admit him into their ranks. Allowing a follower of an Archduke of Hell, the opposite end of the evil spectrum from the demons of Orcus, was considered anathema to their cause by many of the goodly host. However, Zelkor's judgment to admit him finally prevailed in light of what Slavish had to offer to the cause. For Slavish was not only a powerful sorcerer but also bore the sword Demonbane, an artifact so powerful it was said to be capable of slaying Orcus himself. In fact it was forged by the hands of Baalzebul for that very purpose. With such a potent weapon in their midst, Zelkor felt the Army of Light could not afford to turn away the help offered by Slavish. Thus the servant of an arch-devil was the last member admitted into the Army of Light before the march for Tsar.

#### CHAPTER 3: A DESOLATION PRIMER

of the pits might find such a place unpleasant.

The Desolation stretches roughly 70 miles east and west and 50 miles north to south. Its southern boundary, marked by the tiny refuge known as the Camp, gradually rises to the stony hills that mark the northern edge of the civilized kingdoms. To the north the trade road passes another set of hills before, according to rumors, eventually entering a true desert land filled with oasis kingdoms, genies, and the exotic peoples known only in legends in the lands to the south. East the Desolation gradually enters a wild and broken land, more verdant but perhaps no less inhospitable. For here the lands are the homes of the many orc and goblinoid clans before finally reaching a little-visited and rocky sea coast. The western edge is the Desolation's clearest demarcation as the sheer vertical cliffs of the Stoneheart Mountains march along parallel to the trade road, visible as a seemingly impassible wall of gray stone.

The climate of the Desolation is universally dry. A few gully washers hit in the late fall, but otherwise it remains bone dry. In fact, the ground stays so dry that there is an almost constant haze from whitish, powderlike dust that rises with the constant breezes. This haze lends to the overall gloominess and feeling of isolation and claustrophobia that is sometimes experienced on this otherwise wide-open plain. Occasional dust storms whip up and race south, usually petering out before reaching the Camp. These billowing white clouds are called bone storms because of the general opinion that the white dust is actually the powdered remains of the fallen soldiers' bones trampled underfoot by the armies and then left to bake in the sun for centuries. Visiting necromancers have taken samples before and tend to concur that there is some truth to these tales. In the summer the temperatures rise as high as the 90s with an extremely low humidity, but in the winter bitterly cold winds come down off the mountains to the northwest and create conditions well below freezing for weeks at a time.

The Desolation is divided into four quadrants. These are clearly marked by the two roads that cross in the Desolation's center. The landscape even tends to change somewhat, roughly corresponding to these artificial dividers. The four quadrants each receive their own chapter in this adventure and are called, going counter-clockwise from southeast to southwest, *The Ashen Waste, The Chaos Rift, The Boiling Lands, and The Dead Fields.* Further there is a fifth section of the Desolation that corresponds to no particular quadrant and receives its own chapter as well. This is composed of the roads themselves that bisect the Desolation and the ruined city around which all of these lands lie. This chapter is called *The Crossroads and Tsar.* 

The mood of the Desolation should always be somber and depressing. Thousands of beings died here, good and evil, extraplanar and mundane, Celestial and Abyssal. It is almost as if the lands retain a memory of that time of strife and countless horrors. How many voices were stilled to never be heard again is beyond count. The wind seems to sing a funeral dirge, low and constant; perhaps it is the voices of those lost. Never let the players forget that they are in a place marked by the agony of thousands. Never let them think of the Desolation as just another terrain feature to be crossed. Much of the atmosphere of the adventure comes from the constant reminder that the Desolation is first and foremost a battlefield, and that the adventurers are merely following in the footsteps of thousands of others who have already fought and bled on this land.

The danger-fraught reaches of the Desolation beckon as the Camp is left behind and the wild barrens of the Ashen Waste and the unplumbed secrets of the Chaos Rift wait to be discovered in Slumbering *Tsar: The Desolation, Part 2—The Ghosts of Victory.* 







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