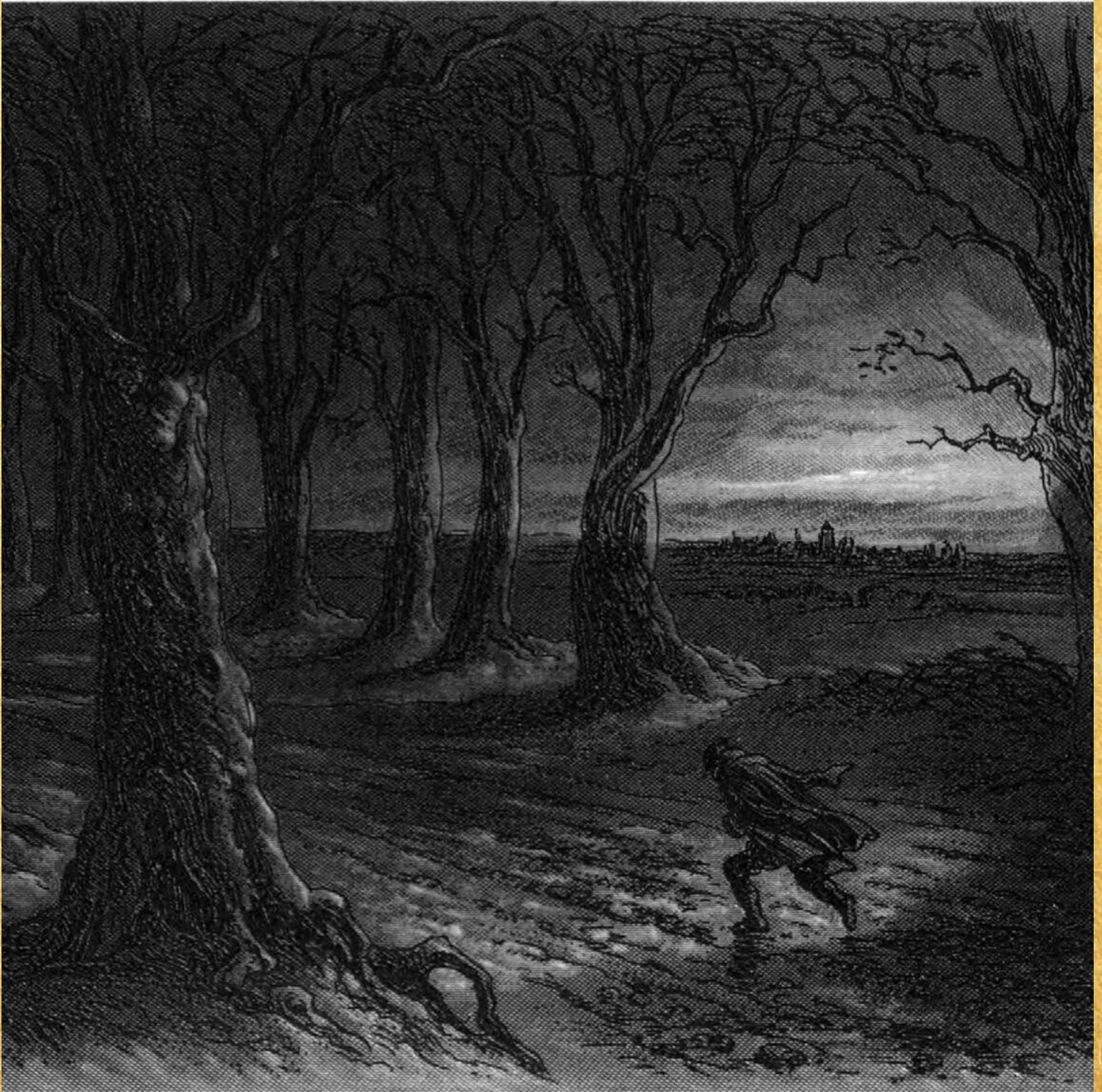


The Moonshadow Murders



An adventure compatible with the Pathfinder RPG

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Adventure Summary

Within the small town of Rivercrest, near the Witherbark Forest, a terror has crawled from the darkness of the past. The bodies of several townsfolk have been discovered in their homes with a darkened shadow emblazoned on the walls above where they lay depicting the horrific act. The killings dredge up memories of a person, long dead, that terrorized the town over a decade ago. Now, the Mayor and Watch Captain of Rivercrest have decided to seek help from adventurers in order to stop whatever creature is responsible.

The PCs are directed to the site of the latest murder and allowed to investigate. Throughout the adventure they will question witnesses, and find clues to the identity of the killer. Their investigations will draw the attention of the creature responsible, a bugbear named Mowg, that feeds on the fear of the townsfolk as well as their flesh. Eventually the PCs will track Mowg to his home in the wilds and do battle with the twisted creature.

Introduction

The town of Rivercrest is a rather small community nestled against the Witherbark Forest. Over a decade ago, the normally quiet town was shocked by a series of sadistic murders. Victims were found in shadowed alleys; the scene of their horrific end painted in their own blood upon the walls of nearby

buildings. The killer was eventually exposed as Daethelin Moonshadow, a reclusive half-elven man that spent much of his time hunting in Witherbark.

After his arrest, a search of his residence revealed that the murders were a part of some sort of transcendence ritual involving a powerful demonic entity known as The Blood King. Once this was discovered the local church ordered a cleansing of the home and all other structures and remains that could have been tainted by this demonic force. Somehow, the weapon used in these terrible rites was lost before it could be cleansed, and on the day that he was to be executed, Daethelin proclaimed a curse upon the town that his work would be finished when his blade was discovered.

Now, more than ten years later, it appears that Daethelin's curse may have taken root. Though no one has come forward claiming that the blade was found, several townsfolk have been found dead, with a strange red-tinted, shadowy image upon the walls overlooking their corpse that depicts their final moments. Though some of the townsfolk have forgotten the horrors of those slayings; the mayor, Ricard Wesselin, and watch captain, Thrumbold Greystoke, recall them quite vividly and are on the lookout for any passing adventurers that may be of assistance in tracking down the killer. They hope to end this quickly before the fear that has taken root in the townsfolk turns to madness.

Entering Rivercrest

As the PCs move into town; they pass a small circle of wagons adorned with rather flamboyant decor marking them as belonging to northern gypsies. Any townsfolk they see are obviously made uneasy by the appearance of newcomers even as they toil away at their daily chores. Even the beasts of burden seem suspicious of any travelers as they watch the PCs walk by.

The structures of the town are simple affairs constructed mostly of wood. They show signs of age, but are mostly in good repair. The roadside inn, The Drunken Huntsman, rests on the edge of town across from Lorkin's General Store. Continuing down the main street, the PCs can see other businesses mixed in with small cottage homes. At the town center, a building constructed of carved stone seems out of place amidst all of the woodwork of the rest of the structures. A large bronze symbol in the shape of a key hangs above the marble doors of the impressive edifice.

Before the PCs make their way too far into town a pair of watchmen approach them. Though they might be suspicious of newcomers, the pair are relatively hospitable as long as the PCs don't go out of their way to be troublesome. The two guardsmen ask the group basic questions; where they're from, what they're doing in Rivercrest, things of that nature. It does not take long, however, before the subject of the murders is brought up.

"You folks really should think about moving on before too long. There's a killer that lurks about at night. Wouldn't want you to end up like that poor gypsy boy."

The two guardsmen don't have much in the way of information about the killings, just that there have been five in total so far and that a strange shadow is left on the walls overlooking the corpses. The guardsmen mention that the PCs should speak with Captain Greystoke if they wish to be of assistance.

Notable Features of Rivercrest

Rivercrest is home to roughly five hundred citizens, many of which work in the lumber industry surrounding the forest. A fair few farms dot the southern edge of town in to the plains, and most of the businesses

cater to supplying the lumberjacks with their necessary tools and equipment. A notable exception to this is The Drunken Huntsman, a roadside inn near the main trade thoroughfare into town on the western road. The Huntsman caters to caravan drivers and merchants that come to town to negotiate for raw lumber or finished goods from the skilled carpenters of Rivercrest. As such, this quaint inn has services one would not expect from a town this size. Magically heated baths are available in every room, and the ale and wine selection covers a vast assortment of libations including some dwarven stouts from the Mountain Kings and select reserves from elven vintners of the Forest Realm.

The temple of the Grand Vault rests at the center of town. The building doubles as a town hall and is used to host all major civic functions and festivals. The temple also serves as the town's bank, with a rather extensive and secure vault built into the structure. At the end of every month, Mayor Wesselin holds town meetings at the temple wherein citizens can air their grievances and issues facing the town can be discussed in a civil manner. Once all discussion has ended, everyone in attendance is treated to a well-prepared dinner from **Hannah Mistwillow**, the high priestess of the temple.

The most significant structure of Rivercrest is actually outside town, on the edge of the forest; the lumber mill. This imposing wooden structure is most notable, perhaps, for the fact that it is also mobile. Decades ago, the mayor of Rivercrest struck a bargain with a traveling wizard. In exchange for animating the mill (allowing for easy collection of felled lumber), a single white oak sapling must be planted at the center of the forest near a trio of standing stones. When that task was complete, the wizard worked his magics, allowing the large structure to follow the lumberjacks to new work sites.

Meeting with Greystoke

Thrumbold Greystoke is seated in his office at the watch garrison on the north edge of town. He is an aging dwarf with silver hair and a coppery tinge to his skin from years spent working out in the sun. The room itself is sparsely furnished; a single tall bookshelf and armor rack with a battle-worn breastplate are the only company for the sturdy oak desk in the center of the room.

As the PCs enter Thrumbold's office, he appears engrossed in several volumes which are spread across his desk. He glances up briefly from his tomes, and questions the PCs on their business with him. When they explain that they are here to assist with investigating the recent killings, the Captain's face turns grim.

"Aye, nasty piece of business that. Got everyone in town shook up thinkin the Moonshadow has returned from the grave. Mayor Wesselin and I have put up a bounty of one hundred gold crowns for anyone that might have information on the killings. If you can find whomever is responsible. I'll double it."

Captain Greystoke is an aging dwarf originally hailing from the Mountain Kingdoms. He left the toil of the mines in his younger years to explore the regions surrounding The lake of Terrors. His aspirations were cut short, unfortunately, in the Witherbark forest when his survey team was beset by an ettercap and its brood of massive spiders. Most of the team was able to retreat, but Thrumbold had to be carried away after receiving a bite to his leg and partially succumbing to the ettercap's venom.

The team found their way back to Rivercrest, but they lost much of their equipment when they withdrew from the forest and so were forced to return home. Thrumbold elected to stay in Rivercrest to aid the community that had shown compassion to him and his team. Once he was able, Thrumbold swung his axe in service to the Morribund family lumber mill. Thrumbold went on to eventually join the watch after a particularly savage series of goblin attacks. He has slowly risen through the ranks by the simple fact that he has outlived those that held rank before him. He still prefers walking the streets to working in his office, but he knows his skills are better served training others.

The current situation has Thrumbold rattled. Much of the evidence in these killings appears to point to a supernatural origin. Even worse, the similarity to the Moonshadow slayings is uncanny, not to mention the haunting echoes that are left once the deed is done. Thrumbold knows he has to keep his worries concealed from the rest of the town or outright panic could erupt. He views the PCs as a means to keep more of his men patrolling the streets while outsiders search out the killer to put an end to this nightmare.

The PCs are free to ask Captain Greystoke questions about the murders, he will try to answer them as best as he can. Below are some answers to questions that PCs are likely to ask. If they ask questions outside of those listed, the Captain's answers are almost always in the context of his experience with the killings from a decade ago so feel free to embellish those tales as much or as little as you like.

Who is The Moonshadow?: "Daethelin Moonshadow was a half-blood huntsman that set up a lodge just outside of town around twenty years ago. Quiet fellow, spent a lot of time in the forest trapping small game and hunting. Around ten years ago, he killed half a dozen townsfolk over the course of a month before we figured out it was him. He was executed by hanging, but his last words were a curse upon this town."

How were these people killed?: "Single slice across the neck. Probably from a dagger or other short blade. A few had bites taken out of them as well, but I believe those happened after they had died."

Why does everyone think that Moonshadow has returned?: "Similar circumstances of the killings. A shadowy image of the murder appears on a nearby wall overlooking the bodies. The bodies are partially exsanguinated, and they have a rune carved into their forehead." (The Captain is unwilling to reproduce the mark because of its accursed nature, but will instead direct the PCs to visit the mortuary.)

Is there anything different about these recent killings?: "Aye, some of the bodies have been partially eaten. Almost looks like an animal bite. Some folks think Moonshadow might have come back as a ghoul or other foul creature."

Are there any witnesses to the crime?: "No one has seen it happen, but one of the caravaners, Senescha, heard the screams. The creature she described was a looming figure that seemed to collect shadows around itself and drowned out the light. It seemed to evaporate in the night after it made the kill."

Was anyone working with Daethelin ten years ago?: "Not that we are aware of. Daethelin kept to himself. He had a bit of a relationship with Ecaterina Vinnick."

We've questioned her about the recent events, but haven't found anything to link her to them. She is certainly less distressed about the murders than anyone else, though." (The Captain obviously holds a great deal of suspicion towards Ecaterina. Several townsfolk do as well as they believe her to be complicit in the incident a decade ago.)

When have the murders occurred?: "Always at night and during a new phase of the moon. The new moon, crescent moon, half moon, gibbous moon, and full moon." (The most recent murder took place during the full moon. There are only a few days before the moon reaches a proper crescent.)

How many murders have occurred recently? "Five so far; the most recent was one of the gypsies just outside town. Fella by the name of Piotr. He was on watch at the caravan. Senescha, another gypsy, is the young lass that heard it happen. Poor girl was scared daft."

Where have the murders occurred?: "First two were on the streets after dark near the Drunken Huntsman. After that, folks stopped stayin out so late and I put more of the watch on the streets at night. Didn't help though, the next one was in their home. Fourth victim was out by the lumber mill and the last one was at the caravan."

The PCs can request the names of all of the victims and witnesses as well as gain access to the locations where the murders occurred. If they wish to enter private residences, however, Captain Greystoke insists on the PCs being accompanied by a member of the watch. If the PCs would like to see the bodies of the victims only the two most recent have yet to be buried. Piotr and Skjarl's bodies are in a magically chilled room at the temple of Abadar in town.

The Investigation

Once the PCs have been given leave to begin their investigation; they have a multitude of avenues ahead of them. There is no particular order that the PCs need to follow while investigating the murders, but as they progress they will attract the attention of Mowg. The bugbear prefers to use his abilities and those of the weapon he wields to frighten the PCs rather than outright kill them. Calling illusions of shadowy demonic forms, leaving grisly trophies out-

side their inn room windows, or even a whispered message describing their impending deaths could all be used to attempt to frighten the new investigators. As the PCs persist in their investigation, Mowg will attempt to divert their suspicions toward Ecaterina Vinnick by planting evidence in the woman's home, a trophy taken from his most recent victim.

Investigating these locations should take at least a couple of days. Mowg is likely to notice the PCs visiting some of the sites of his work as he enjoys observing the aftermath of his deeds and spends much of the afternoon observing Rivercrest from a nearby wooded hill. He sees in the PCs an interesting challenge and tries to frighten them in order to sweeten their flesh for when he eventually moves in for the kill. As it is difficult for Mowg to move around within the town during the day, any actions he takes during that time will likely occur as the investigation moves beyond the urban locales. Below are some examples of actions that Mowg might take to frighten the PCs:

Writing on the window: The PCs awaken in the morning to find bloody writing scrawled on their inn room window. The scrawls are crude but legible. The message should be something vaguely menacing like "I see you" or "Nowhere to hide". Something that could spook the players.

Creeping shadows: Using his innate *minor image* ability, Mowg makes it appear as though the shadows of nearby structures, trees, or people are clawing their way toward the PCs (Will save DC: 10 or

Sidebar: Victims and witnesses

Victims:

1. Henrich Willoughby (Human Male, 24 years old) Found in Woodcutter's alley, Killed during the new moon.
2. Ilain Clifton (Human Female 30 years old) Found on Market Street, killed during the waning crescent moon.
3. Edmun Longstride (Halfling Male 36 years old) Found in his home on Watchmen's Way, killed during the half moon.
4. Skjarl Drummond (Human male 28 years old) Found near the lumber mill, killed during the waning gibbous moon.
5. Piotr Himloch (Human Male 20 years old) Found near the Varisian caravan, killed during the full moon

Witnesses:

1. Senescha (Female Human 17 years old) Varisian gypsy heard muffled whimpers and a brief struggle just outside the caravan circle.

become shaken). Note: This is a short range ability. Mowg would have to be well hidden for the PCs to not have a chance of spotting him. This could be combined with disguise self to appear as one of the townsfolk in order to get close enough, but perceptive PCs may still be able to notice the bugbear, so be cautious.

The gift: A grisly gift is placed on the outside window sill of the PCs inn room(s). Severed heads of small animals equal in number to the size of the party are placed with their hollow eye sockets facing toward the room.

The doppelganger: The PCs discover a corpse that looks exactly like one of their own group. The corpse is a manifestation of Mowg's minor image ability and has no solid substance so any investigation is likely to reveal the corpse as an illusion. If the PCs take more than a few days during their investigation, this could be performed on Mowg's next murder victim during the waxing gibbous moon. Again, Mowg would have to be nearby, so be cautious with this and have a good escape plan for Mowg in case he is discovered.

A. The Caravan Circle

Four large wagons painted a vibrant array of colors form a rough circle near a copse of ash trees. A small cooking fire at the center of the circle sputters and coughs beneath a black iron cauldron whose contents bubble and churn while eight sturdy draft horses shuffle and stamp their hooves nervously as they graze on nearby grasses. The aroma of cooking spices mingles with the musty scent of beasts and a sharp, almost bitter, stench; to create a nearly nauseating bouquet. An eerie silence covers the camp like a blanket.

The gypsies are currently inside the wagons offering prayers to the Maiden of Roads for their fallen comrade and asking protection against the evil spirit that slew him. The PCs can hear the murmuring of these prayers with a DC 15 perception check. A knowledge: religion check (DC: 12) is also possible to identify the bitter scent that mingles in the air as scornweed which is used in rituals to ward against vengeful spirits of the dead.

If the PCs attempt to get the gypsy's attention before entering the caravan circle, the wagon master **Anatol**, a large middle-aged man with a bushy black beard exits his carriage to meet them. If they instead choose to investigate the circle without the gypsy's knowledge, the caravaners will be finishing their prayers within several minutes before exiting their wagons to continue their preparations to leave town as they have no desire to tempt fate with the town "curse". They hope to be able to leave within the next few days.

Anatol is the wagon master and spokesperson for the group and will be most likely to answer any questions about the murder of their fellow, though he does not know many specifics about what happened. Senescha is the individual that can give the most information, but she is suspiciously absent from the caravan preparations. If the PCs ask about Senescha, Anatol will simply say, "*Senescha is unavailable.*". The PCs can try to press the issue with a DC:13 Diplomacy or Intimidate check. If successful, Anatol explains that Senescha is being blessed by their road guide to ensure that she is not somehow marked by the town's curse and that the ritual takes roughly an hour to complete. If the PCs insist on speaking with Senescha immediately, Anatol becomes rather gruff asking the PCs to leave since they cannot respect the caravan's traditions.

The general atmosphere of the caravan is one of fear with a touch of suspicion. Anatol has been around long enough to know that his people are not the most well thought-of outside of their homeland. He does not want to believe that anyone in town would be responsible but the alternative of a sadistic killer's curse does not place his mind at ease either.

Anatol is typically a jovial individual, quick to laugh or joke, even in the most inappropriate of times. He is understandably shaken by the loss his caravan has suffered. The loss made even more personal because Piotr was Anatol's son. Anatol does not mention this fact to the PCs, but it is possible to deduce that the wagon master is hiding personal feelings regarding the victim with a successful sense motive check DC: 15. If the PCs attempt to coerce the information out of the wagon master, he relents and explains his relationship to the victim.

If the PCs do question Anatol about the murder, below are the answers to some likely questions:

Did anyone else see what happened?: "It was late, only Piotr and Senescha were on watch. We awoke when Senescha screamed, but saw nothing in the darkness."

Where was Piotr found?: "He was not far from the circle, only a few paces outside of the fire light. We don't know why he would have left the safety of the fire. Perhaps the curse addled his mind."

Was there anything strange about the body?: "There was a mark upon his forehead. I had never seen it before, but I could draw it for you if you like."

Had anyone from town visited the caravan within a day or two prior to the murder?: "Just two visitors. I had business with Celise Rayn, the town herbalist, and Ecaterina Vinnick came to see our road guide, Mika."

The mark on Piotr's forehead is the demonic rune for The Blood King. This can be determined with a knowledge: planes or religion check DC: 15.



If the PCs wait to speak with Senescha after her blessing has been completed, the young woman will exit out of a large wagon adorned with various butterfly wood carvings and murals. Senescha is a young woman, around seventeen years of age; her skin is tanned from a life on the road and thick black hair frames her round, childish, face. Herbal pigments adorn her features with spots of blues and purples creating a form similar to butterfly wings around her eyes. If any PCs observe her as she leaves the wagon they can make a sense motive check with a DC: 13 to determine that Senescha is nervous and seems to avoid stepping in shadows whenever possible.

Exiting the wagon behind Senescha is an older woman just passing beyond middle aged; wearing a vibrantly colored headscarf and an equally flamboyant dress. Bangles and beads clatter and clink as she walks. In her hands is a white birch cane which she taps in front of her as she walks, and her eyes are a solid milky white. This is **Mika** (F Oracle 4), the road guide.

Mika maintains a very stern demeanor, but this is just an act she performs in front of outsiders. Who

would want their fortunes told by a whimsical, jubilant, blind woman, after all? She tries to see the best in those she meets but her many years on the road have made her wary of strangers.

Senescha is distraught from the loss of her friend and fearful that whatever creature slew Piotr will come for her next. This makes speaking with Senescha about the night of the attack difficult as she feels that reviewing the events could draw the attention of the demon that killed Piotr. The PCs can soothe her with a diplomacy check DC: 15, to make the interrogation run more smoothly. Intimidate could also be substituted, but it would likely harm the already disturbed young woman and the rest of the caravan would soon put an end to the interrogation.

Following are some answers to questions that PCs are likely to ask. Should the PCs ask questions that are not listed, Senescha's knowledge should be fairly limited, but answers to any questions regarding the killer should be used to create a supernatural mystique surrounding the monster. Use these questions to build up the killer in the eyes of the PCs as a malicious force rather than an individual so that when the PCs do encounter it, they may not know exactly what they face.

Did you see what happened to Piotr?: "I couldn't, it was too dark. Even though he was holding a torch. It looked like a black curtain was drawn between us. I could see the light, but it was so dim."

Why did Piotr leave the caravan circle?: "Piotr heard something rustling the grasses near the horses. He thought it might have been a lone wolf or goblin dog. I told him it was probably nothing, but he went to look anyway."

Did you see what the killer looked like?: "It was a demon! Like it crawled out of some darkened pit! Shadows seemed to swirl about it as it moved. All I remember is the shadows and those vivid glowing eyes; like those of a cat."

Do you know of anyone that might want to harm Piotr? "Not that I know of. He liked to haggle with shopkeepers more than he should, but he never caused a problem with any of them. I guess he got in to a bit of a spat with a mercenary or guardsmen at

the lumber mill when he went to order some roof slats for the wagons.”

Were the horses behaving strangely before the attack?: “Not at all. Which is why I tried to tell Piotr that nothing was out there. They didn’t whinney or beat their hooves at all. Not until after it happened. Afterward they all panicked and bolted.”

The road guide, Mika, stays with Senescha as the PCs question the younger woman. She does not interrupt unless she feels that the PCs are too harsh or belligerent toward Senescha. The PCs are free to ask her any questions they like. Mika’s knowledge of the attack is limited, much like the rest of the caravan she was only roused by Senescha’s screams. After the attack, however, she has used her abilities as an oracle to reveal that unquiet spirits exist at the location where Piotr was killed. She has already shared this information with her caravan, but could warn the PCs of the haunt provided they haven’t already stumbled upon it. If the PCs learned of Mika’s meeting with Ecaterina, they may wish to speak with the road guide about the purpose of that encounter as well.

Ecaterina came to Mika because she had heard that gypsy road guides were granted abilities to foretell the future with tarot decks. She believes, much like the rest of the townsfolk, that the recent murders are the work of her former lover, Daethelin, returned from the grave to complete his work. As Mika read the Harrow, she could not say with certainty that Daethelin had returned. This seemed to upset Ecaterina who continued to demand the “truth” about her lover from Mika. Eventually Mika tired of the unruly behavior and forced the erratic woman to leave with a *command* spell.

The PCs will likely want to investigate the area where Piotr was killed. The gypsies are willing to point out where Piotr was slain beyond the wagon circle, but none of them approach the location with the PCs. As the PCs approach the scene, read the following:

As the PCs approach the area where Piotr was killed they begin to experience an unreasonable sense of dread. This is due to the haunt that has begun to form surrounding Piotr’s death. As this is the most recent slaying in Rivercrest the haunt is the weakest of all that have formed around the five victims,

Rounding the corner of the wagon furthest from the road, your eyes are drawn to a silhouette emblazoned on the rear door to the carriage. Two dark humanoid shapes are emblazoned upon the flamboyant colors of the caravan wagon as if the shadows of these two people were somehow ripped from their living anchors and placed upon the wooden frame. The first figure is smaller, it’s arms raised in defense...or shock; while the second appears as a hulking brute at least a head and a half taller than its companion with its right arm raised holding a vicious, curved blade.

Haunt: Dread in the Dark (CR 1)

XP: 400

NE haunt with (10’ square surrounding crime scene)

Caster level: 1st, Notice: Perception DC 10 (To see glowing yellow eyes in the shadow of the nearby wagon)

HP: 3 Trigger: Proximity, Reset: 1 Day

Effect: The light around the area begins to dim as a looming translucent form rises from the grass with flashing red eyes and bared yellowed fangs. All those in the radius must make a DC: 10 Will save or become shaken for the next hour.

Destruction: Daethelin’s blade must be submerged in holy water for 24 hours.

Because of the formation of the haunt, the area surrounding Piotr’s death has been virtually undisturbed. Searching the area could reveal some important clues about the mystery. A perception check DC: 13 of the ground near where Piotr was killed reveals a pair of large boot prints. Recent rains have washed the prints out making it difficult to determine specifics about the creature they belong to, but a DC: 18 survival (tracking) check will reveal that individual is likely almost 7 feet tall and weighs over 300 pounds. These tracks can be followed easily enough heading towards the north edge of town for approximately one hundred feet. After this point, Mowg began to spend time covering his tracks and doubling back to evade any pursuit. A DC: 26 (firm ground, 2 days have passed, 4 hours of rain, and hiding tracks) survival (tracking) check could allow the PCs to follow the tracks to the forest edge, but anything beyond that becomes increasingly difficult as Mowg knows the area well enough to keep to harder packed ground or stone to further hamper pursuit.

A perception check DC: 15 of the area near the wagon is enough to discover several scratch marks in the wooden wheel facing away from the camp. The scratches appear to have been made by a small bladed weapon. Anyone looking at the scratches that has ranks in linguistics can make a DC: 18 check to notice that the scratches form very crude runes of the abyssal alphabet. Anyone with Abyssal as a language could translate the runes as "The Blood King Calls".

XP Award: If the PCs successfully gather information from the camp, award them 300 xp. While the gypsies may not have much information about who the killer is they do provide some insight to the villains capabilities.

B. The Temple Mortuary

The imposing grey stone edifice of the temple looms before you. Great stained glass windows line the outer walls depicting a man in golden robes performing various miracles over throngs of worshippers in great walled cities. The heavy marble doors of the temple stand open, beckoning you inside.

As the PCs enter the temple; they should be greeted almost immediately by a young acolyte named **Priscilla Holstead**. Priscilla is a boisterous young woman enthusiastic about her faith in the Grand Vault and very unlike the typical stoic adherents to the faith. As she has never seen the PCs before, she assumes they are newcomers to town and immediately begins to explain the various services that the church performs in town unless the PCs stop her.

"Good day to you folks! The servants of The Grand Vault welcome you to our temple. We hold sermons nightly led by Ecclesiarch Mistwillow and host town meetings on the first Moonday of every month. We also offer full banking services to all citizens so if you're looking store valuables or require a personal loan we would be more than happy to assist. We also make daily trips to the lumber mill to offer butter rolls and water to the workers and welcome any volunteers to join us. How can the Servants of the Vault assist you folk today?"

If the PCs explain that they are here investigating the recent murders, Priscilla's jovial demeanor diminishes slightly. The acolyte then explains that the

PCs will want to speak with Ecclesiarch Mistwillow if they have questions regarding the curse or the victims. The PCs can make a sense motive check DC: 13 to notice that Priscilla's change in demeanor could be due to a trauma associated with the murders or the curse. In fact Priscilla is actually an orphan taken in by the church a decade ago when her parents were slain by Daethelin Moonshadow. The current incidents hold too many similarities for the young acolyte's liking and she believes that Daethelin may indeed have returned. She hasn't been brave enough to investigate the Moonshadow Lodge herself, but after the PCs meet with the Ecclesiarch she could mention the lodge as a possibility for the killer's refuge.

Once Priscilla knows the reason that the PCs wish to speak with the Ecclesiarch, she will lead the PCs to the Priestess' chambers on the upper floor of the temple.

The Ecclesiarch's chambers are smaller than you would expect considering the size of the temple itself. Light pours in to the room through two large stained glass windows. Two massive bookshelves dominate the southern wall brimming with assortments of religious texts and treatises. A grand oak desk sits as the centerpiece of the room an ornate golden key inlaid upon its surface.

Ecclesiarch Mistwillow is currently seated at her desk adjusting the banking ledger of the temple. **Hannah Mistwillow** (F Cleric 4) appears to be a woman in her mid-thirties with long black hair that curls toward the end. Her slender frame is hidden beneath the many layers of her religious vestments and a pair of golden spectacles frame her bright green eyes. Though she appears to be quite young she is, in fact, over a hundred years old. Her long hair hides the slightly pointed ears that betray her elven heritage.

Hannah arrived in town almost eight years ago as a replacement for the previous Ecclesiarch that had died. She is aware of the murders that happened prior to her arrival through notes and journals left by her predecessor **Reginauld Holbruth**, but has no first hand knowledge of the events. She believes that the current predicament facing the town is nothing more than the work of a deranged vagabond that

has yet to reveal themselves. She has worked with Watch Captain Greystoke casting auguries to help focus the investigation, but too many answers have been unclear to be of much use.

As the PCs enter her chamber the Ecclesiarch is adjusting the temple's banking ledger. She addresses the party without looking up from her work:

"Greetings, to what do I owe this intrusion?"

If the PCs explain that they are assisting the watch with investigating the recent murders, Hannah assumes that they have come to either inspect the bodies that have yet to be buried or cremated or that they are here to request more auguries about the case. She has kept augury prepared in the event that Captain Greystoke returned with more questions so the PCs could convince her to use those magics if they have questions.

If the PCs wish to examine the bodies of Piotr and Skjarl, Hannah will escort them to the mortuary in the cellar of the temple. She is not fond of the idea of showing the cellar area to non-clergy as that is also the location of the temple vault. The vault is hidden behind a secret door, however, so spotting it is likely to be difficult (DC: 23). The Ecclesiarch does keep a sharp eye on the PCs while they are in the cellar to ensure that they do not attempt anything nefarious.

Read the following when the PCs arrive at the Mortuary:

The air of the white stone chamber is sharp and cold. Lining the walls of three sides are three foot square iron hatches. Soft, blue, light bathes the chamber, emanating from the maws of snarling brass lions mounted in to each wall. Two solid marble tables sit on either side of a wash basin at the center of the room.

The air in the room is cold enough that without cold weather gear the PCs will have to make fortitude saves after an hour or suffer non-lethal damage from frostbite as per the cold weather rules. There are two sets of heavy wool robes hanging beside the door that function cold weather clothing.

Hannah will open two hatches set in the wall opposite the entry door that contain the bodies of Piotr and Skjarl; then retreat to the other side of the entry-

way to escape the cold while still being able to keep an eye on the PCs.

As the PCs examine the bodies, they easily notice both have long slashes across their throats which is likely what resulted in their deaths. It is also easy enough to notice that Piotr is missing his right ear while Skjarl is absent a thumb on his left hand. Skjarl is also missing a large chunk of flesh on his right leg that appears to have been torn out rather than cut. Each corpse also has a jagged rune burned in to their foreheads.

The PCs can use various skills to determine more exacting details about the bodies and their deaths. For Piotr: a perception check DC: 15 reveals a stab wound to the throat covered up by the wide slash. The puncture is at a rather extreme angle indicating that the assailant was likely much taller than Piotr. A heal check DC: 14 shows advanced necrosis around the wound on Piotr's throat indicating that Blue Whinnis poison was used on the weapon. For Skjarl: A perception check DC: 16 reveals small tufts of fur beneath his fingernails that indicate he tried to fight off his attacker. The fur itself is coarse and brown a knowledge nature check DC: 18 reveals that it is likely fur from a bugbear. A heal check DC: 15 determines that the bite wound on Skjarl's leg was inflicted before he died; his thumb was likewise removed before his death. For both: A knowledge planes or religion DC: 15 reveals the jagged rune on their foreheads to be the symbol for The Blood King.

XP award: If the PCs discover any of the hidden details about the bodies award them 200 xp.

C. The Lumber Mill

The mill currently rests approximately half of a mile outside of town. Despite Skjarl's murder only , the atmosphere around the mill is still bustling with activity. The foreman (and owner) of the mill is **Natalie Crobthorn**, a rather crass woman of advancing age but remarkable business sense. Natalie cares for the well-being of her workers and was deeply upset by Skjarl's death. She knows that the mill is the lifeblood of the town so she has kept it open and running but she now sends all of her workers home an hour before sunset making sure that no one leaves alone. Natalie has also hired a pair of mercenaries to be on hand throughout the working day.

Nestled beyond a low hill where the plains give way to Witherbark Forest, a structure of mingled stone and wood rests upon stilts resembling the legs of a gigantic beast. Intricate carvings along the exterior walls give them the illusion of girding the body of a massive ox. Jutting out from the roof facing the trees, a bull's head carved from dark wood with polished bronze horns casts its gaze down toward a triangular stack of trees. Every few minutes a high pitched whine erupts from within the mill followed by a shower of sawdust erupting from a chute at the rear.

One of the mercenaries, a dark skinned tribal woman with studded leather armor named **Mussa** (F Warrior 2), approaches the PCs to ask what business they have at the mill. As long as the PCs are upfront and truthful about their reasons for coming to the mill, Mussa allows them access. The PCs are free to investigate as they see fit, but without knowing precisely where Skjarl was killed it will be extremely difficult to locate any remaining evidence as the area has seen a lot of traffic over the last several days. Talking to Natalie or some of the other workers is likely their best recourse to find out where to start.

Natalie can be found inside the mill overseeing the operation. She's not particularly fond of interruptions, but Skjarl's death weighs heavily on her mind and she is willing to help any way that she can. Unfortunately all she knows about the murder is that some of her workers talked about seeing lights drifting about in the forest a few days before it happened and where the body was discovered. The lumber mill has moved about a quarter mile north along the tree line, but the site is still visible from here. Natalie points to a trio of small, gnarled trees at the edge of the forest to indicate where Skjarl was found. She will also warn the PCs that she had to move the mill because too many workers became frightened or irrational when they came to close to the trees, claiming to hear Skjarl screaming in agony.

As the PCs approach the trees that were pointed out by Natalie, they begin to see what appears to be scores of birds lying dead in the grass surrounding the trees. The birds are in various states of advanced decay but a perception check DC: 15 reveals that the corpses occasionally twitch. If the PCs continue toward the trees or move to investigate one of the birds, the entire field erupts with the birds

swarming together in to a Carrionstorm as they begin attacking the PCs.

Carrionstorm (CR 1)

HP: 11 AC: 12 Spd: 40' fly

Attack: swarm (1d6 plus distraction)

Fort: +1 Ref: +0 Will: +5

Special: Undead and swarm traits

The carrionstorm was created by the necromantic energies of the haunt surrounding Skjarl's death. Over the past two weeks birds came to light on the trees and those who were not quick enough to flee the haunt, died. As the numbers of dead grew, the energy suffusing the area animated the birds into the malicious swarm.

Once the carrionstorm is dealt with, the PCs can investigate the site of Skjarl's murder. As they draw closer to the trees, however, the haunt awakens.

Haunt: The Beast (CR 1)

XP 400

NE haunt (20' square surrounding the crime scene)

Caster level: 1st Notice: Perception DC: 13 to hear the angry growling of a vicious beast

HP: 5 Trigger: Proximity, Reset: 6 hours

Effect: The growling grows louder as the shadows of the trees begin to crawl towards the victim. As the shadows touch anyone in the area they feel sharp searing pain in their leg: followed by the sensation of hot blood pouring from an open wound. Everyone in the area must make a DC: 12 Will save or suffer 1d6 negative energy damage.

Destruction: Daethelin's blade must be submerged in holy water for 24 hours.

While much of the evidence from the night of the murder has been destroyed by time, some still remains. A perception check DC: 14 reveals a scrap of blue cloth torn by one of the lower branches. Anyone with the profession or craft skill of tailor would be able to recognize the pattern of the cloth as likely belonging to a woman's garment. If revealed to anyone in town, they will recognize the pattern on the cloth from a shawl belonging to Ecaterina Vinnick.

The shawl was torn when Ecaterina inspected the location to see if the killer (whom she believes is Daethelin) might have left her any messages. The

woman discovered a piece of red quartz in a boot print that has long since vanished that she believes is a clue to her lover's whereabouts due to the stone's rarity in this region. Her excitement at this discovery distracted her from her torn shawl causing her to leave the cloth at the scene. This clue is meant to be a red herring as Ecaterina has nothing to do with the current spree of murders.

D. The Vinnick Farm

Approaching the farm, you are greeted with the sight of desolation. Vast fields that should be filled with corn or grain are nothing more than an expanse of loose dirt. Closer to the house, a small pen of grunting pigs abuts what appears to be a small vegetable garden. A parade of goats prances about the front of the darkened wood barn. The house itself is rather small in relation to the land upon which it rests. The windows have been shuttered and a single rocking chair sits idle on the front porch. A faint wisp of smoke rises from the soot-stained chimney.

Situated on the western edge of town, **Ecaterina Vinnick's** farm is a lonely place. The belief of many of the townsfolk that she was aware of Daethelin's activities caused a rift to form. Now that the killings have begun again, some believe it may actually be Ecaterina who is performing these horrific acts. As such, her farm has few visitors and is unable to sell her surplus crop in town which has led to a large portion of her land remaining fallow as she has no need of producing more than she can use herself. A lone farmhand has stayed on to help Ecaterina. Many in town surmise that the young man is under some kind of enchantment, such is not the case, **Seamus Morribund** is simply infatuated with the older woman and has been for some time.

Ecaterina is in no mood to entertain questions, especially when those questions involve her former lover or the recent murders. If the PCs arrive at the farm during the morning hours, Ecaterina is either working in the garden or feeding her livestock. In the late afternoon or evening she is most likely inside the house preparing evening meal, patching damaged articles of clothing, or pining over old letters from Daethelin. Whatever the case, Seamus is likely not far away; eagerly awaiting whatever command Ecaterina has for him. If the PCs take time to observe the pair before investigating the property fur-

ther, a sense motive DC: 12 shows that Seamus is obviously quite smitten with his employer while making a DC:15 on the same check reveals that Ecaterina is aware of the affection, but does not return these feelings.

Ecaterina is a middle-aged woman in her late thirties that is beginning to show signs of her age, but still retains a measure of her youthful beauty. She inherited the family farm at a young age when a bout of filth fever swept through the town killing her parents. She is no stranger to the hardships of the world and became fascinated with the more macabre aspects of existence on the frontier. While she did not necessarily delight when forced to slaughter one of her livestock for meat or due to illness, she did treat the task with a certain reverence. It was during one of these moments that Daethelin Moonshadow stepped in to her life and a bizarre and twisted courtship began to take place. While the two never officially married, they were often seen in each other's company. Many thought them to be a strange couple, but were happy that Ecaterina was achieving a semblance of normalcy.

When Daethelin was revealed to be a demon cultist in service to The Blood King, the town's view of Ecaterina's relationship took on a much more harsh tone as she was all but exiled for her relationship with the murderer. The town watch suspected that Ecaterina knew of Daethelin's activities, but could never prove it so instead the townsfolk simply refused to do business with the young woman, hoping she would eventually be forced to leave. Ecaterina refused to sell her farm, more out of spite than anything. She did, of course, know what Daethelin was doing. He would frequently tell her of his exploits because he knew it excited her. Daethelin was trying to nurture a wickedness in Ecaterina, but he was discovered before he could truly complete the process and drive her to kill.

Ecaterina is likely to be adversarial in her interactions with the PCs regardless of how benign the PCs intentions are. If the PCs attempt to search her property she will make every effort to stop them including using force. If it comes to a fight, Seamus will leap to Ecaterina's defense seeing this as his opportunity to prove his love. The PCs can attempt to improve Ecaterina's attitude toward them with a diplomacy check DC: 22 or intimidate DC: 15 to avoid any

physical confrontation and comply with their questioning.

Ecaterina knows little about the recent murders except that they are very similar to Daethelin's work a decade ago and when the next killing will happen. Assume that when the PCs began the adventure that the next murder would take place in four days to coincide with the changing of the moon's phase. Ecaterina can't say who the victim will be just that she knows when it will happen. If the PCs search the cottage, a perception check DC: 14 reveals a loose board in the floor of the bedroom where Ecaterina stashed letters from Daethelin as well as the small red quartz that she found while she was searching the lumber mill scene. She believes the quartz is a clue to how to find the killer that she believes to be her lover. She is not entirely wrong in this assumption as a knowledge: geography or local check DC: 13 imparts that this particular type of quartz is found in a creek near the edge of Witherbark forest. Elsewhere in the kitchen; a shriveled ear can be discov-

ered tucked behind a cracked board near the wood stove with a DC: 12 perception check. This ear was taken by Mowg as a trophy from his most recent kill. The bugbear planted it in Ecaterina's home the night of the murder in an effort to frame the woman for the deed.

If Seamus is separated from Ecaterina he is much less malign to the PCs answering any questions they may have as best he can. The young man is ignorant of anything involving the murders, but he can answer almost any question about Ecaterina, where she was and what she was doing on specific days. He even knows about Ecaterina's stash in her bedroom under the floorboard with the letters and the quartz stone.

If the PCs do end up provoking Ecaterina; she will try to separate the weakest character from the rest of the group before she initiates any kind of attack. When she does attack, she prefers to incapacitate rather than kill. If Ecaterina does manage to over-



power the entire party with Seamus' help, she will tie them up while she decides what to do. Eventually she may come to the conclusion that killing the PCs is the only option, but that is entirely up to the type of story you want to tell.

Ecaterina Vinnick

Human Middle Age Female Expert 2

HP: 10 AC: 12

Attack: Improvised sap +3 1d3 non-lethal

Seamus Morribund

Human Male Commoner 1

HP: 4 AC: 10

Attack: Club +2 1d6+2

E. The Longstride Home

A thin layer of dust coats the front porch of this small cottage home. The front door is decorated with the carving of a forest starling flanked by twisting grape vines; below this rests a small brass plaque. The shuttered windows of the house rattle erratically as wind passes over them, and a wafting scent of moldy rot issues from the house.

The haunt in the Longstride home has been allowed to fester for some time; though the people of Rivercrest are as yet unaware of how dangerous the haunt has become. Neighbors have occasionally heard strange sounds or spotted shadowy movement through an open window, but no one has entered the home since the body was found to fully awaken the haunt.

The plaque on the front door reads: "A hearth well kept, is a life well-lived". The carving is the family crest of the Longstride halfling family and the phrase is their motto. Anyone with knowledge:local can make a check with a DC: 15 to know that the Longstride family runs one of the most successful meaderies on the outskirts of Canorate that also serve as freelance information brokers.

The front door to the house is, surprisingly, unlocked allowing the PCs to enter with little difficulty. If the PCs wish to find another way to enter the house, the windows can be opened from the outside with a disable device check DC: 12. No matter which method of entry they choose, however, awakens the haunt.



House of terror (CR 2)

XP 600

NE haunt (affects the entire house)

Caster level: 3rd Notice: Perception DC: 13 to hear the faint creaking of floor boards

HP: 6 Trigger: Entering the home, Reset: 1 day

Effect: This haunt has several stages taking place over consecutive rounds and increasing in intensity. Round 1: The front door closes and locks as the light in the house becomes dim.

Round 2: Heavy footfalls can be heard approaching the bedroom. If any PCs are in the bedroom at this time, one of them sees a shadowy form with glowing yellow eyes moving towards them. That character must make a fortitude save DC: 12 or begin suffocating; this continues for the remaining duration of the haunt.

Round 3: Blood begins to bubble up from the stain in the floor as a diminutive, shadowy form claws its way from the bedroom doorway. The beings gaping toothless maw emits a horrible gurgling moan as thick black ooze dribbles from its throat. Everyone witnessing this apparition must make a will save DC: 14 or become frightened and suffer 1d4 points of wisdom drain.

Round 4: Loud rattling issues forth from the kitchen intermixed with gurgling cries and the unmistakable coppery aroma of blood. A massive hooded figure looms over the bloodstain in the center of the kitchen. The figure suddenly lurches toward the PC that is closest to it; seizing the PCs shoulders as it

clamps down over their throat with a maw of jagged yellow teeth. The PC must make a fortitude save DC: 15 or suffer 1d4 wisdom drain and lose their voice for a week. A successful save negates the loss of the character's voice and they suffer only 1 point of wisdom drain.

1. Reading Room -

This small room contains two undersized chairs flanking a small end table and a pair of pair of bookshelves that nest in the northern wall. The central focus of the room, however, is a grand stone fireplace that takes up much of the western wall, in front of which a reddish black stain streaks across the floor from an eastern doorway to another that leads north next to the bookshelves. A putrid stench permeates the entire room.

The reading room serves as the entry chamber to the small cottage. The front door rests in the south wall while the exits to the north and east lead in to the kitchen and bedroom, respectively. The room is very tidy even though no one has set foot in the house for the past several days. The bookshelves have been emptied of their contents and either shipped off or sold according to Edmund's will. A shallow pile of ash still rests in the fireplace. The room is, for the most part, barren save for the two small chairs and end table. An investigation of the stain on the floor (perception DC: 14) reveals a set of narrow footprints mingled in the stained wood that follow the bloodstained path through the home. A survival (tracking) check DC: 17 could be used to determine that the tracks belong to a woman, but were made after the murder was committed.

2. Bedroom-

A single tiny bed rests opposite the shuttered window with a small footlocker tucked underneath. Next to the door; a plain dresser, stained and lacquered a dark shade of auburn, is coated with a thin layer of dust. Dark specks dot the walls near the bed and a tenebrous stain pools beneath before streaking towards the door.

The blood-soaked bedding was removed shortly after Edmund's body was discovered and his per-

sonal effects have all been removed according to his wishes and shipped to his sister in Canorate. If the PCs search the footlocker they find it empty, but a perception check DC: 16 reveals a small compartment on the inside of the lid that holds 3 platinum pieces and a small bronze key (The key opens the hidden lockbox in the cellar). If the PCs investigate the stain, a perception check DC: 12 reveals it to be blood that is soaked in to the wood floor (and walls) as in the reading room. Further a heal check DC: 13 shows that with the amount of blood that was pooled around the bed, Edmund's throat was likely cut while he was in bed.

3. Kitchen-

Despite the room's diminutive size, it feels quite spacious. The short wood-burning stove, preparatory counter, and pantry are all pushed back against the walls leaving the floor open for someone to move about. A dark reddish stain streaks the floor from the southern doorway eventually terminating in a sizable amorphous blotch at the center of the kitchen. A ghastly figure gazes down from the eastern wall above a descending staircase, a wicked knife clutched in it's clawed hands.

The kitchen is the area where Mowg eventually finished off Edmund in a rather gruesome manner by tearing out the halfling's throat with his teeth. Some of the stains that remain on the floor are boot prints from Mowg alongside the large discoloration that marks where Edmund's body came to rest. A survival (tracking) check DC: 15 can determine that the individual that created the boot prints is quite large. If the PCs have already visited the varisian caravan and spotted the tracks at the crime scene it is a simple enough matter to conclude that these were made by the same person. Any PC that has ranks in the profession skill for city watch or something similar can roll against a DC: 15 to deduce that the killer was tormenting his victim. The initial wound was meant to cause panic rather than kill quickly.

If the PCs spend time searching the kitchen, several small pieces of knobthorn bark could be discovered near the top of the staircase with a DC: 14 perception check near a bloody boot print. Anyone local to the area or with ranks in knowledge: nature would know that the knob-

thorn trees grow in Witherbark forest near creeks rich in iron sediment that the trees use to harden their thorny bark. If they bring this information to Captain Greystoke or Natalie Crobthorn they know of a copse of knobthorn near a spring close to the edge of the forest. This copse is only a half mile from the cavern entrance in which Mowg currently resides.

4. Cellar-

Faint shafts of light filter down the stairway to illuminate two rows of casks that line the far wall. Lumps of refuse lie strewn across the hard packed dirt floor and an unlit lantern swings from an iron hook in the ceiling. The air is thick with the sweet scent of fruit and the musty stench of mold.

The cellar has become the nest of a pair of dire rats that burrowed in behind the casks on the western wall. The beasts do not immediately attack anyone that enters the cellar. Instead they remain hidden unless someone approaches the casks. At which point they move to defend their nest and the babies inside.

Dire rat (2)

HP: 5 AC: 14 Spd: 40'

Attack: Bite +1 (1d4 plus filth fever DC: 12)

Fort: +3 Ref: +5 Will +1

(see page 232 of the Bestiary)

If the PCs search the cellar, a hidden compartment can be discovered with a perception check DC: 13. The lower, central cask is empty and can be opened by twisting the spigot. Inside of the cask contains an ornate spyglass and a diminutive locked strongbox. The strongbox can be opened with a disable device DC: 20 or the key hidden within the footlocker inside the bedroom.

Contained within the strongbox is a fairly detailed map of the region in the Witherbark forest near the Moonshadow Lodge and Mowg's lair; as well as survey information of the area, soil, and water samples. Edmun believed that the caves may contain mineral wealth beyond what was known in the region. He was preparing to send the samples back to his family in Canorate to have them examined for trace minerals when he was killed by Mowg who had been watching the halfling

during his survey trips. The map plainly shows the location of Moonshadow Lodge as well as the cavern entrance with notes regarding the potential use as a mining concern.

F. Moonshadow Lodge

Tucked away beneath the boughs of an enormous witherbark tree rests a squat cabin constructed of thick dusky logs. The front door hangs open connected to the frame only by the lower hinge, and the window shutters are missing nearly all of their wood slats. A massive branch juts out of a hole in the roof, it's leaves thin and shriveled. Carved in to the sides of the structure are crude messages likely left by angry townsfolk creating a sort of memorial wall to the atrocities of the former resident.

The lodge is only a couple of miles from town to the east along a game trail half of a mile inside the tree line of Witherbark Forest. If the PCs mention that they are planning to investigate the lodge to any of the townsfolk they are likely to be bombarded with folktales and stories of demons and twisted fey lurking in and around the home. While these tales are meant to keep the players on edge feel free to play up the menacing atmosphere of the forest as you see fit or even add a few fiendish encounters if you feel that your players need more of a challenge.

The carved writing on the wall are messages from the townsfolk wishing all manner of afterlife unpleasantries upon Daethelin Moonshadow. If the PCs inspect the wall they can discover a few messages that were obviously created much more recently with a perception check DC: 16. Two of these messages are requests for a rendezvous while the third seems more of a declaration with a single word 'vengeance'. The declaration was the first to be carved, a DC: 15 knowledge: nature check could be used to deduce that the message was carved approximately a month ago while the requests were considerably more recent and were carved only one and two weeks ago.

1. Sitting room-

Shattered wood furniture and a crumbling stone fireplace dominate much of the room. Towards the

back of the room, situated between a doorway and hall are three small piles of refuse that exude an acrid, moldy, stench. An unnatural cold permeates the room.

The sitting room has been utterly demolished by a combination of time and angry townsfolk. What remains of the chairs, tables, and bookshelves are recognizable as being of high quality craftsmanship, but the reliefs and images contain an incomprehensible air of malevolence in the scenes or figures that they depict.

The three piles against the wall opposite the main entrance are the remains of books that rested upon, now broken, shelves. A decade of exposure to the elements has allowed brown mold to fester on the books. Anyone moving within five feet of the mold suffers 3d6 non-lethal cold damage. If any PC carries a torch or lantern near the mold, it instantly spreads to fill the five feet around the character.

Searching the room reveals little beyond the fer-



vor with which the townsfolk destroyed Dae-thelin's home. If the PCs can successfully remove the brown mold and search the pile of books they will find a single page from one of the books has survived intact. This page acts as a scroll of the spell daylight. The doorway to the southwest opens in to the kitchen while the hall leads to the latrine and bedroom.

2. Kitchen-

A black iron stove has toppled just in front of the doorway, it's chimney pipe twisted and mangled from whatever force tore it down. Cabinet doors and shelving lie strewn about the floor as though a cyclone manifested inside the room. A single door hangs slightly ajar in the northwest corner of the room, and an oak table coated in nebulous dark stains are the only components of the kitchen left unmarred.

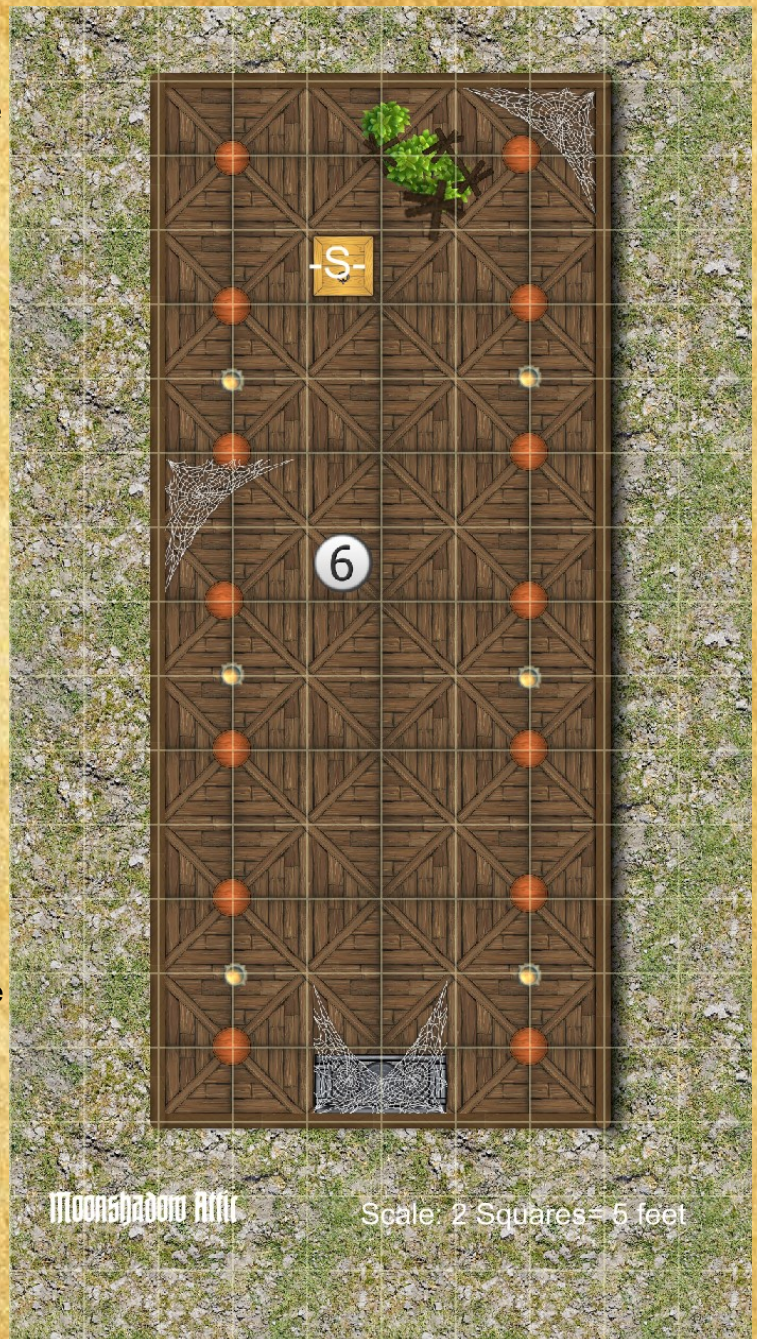
The kitchen, much like the sitting room, was the victim of the outrage of the people of Rivercrest. Hatchets and hammers were brought to bear on furnishings while most of the utensils were taken back to the smithy and melted down. A single item managed to escape the town's fury. A masterwork shortsword tucked away beneath a loose floorboard can be found with a perception check DC: 13. The shortsword is a fairly ornate piece with a slightly curved blade engraved to look like the bill of a bird while the handle has the appearance of a stylized stork's head.

The door to the northwest leads to the pantry. There are no other exits to the room.

3. Pantry-

Rows of shelves line the walls of this small chamber while bits of shattered clay and glass lay strewn about the floor. The sour taste of vinegar fills your nostrils.

The food that was left to rot in the pantry has long since rotted away or been devoured by the multitudes of insects common to the area. The noxious stench that lingers is not powerful enough to cause more than a passing discomfort to anyone that inspects the room.



4. Latrine/Midden-

Midway down the short hallway, a cracked and warped door opens to reveal a diminutive room not much larger than a closet. Opposite the entrance, the floor raises up to form a bench. At the center of which is a hole that evacuates in to a small pit. A cool draft whirls upward from the opening.

This room serves as both the latrine and midden for the small lodge. Not much remains of whatever refuse was tossed through the hole save for several bones too large to be dragged off by the small scavengers that could gain access to the pit. A small grate that exits to the outside is the source of the draft. This grate can be accessed from the outside of the lodge, but anyone larger than small size category would have to crawl on their hands and knees. Even those of small size would have to stoop their heads low.

The pit is home to a large nest of rats. The animals are not hostile unless provoked by investigating the collection of sticks and refuse that make up the nest. Then the rats will swarm and attack.

Undersized rat swarm

HP: 8 AC: 13 Attack: swarm (1d4 plus disease)
Fort: +2 Ref: +3 Will: +0

5. 5. Bedroom-

The end of the short hallway opens into a chamber ravaged by the elements. A massive tree branch lodged in to the floor climbs upward through the ceiling, an upper attic chamber, and eventually the roof. Pieces of the wood slat roof stab downward from the hole alongside bits of hanging moss. Beyond the branch, the head of a great stork is carved in relief along the far wall overlooking the shattered remains of a simple bed and down mattress. A wardrobe stands off to the side of the door, with its doors splintered open with bits of leather and cloth arrayed in front of it.

The bedroom fared better than the rest of the lodge when villagers came to vent their anger. Unfortunately nature had other ideas and several years ago, a branch snapped off of the enormous witherbark tree sheltering the house and sheared through the top of the structure. Dirt and grime covers nearly every inch of the room in a thin, wet, film. The carving of the great stork is meant to be a depiction of the demon lord Shax. Anyone that inspects it closely will note a disturbingly sinister appearance, while a knowledge: planes check DC: 15 exposes that it is created to honor the Blood Marquis.

The wardrobe contains little of value as the garments contained within have been removed, shredded, and scattered across the floor. While the bed conceals a masterwork shortbow buried beneath it's rotted remains. If the PCs spend any time examining the bed they notice that a hidden compartment in the frame was smashed open when the branch fell through the roof. The compartment has a red velvet interior with an imprint in the form of a curved dagger.

A concealed trap door leading in to the attic is in the southeast corner of the ceiling in close proximity to the point where the branch crashed into the room. The DC to discover this trap door is only 12 as the branch warped the construction as it penetrated the house. It could also be possible to climb the branch itself in to the attic with a DC: 10 climb check.

6. Attic-

The sloping walls of the attic, much like the roof of which they are composed, adjoin in the mid-point of the room. Skins and hides of all manner of beast stretch between structural supports with white, ceramic, pots placed directly below them. The rims of these pots are stained a disturbing shade of crimson. At the far end of the chamber, an altar carved of bleached white ash perches atop a pair of support beams. Two sinister stork-like creatures carved from the same wood stand poised on either side, their feathered wings joining at the tips as they embrace the ritual table, their bills nearly touching its blood-stained surface.

The attic was undiscovered in the initial raid of Daethelin's lodge. Had the watch found it, they would have likely burned the entire structure to the ground. The attic is where Daethelin performed his daily sacrifices of blood to the demon lord Shax. Mostly comprised of small forest creatures, the occasional lone wanderer or weak fey met their end on the altar.

The entire attic is under the effect of a permanent desecrate spell, and all worshippers of good-aligned deities suffer a -1 penalty to their skill checks while in the room because of the abyssal energies that have been focused here.

Should the PCs investigate the area they find a copy of the *Sanguine Scriptures*, A holy text of The Blood King, and a sacrificial knife (it does not fit the opened compartment in the bedroom) on top of the altar. A small table nestled against the sloping wall has a detailed map of the surrounding environs including the cavern that now houses Mowg. The cavern is labeled as a refuge should his nefarious activities be discovered, and several small caches of supplies are likewise marked along with dates of when they were last replenished. The last date written down is approximately ten years ago.

It is distinctly possible that the PCs could miss the clues that highlight where to continue the investigation. If this is the case feel free to have some of the townsfolk or other NPCs come to the characters with accounts of shadowy figures escaping in to the woods in the direction of Mowg's lair. Perhaps it could be a detail that the witness remembers after their initial interrogation and returns to give that information to the PCs. Perhaps Mowg himself lures the PCs in to the forest, anxious to taste the fear of more worthy adversaries.

It is also possible that the PCs could take more than a few days during the course of their investigation, allowing Mowg to kill again. If this happens, they have a fresh crime scene to investigate and you should be more liberal with clues to Mowg's whereabouts. Perhaps Mowg was wounded and leaves a more obvious trail than he typically would.

Hunting the Killer

Once the PCs have completed their investigation, they should have a good grasp of where to look for the murderer, as well as an idea of what they might be facing. The PCs should have little trouble finding Mowg's lair as long as they have one of the maps that shows the location of the cave. Without these maps it is more difficult requiring a survival check DC: 15 and 1d4 hours of searching the forest near Moonshadow Lodge.

Once the cave is located, the PCs have only to confront Mowg at his lair. This could prove difficult as Mowg spends little time actually inside his lair. He sleeps in the morning hours while afternoons are spent observing the town from a hillside to find new

prey. His nights are spent either hunting in the forest or in town. Mowg utilises a pack of goblin dogs to keep watch over the cave (and himself) while the bugbear is away or resting.

A break in the forest canopy allows shafts of light to pierce through; illuminating the mouth of a cavern. The tenebrous maw is tucked in to the side of a hill. A grand tree rests above, it's roots dangling over the upper arch giving the appearance of a massive fanged mouth.

The cavern itself does not run very deep, consisting of only two chambers with just a few smaller hollows and alcoves scattered through the intervening tunnels. Two of the goblin dogs are always posted out front to warn of approaching intruders and attack any that get too close.

An alarm tripwire is also placed in the entrance that dumps a sack of bones sending them clattering to the hard, stone ground. A perception check DC: 15 spots the trap while a disable device DC: 12 disarms it. It is also possible to simply step over the tripline once it is spotted. If the PCs alert the goblin dogs out front, the three remaining beasts will come charging through the entryway in one round and crash through the tripline setting off the alarm trap.

Snarl and Cruncher

Goblin Dogs (2)

HP: 9 AC: 13 Perception: +1 (scent)

Attack: Bite +2 (1d6+3 plus allergy)

Fort: +4 Ref: +4 Will: +1

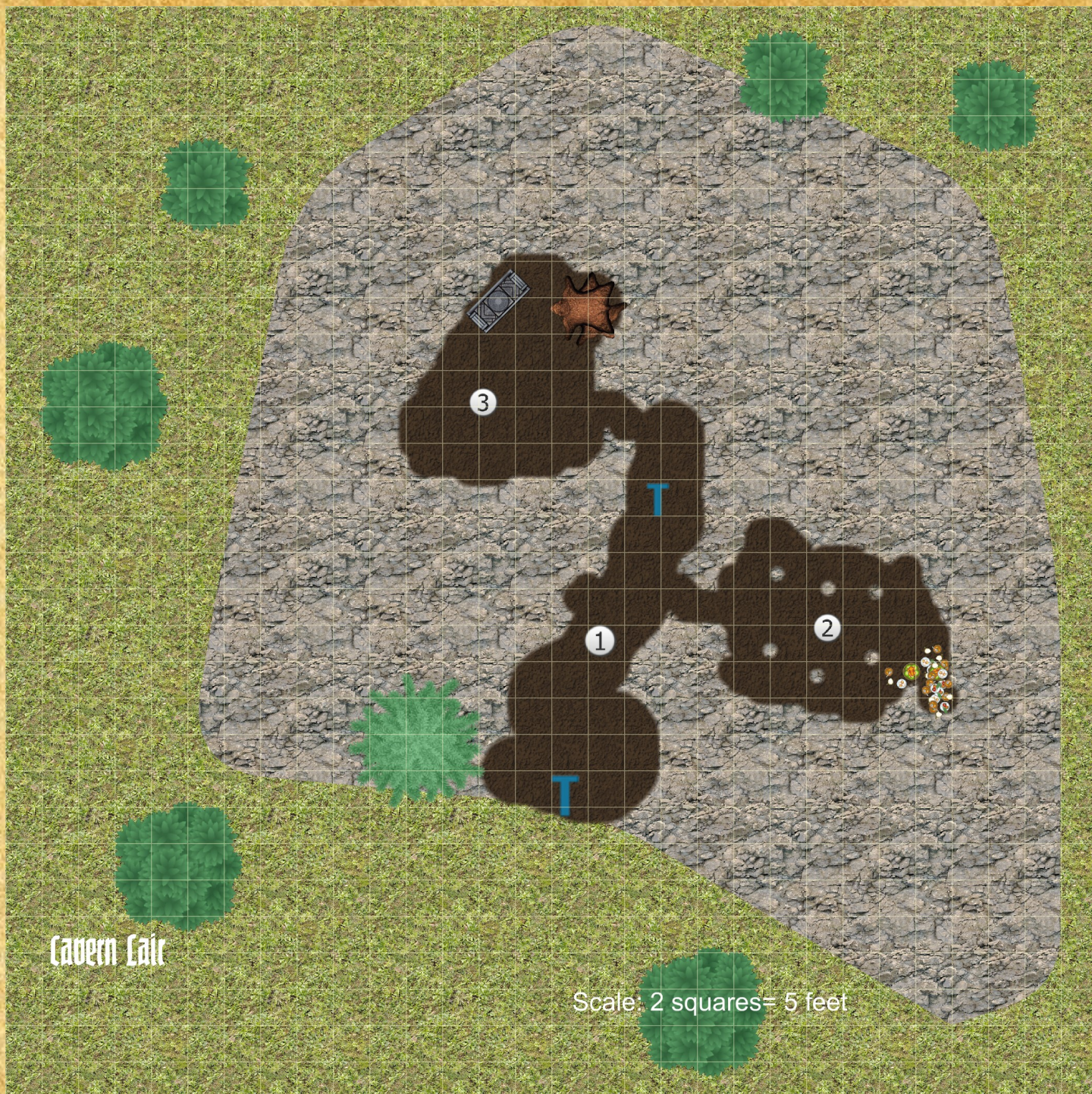
(See page 157 of the Bestiary)

Snarl and Cruncher are trained to start hissing and growling as soon as they sense an intruder to alert the other goblin dogs inside as well as rouse Mowg.

1. Entry Passage-

Roots and moss coat the walls of this darkened passage giving it an organic appearance like the inside of some beast's gullet. A trickle of rancid water flows through a depression in the center of the tunnel creating a faint gurgle that echoes throughout. The gut-wrenching stench of rotten meat and excrement fills the passage.

There are no lamps or torches anywhere throughout this cavern. Characters with low-light



vision should have little trouble seeing while in the main passage, but the two chambers do not receive any direct light from the entrance and are completely dark. Any characters without low-light vision treat the entry passage as dim light.

The passage is only about twenty feet long, curving to the left at the end, and close to ten feet wide. A smaller aperture

opens to the right midway down the passage that leads to the kennel. The end of the passage opens up into a large chamber that Mowg uses as his personal sleeping quarters. Approximately five feet before the entrance in to Mowg's chamber is another tripline which is cleverly concealed with the roots and moss that have fallen to the floor. A perception check DC: 17 can discover the trap if one of the PCs

is actively looking. The tripline causes a grid of wooden spikes to swing down from the ceiling in an attempt to impale any interlopers.

Ceiling Spike Trap

Detection DC: 17 Reflex: DC: 12

Effect: 2d6 piercing damage

2. Kennel-

The floor of this chamber is strewn with bits of bone and torn hide. A thick metal chain coils haphazardly in the center of the room secured to the floor with a trio of iron spikes driven into hard stone. An enormous pile of detritus and rotting vegetation is mounded against the wall opposite of the entryway. Several thin columns of dark reddish stone are scattered throughout the room.

This chamber is the kennel for Mowg's pack of goblin dogs. At any one time only three of the mangy beasts are present while the two others are on guard out front. If the PCs alert the guard dogs outside, the three remaining animals from the kennel will rush to join the battle and will arrive one round after it begins; otherwise they will be found in this room wrestling over whatever scraps of meat or bone remain from their last meal.

The chain in the middle of room is used to keep live prey from escaping as the goblin dogs constantly dart in and around the columns tormenting and exhausting their prey before eventually killing and devouring it whether it be man or beast.

The mound of rotted filth at the back of the chamber is the sleeping mat for the goblin dogs. If anyone searches the pile, they need to roll a fortitude save DC: 12 to resist contracting filth fever. A small pouch could be discovered with a DC: 14 perception check. The pouch contains fourteen silver pieces, five gold pieces, and a signet ring belonging to a minor merchant house worth 25 gp. The pouch and its contents belonged to a member of the house that came to Rivercrest to strike a deal for some lumber. He was captured by Mowg on his way back to Canorate and devoured by the bugbear and his

beasts.

Gnash, Ripper, and Chops

3 Goblin dogs

HP: 9 AC: 13 Perception: +1 (Scent)

Attack: Bite +2 (1d6+3 plus allergy)

Fort: +4 Ref: +4 Will: +1

(See page 157 of the Bestiary)

3. Mowg's Chamber-

A curtain of bones draped across the tunnel opens into a larger chamber with walls the color of dried blood. To the left of the entryway a thick vein of reddish crystalline quartz marbles the floor. At the rear of the chamber a crude altar constructed of a grisly assortment of bones with a massive bird skull resting atop the remains of a humanoid torso gazes hungrily upon its surface. A large mound of hides, some of a sickening non-beastial nature, sits just to the right of the altar.

As mentioned previously, Mowg is rarely found in this chamber, only staying here to rest before continuing his observations of the townsfolk and hunting for food in the forest. If the PCs do manage to get past all of Mowg's defenses without causing any sort of alarm, then the bugbear can be found resting on the hides toward the back of the room. The curtain of bones at the entrance to Mowg's chamber is his final alarm should anyone manage to find his lair. Anyone that passes through the curtain causes the bones to clatter together creating a distinctive rattling sound that instantly rouses Mowg. It is possible to move carefully through the curtain without causing it to rattle with a successful stealth check DC: 20.

If the alarm was raised at any point prior to the PCs reaching the bone curtain, Mowg quickly arms himself and dons his armor before slipping into the shadows and creating an image of himself still sleeping on the hides. If the PCs are carrying any light sources with them, Mowg will use the darkness ability of his dagger to cast the area in to shadows and dim light.

Mowg will always attempt to attack from surprise and targets characters that are physically weaker (like sorcerers or wizards) first in an effort to remove

them as quick as possible. The darkness effect that surrounds him from the dagger allows him to regain stealth even after combat is engaged to reposition on another target. This is also useful if Mowg needs to retreat because the PCs are too strong or he becomes grievously wounded.

Scattered atop the altar are the trophies Mowg has taken from his victims: A tongue, a scalp, and two thumbs. Stashed behind the mound of hides is a container made from the skull of a dwarf that Mowg uses to stash whatever treasures he pilfers from his victims. The skull contains assorted coins worth 50 gp, a turquoise worth 12gp, and a set of masterwork thieves tools.

Mowg

NE Male Bugbear (Kardan)

Init: +1 Senses: Darkvision, scent, Perception: +8

AC: 18 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +3 natural)

HP: 21 (3d8+3)

Fort: +2 Ref: +4 Will: +1

Speed: 30 feet

Attacks: Daethelin's blade +6 (1d4+4 plus poison)
Javelin +3 (1d6+3)

Morale: If brought below 10 HP Mowg attempts to flee, using the darkness to re-enter stealth. He will use his ability of minor image to make it appear as though he leaves the cave to lure the PCs outside and away from the cavern entrance giving him an easier chance of escape.

Str: 16 Dex: 13 Con: 13 Int: 10 Wis: 10 Cha: 9

Base Attack: +2 CMB: +5 CMD: 16

Feat: Scent of Fear, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills: Intimidate +4, Perception +8, Stealth +14 Racial Modifiers: +4 Intimidate, +8 Stealth

SQ: Stalker (Perception and Stealth are always class skills)

Spell-like abilities: 3/day disguise self, minor image

Languages: Common, Goblin

Combat Gear: Daethelin's blade (unique dagger +1), hide armor, 3 javelins, 5 doses of Blue Whinnis venom

Daethelin's Blade

Unique +1 dagger

Aura: Minor evocation and evil CL: 8th Weight: 1 lb

Price: 4700gp

This dagger has a curved blade composed of crimson steel and a handle engraved with the form of a malevolent humanoid with the head of a stork.

The weapon acts as a standard +1 dagger but has the ability to cast darkness as a swift action three times per day. The dagger is possessed by the malevolence of its former wielder, Daethelin Moonshadow, and anyone holding the weapon must succeed at a Will save DC: 12 to resist the urge to kill a sentient humanoid during each phase of the moon (New, Waxing, Half, Waning, or Full). For every phase of the moon that passes without killing in this manner, the DC increases by +1.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs are able to slay Mowg and return with Daethelin's blade, Captain Greystoke and Mayor Wesselin gladly reward the PCs for their efforts with the agreed upon two hundred gold. They also request that the blade be taken to the temple of Abadar so that it can be properly destroyed and the unquiet spirits that haunt the town can be put to rest. If, for some reason, the PCs are unwilling to part with the weapon, The Mayor is prepared to offer another five hundred gold pieces in order to appeal to the more mercenary minded of the group. If they still decline, then they are asked to leave town as soon as possible so that the taint of the weapon can at least be removed.

With the murderer found and dealt with, the Mayor declares a week long celebration in the town of Rivercrest to commemorate the occasion. If the PCs turned in the blade to be destroyed then they are hailed as heroes and treated to as fine a celebration as the town can muster. All businesses in town will offer a discount on purchases and the Drunken Huntsman allows them to stay for free.

If Mowg was forced to retreat and escaped he is not likely to remain nearby instead moving off to torment another village. He is not likely to immediately seek revenge on the PCs, but he may eventually set his sights on the only prey to elude him thus far.

Thank you for your support purchasing this adventure. If you didn't purchase it, well, I hope you at least enjoyed it.

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Thank you again, and I look forward to more adventures in the future.

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