

Seasons of the Runewild: Bonedigger



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Bonedigger

Written by: William Fischer

Edited by: Craig Hargraves and Matthew J. Hanson

Art by: Joyce Maureira

Background by: Rick Hershey

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The Runewild Is Coming

Though you can adapt it to any setting, *Bonedigger* was designed for a mystical forest called the Runewild. In the Runewild the borders between the mortal world and fairy lands grow thin. The Broken King gathers an army of goblins, while the Witch Queen Griselda plots revenge.

We ran a successful Kickstarter Campaign for the complete Runewild setting, and plan to convert it to be Compatible with Pathfinder Second Edition.

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Fifty years ago, a hag named Speckled Hester was burned at the stake near the town of Ill Hollow. As the flames consumed her, Hester vowed to share her greatest secret with whoever first made contact with her spirit. To ensure this never occurred, the people of Ill Hollow buried Hester in an unmarked grave, where they believed the hag would be forgotten.

Not a word has been heard from Hester since, but the ghost of her most faithful servant, a hound named Bonedigger, haunts Ill Hollow to this day. The townsfolk believe Bonedigger seeks to lead others to Hester's grave so that they might learn her final secret. To keep Hester in the ground where she belongs, the people of Ill Hollow began a strange tradition. On the first night of Harvestide, they bury the bones of a horse or pig in a grave marked with Hester's name. Rather than finding Hester's bones, each year Bonedigger digs up the contents of the false grave instead.

The ruse has fooled Bonedigger, until now. Several weeks ago, a hermit and would-be necromancer named Hywela Teague discovered Hester's most valuable possession, a magical tome called *Hester's Black Book*. Tonight, Hywela intends to accompany Bonedigger on his annual visit to Ill Hollow and use Hester's book to contact the hag's spirit. But when a local youth named Jonah Tennet interrupts Hywela's plans, she kidnaps the boy and flees with Hester's bones instead. To save Jonah, the PCs must trek into the Runewild, a fey-infested forest, and stop Hywela before she calls Hester's spirit back to the land of the living.

Introduction

Bonedigger is an adventure for four 1st-level characters. It is designed to be played over the course of a single session (3 – 4 hours of gameplay). The adventure takes place near an enchanted forest known as the Runewild and can serve as an introduction to the *Runewild Campaign Setting*. You can also drop the adventure into an existing campaign without much trouble.

Bonedigger presents players with a mix of combat, exploration, and roleplaying encounters. The PCs may investigate several different locations as they search for Jonah Tennet. The adventure doesn't assume the PCs must visit all these locations or tackle them in any particular order. As the GM, you will have to decide for yourself when and where the "climax" of the adventure occurs.

Scaling the Adventure

If you plan to run *Bonedigger* for five or more PCs, or for characters of 2nd level or higher, consider one or more of the following changes to the adventure:

- Add 1 or more **skeleton guards** to the encounter, **A Dead Horse**.
- Change Clover, the spectral cat who lives on **Hester's Hill**, from a weak to a normal **will-o'-wisp**.
- If the PCs anger Old Moody at **The Caretaker's Cabin**, he manifests fully and attacks as a **ghost commoner**.
- When checking for random encounters on the way to **Hywela's Campsite**, roll a d6 twice and use the higher result.
- When the PCs finally confront Hywela Teague, 1 or more **skeleton guards** accompany her.

Harvestide

Human settlements across the Runewild celebrate Harvestide, but the holiday has special meaning in the town of Ill Hollow, as it marks the date when Speckled Hester was executed here half a century ago. The adventure begins as the PCs witness the bizarre parade that kicks off Ill Hollow's Harvestide celebration. Read or paraphrase the following:

The evening air is crisp in Ill Hollow as the town's annual Harvestide celebration begins. Garlands of red and orange flowers hang from the rooftops, and baskets bursting with autumn leaves adorn each doorstep. Candlelit gourds illuminate the streets, while in the town square, tables spread with fall fruits and bowls of mulled cider tempt crowds of passers-by.

In contrast to these pleasant decorations, an unsettling effigy stands in the center of the square. Dressed in black robes and a high-pointed hat, the effigy appears to be a witch of some kind. The witch's head, however, has been replaced with a horse's skull. Dabs of black paint cover the grinning skull like freckles.

As you watch, a group of townsfolk hoist the effigy above their heads. Children squeal and adults gasp in mock terror as the witch is made to chase them about. Soon after, more townsfolk arrive to drive off the witch with torches. After several minutes of this back-and-forth, the crowd lets out a triumphant cheer. They then parade behind the defeated effigy toward a gated cemetery outside of town.

PCs who succeed on a DC 15 Society check know the parade isn't a typical part of Harvestide and must be a tradition unique to Ill Hollow. On a critical success, the character knows the effigy represents Speckled Hester, a local hag who died here fifty years ago. The townsfolk use the horse as a decoy to fool the ghost of Bonedigger, Hester's hound. The PCs can also learn about the strange tradition by asking anyone in the crowd.

If the PCs follow the parade, they arrive in time to watch the townsfolk bury the effigy (along with the rest of the horse's skeleton) in a grave bearing the name "Speckled Hester." When the last shovelful of earth is patted down, the cemetery's caretaker, Moody Harlow, locks the cemetery gates. The crowd then races back to town, entreating the PCs to follow lest they be "gobbled up" by Bonedigger.

The faux burial ends just after nightfall, so the PCs have several hours before the events of **A Dead Horse** interrupt the festivities. You can elide the rest of the Harvestide celebration if you choose, or you may run any of the following scenes before moving on to the next section of the adventure.

The Harvest Cup

Tables stacked with apples, figs, and plums crowd Ill Hollow's town square. All the food is free for the taking, although cider must be purchased for two coppers a cup. PCs looking to drink for free can seek out the "Harvest Cup" instead. Townsfolk pass around the Harvest Cup as the night progresses. Whoever holds the oversized goblet may drink from it for free, but if they spill even a drop they must pass the Cup to another festival-goer. PCs holding the Cup must occasionally attempt DC 15 Reflex saving throws to avoid spilling as the townsfolk "unintentionally" jostle them. Anyone who finishes an entire Harvest Cup of cider must attempt a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw. On a failure, the character becomes sickened 1, or sickened 2 on a critical failure.

Harvestide Cookies

Children carrying sacks stuffed with oddly-shaped cookies approach the party. For 1 sp each, the PCs may reach into a sack and take a cookie. By tradition, your cookie's shape

grants insight into your fortune for the coming year. The cookies are baked into intentionally vague shapes to encourage such divinations.

Despite their mundane origins, the cookies are indeed imbued with a bit of Harvestide magic. If inspected with a *detect magic* spell or similar effect, the cookies radiate faint auras of divination magic. For a full description of *Harvestide cookies*, see **New Magic Items** at the end of the adventure.

Young Moody's Tale

Like his father and grandfather before him, "Young" Moody Harlow serves as caretaker for Ill Hollow's cemetery. Normally it's a thankless task, but on Harvestide night Moody is treated like a king. In particular, the townsfolk barrage him with requests to tell how his grandfather, "Old" Moody Harlow, killed Speckled Hester's hound, Bonedigger.

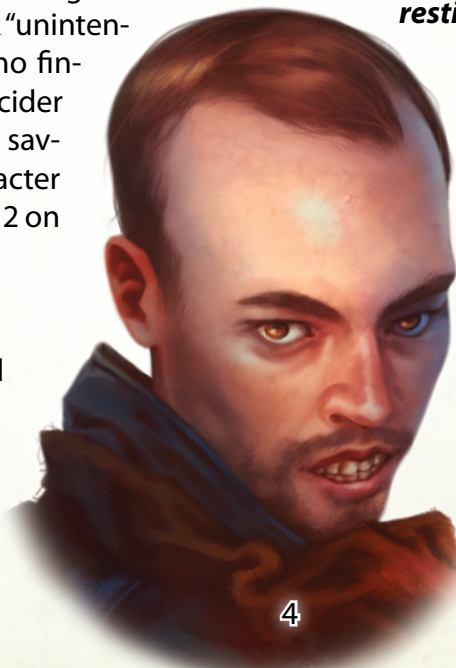
Young Moody is a lanky human man in his mid-thirties. Though he complains about his job, Moody's none too bright and is actually lucky to have the work. He's fond of drink, but if the PCs catch Young Moody before he's in his cups, they hear his tale:

"We in Ill Hollow respect the dead now, but once upon a time this place was lousy with grave-robbers. Necromancers, resurrection men, witches – anyone who could work a shovel was digging up our graves! It got so bad that my grandfather, Old Moody, took on a hound to help him guard the cemetery."

"Bonedigger was a terror, let me tell you. Fierce as a dragon protecting its hoard, with fangs as long as daggers! Not even a shadow could slip past that hound, and it wasn't long before the dead were resting peaceful in their graves again."

"Then one night, my grandfather caught Bonedigger pawing at the graves he was supposed to be guarding. Old Moody tried to stop him, but when Bonedigger wouldn't obey he knew Speckled Hester must have laid one of her hexes on the hound. It nearly broke Old Moody's heart to do it, but he saw no other way. He grabbed his shovel and put the poor beast out of his misery."

"The town burned Hester at the stake soon after that, but Bonedigger



returns to the cemetery each Harvestide night to sniff around for her grave. If he ever finds it, they say, Hester's bones will whisper her final secret."

Moody has a flair for the dramatic, but his tale is mostly accurate. If pressed for more details, Moody admits he has little else to share. He's never actually seen Bonedigger, but he's certain the hound exists, because he finds the false grave empty every year. Moody knows the location of Hester's real grave and that his grandfather hid Hester's skull at **The Caretaker's Cabin** when the rest of her remains were buried, but he keeps these secrets to himself until **The Investigation**.

Staking Out the Cemetery

The adventure assumes the party returns to the festival with the rest of the townsfolk after the parade. If the PCs stay behind instead, Young Moody advises them to move along before Bonedigger shows up. Moody's warnings are playful at first but grow increasingly insistent. If the PCs refuse to budge, Moody ultimately surrenders. "It's your funeral," he says as he locks the cemetery gates with the PCs inside.

Unbeknownst to Moody, the PCs aren't the only ones in the cemetery. Several local youths hide among the gravestones. The PCs can attempt DC 15 Perception checks to spot the children. If discovered, the children explain they'd hoped to catch a glimpse of Bonedigger. If the PCs order them to return to town, the children howl in protest but grudgingly obey.

Hywela Teague arrives with Bonedigger shortly before midnight. If the party has returned to town by this time, Hywela proceeds with her plan as normal. Otherwise, she flees as soon as the PCs discover her, letting Bonedigger cover her escape.

If the party foils Hywela's attempt to recover Speckled Hester's remains, you will have to decide what effect this has on the rest of the adventure. The PCs might still want to track down Hywela, particularly if they suspect she seeks to contact Hester's spirit. If the PCs capture or kill Hywela, the elders of Ill Hollow point out her odd facial markings, which resemble those of Speckled Hester. In this case, the townsfolk may enlist the party to investigate **Hywela's Campsite** and bring back proof of Hywela's association with the hag.

A Dead Horse

Near midnight, panicked screams interrupt the Harvestide festivities. The screams are distant and seem to come from Ill Hollow's cemetery. Shouts of concern soon follow as several parents realize their children have gone missing.

While the adults returned to town after the parade, a group of local youths stayed behind to catch a glimpse of Bonedigger. Little did the children know that this year Hywela Teague would accompany Bonedigger on his annual visit to the cemetery. As Bonedigger dug up Hester's false grave, Hywela collected the hag's true remains. Then, to spite the townsfolk, Hywela animated the horse skeleton they'd buried as a decoy. When the skeletal horse flushed the children from their hiding spots, Hywela snatched one of them (a boy named Jonah Tennet) and fled.

Ill Hollow's cemetery lies 300 feet west of town. As the PCs arrive at the cemetery gates, read or paraphrase the following:

You arrive at the cemetery, a collection of Ill Hollow's townsfolk following closely on your heels. Three children press themselves against the cemetery's gates from the inside, their faces white with terror. Behind them, you see the cause of their fear. A skeletal horse, almost certainly the one that was buried earlier in the evening, gallops about the cemetery. A fourth youth scrambles among the tombstones in a bid to avoid being crushed by the horse's massive hooves. To your horror, you spot the body of yet another child, already trampled, bleeding out on the ground nearby.

The reanimated horse runs down the children within minutes unless the PCs rescue them. Only Embra Tennet, Jonah's twin sister, escapes the slaughter by squeezing through the bars of the cemetery's fence. If none of the other children survive, Embra relates their tale during **The Investigation**.

Roll initiative as soon as the PCs arrive upon the scene. If you're playing with a battlemat and miniatures, you can track the locations of the children and the skeletal horse precisely. Otherwise, assume that at any given moment the horse and any children not already at the gates are 1d6 x 10 ft. away: within range of most missile attacks but well out of the reach of melee weapons. The children have AC 10, 8 Hit Points, and a +0 bonus to all checks. Treat the reanimated horse as a **skeletal horse**.

Climbing the Fence

A relic from the days when grave-robbers plagued Ill Hollow, the fence that surrounds the cemetery is 10 feet high and topped with wicked spikes. PCs can Climb the fence with a successful DC 15 Athletics check. Characters who critically fail the Athletics check take 1d4 piercing damage and become snagged on the fence's spikes. Snagged characters are immobilized (DC 15).

On each of their turns, any children near the fence (other than Embra Tennet) attempt to climb it. Unless they roll poorly and become snagged on the spikes, the children should be able to scramble over the fence in a round or two, even unassisted.

Opening the Gates

A sturdy lock secures the cemetery gates. Young Moody usually carries the key, but in his drunken state he's misplaced it. Characters who use an action to search Moody's pockets can attempt a DC 15 Perception check to Seek. On a success, the PC discovers the key. Alternately, a PC can Pick the Lock with a successful DC 15 Thievery check. The gates can also be Forced Open with a successful DC 25 Athletics check.

Squeezing Through the Fence

As an activity that requires 3 actions, Small-size creatures can Squeeze through the fence with a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check. Characters who fail the check make no progress but can attempt the check again on their next turn. On a critical failure, the character becomes stuck in the fence and must spend 1 minute attempting to free themselves. Of the children, only Embra Tennet is small enough to fit through the bars.

Ricard Ames

The child lying on the ground when the PCs first arrive is named Ricard Ames. Currently, Ricard has 0 Hit Points and is dying 1. As the encounter progresses, make recovery checks for Ricard, as well as any other children who fall beneath the horse's hooves. The PCs can heal the children using magic or Administer First Aid with the Medicine skill, as normal.

At 12 years old, Ricard is the eldest of the children. It was his idea to hide out in the cemetery in the first place. Like Jonah Tennet, Ricard caught a glimpse of Hywela Teague before she escaped. If he survives, Ricard provides a description of Hywela during **The Investigation**.

The Investigation

Once the PCs have dealt with the skeletal horse, Embra Tennet and any other children who survived can tell their tale. When the rest of the festival returned to town, Embra and the others stayed behind to catch a glimpse of Bonedigger. They did in fact see Bonedigger, whom Embra describes as an enormous hound with eyes that "wept shadows." The children stayed hidden from Bonedigger, but they bolted once they saw the skeletal horse. If the PCs hadn't saved them, Embra says tearfully, they certainly would have died.

At this point, a look of horror passes over Embra's face as she realizes her brother, Jonah Tennet, is nowhere to be found. Embra is certain Jonah was with her when they ran for the cemetery gates, but they became separated during the confusion. "Bonedigger must have snatched him up!" she shrieks.

The PCs can search the cemetery for clues as to what really happened to Jonah. The PCs don't need to uncover all these clues, and Young Moody or another NPC might prod the party if they're at a loss for what to do next. However they proceed, the PCs' investigation should lead them eventually to one of several locations outside Ill Hollow: **Hester's Hill**, **The Caretaker's Cabin**, or **Hywela's Campsite**.

Questioning the Townsfolk

The townsfolk believe Speckled Hester is behind Jonah Tennet's disappearance. They become even more convinced of this speculation if they hear Ricard Ames' story or discover Hester's empty grave (see below). The townsfolk beg the party to travel to the ruins of Hester's former home atop **Hester's Hill**, where they're certain Jonah will be found. Jonah's parents even offer the party a reward of 50 sp if they rescue Jonah before any harm comes to their son.

Ricard Ames

Jonah's disappearance upsets Embra so greatly that she becomes hysterical. However, if the PCs rescued Ricard Ames, the boy can provide additional information once he recovers. As he and Jonah fled the skeletal horse, Ricard explains, they nearly collided with another figure: Hywela Teague. Ricard recognized Hywela from a dispute she'd had with his family several years ago. Strangely, Hywela's face was now covered with black freckles ("Like splattered ink," Ricard says), where no such marks existed before. Anyone familiar with the story of Speckled Hester recognizes the marks as similar to those of the hag.

Ricard shamefully admits he fled once Hywela grabbed Jonah. He knows Hywela was spotted recently near the Runewild just south of Ill Hollow. Ricard believes she must have a campsite hidden somewhere in the forest (see **Hywela's Campsite**).

The Horse's Grave

The false grave where the townsfolk buried the horse skeleton is now empty, and someone has scrawled strange runes in black ink on the grave's marker. PCs who study the runes can attempt a DC 15 Occultism check to Decipher Writing. On a success, the character knows that witches sometimes make such marks during their rituals to animate the dead.

The skeletal horse disturbed the ground as it emerged from its grave, but PCs who investigate the area can attempt a DC 15 Survival check to Track. On a success, the PC notices humanoid boot prints among. With another successful check, the PC can follow the tracks to the cemetery fence (see below).

Speckled Hester's Grave

After the people of Ill Hollow executed Speckled Hester, they buried her remains in an unmarked grave. Before he died, Old Moody passed on the grave's location to his grandson, Young Moody. If the PCs do a thorough search of the cemetery grounds, they stumble upon the grave automatically (no roll required). Otherwise, Young Moody points it out to the PCs.

Hester's grave is tucked behind a mausoleum on the north side of the graveyard, out of sight of the cemetery gates. It's also empty, but unlike the horse's grave, Hester's grave appears to have been dug up purposefully by a humanoid using a shovel. Characters who investigate the area can attempt a DC 15 Survival check to Track. On a success, the PC spots humanoid boot prints leading to the cemetery fence (see below).

Young Moody

Word spreads quickly among the townsfolk if the PCs find Speckled Hester's empty grave. Before long, the entire town is in a panic. Only Young Moody appears unfazed by the news. At first, the PCs may suspect that Moody is connected to Jonah's disappearance, but Moody only chuckles if confronted. "My grandfather was too smart for Hester," he explains. "After he buried the rest of her bones, he hid her skull elsewhere, just to be safe. Whoever stole those bones will have to find the skull before they can learn Hester's secret."

Young Moody admits he doesn't know where his grandfather hid the skull exactly. He's certain, however, it's stashed somewhere at his grandfather's cabin east of town (see **The Caretaker's Cabin**). Moody hasn't visited the cabin in years, but he leads the PCs there if he thinks doing so will help locate Jonah.

The Cemetery Fence

PCs who search the graveyard's perimeter can attempt a DC 15 Perception check. On a success, the characters spot fresh blood on one of the spikes that top the fence. Hywela injured her leg on the spike as she fled the cemetery with Jonah. Once the PCs make this discovery, following her blood trail to **Hywela's Campsite** is simple (no check required).

The PCs can follow these leads in any order. If they travel to **Hester's Hill**, they learn more about Hywela Teague and may even uncover a magical weapon that can help them defeat her and Bonedigger. At **The Caretaker's Cabin**, the PCs encounter the ghost of Old Moody, who still protects Hester's skull, and learn information that may prove vital when dealing with Bonedigger. Finally, if the party heads to **Hywela's Campsite**, they find Bonedigger guarding Jonah Tennet. If they search the camp, they may also locate Hywela's most valuable possession, *Hester's Black Book*. All three locations are within a mile or two of Ill Hollow, so unless the PCs dawdle, they should be able to visit all the locations before sunrise.

Hester's Hill

In life, Speckled Hester was a green hag well-practiced in the arts of necromancy. Hester's name came from the inky, freckle-like markings that covered her face, a side effect of her connection to the eldritch tome that gave her power. *Hester's Black Book*, as the tome was known, allowed the hag to speak with the dead and animate their remains to serve her. Unbeknownst to the people of Ill Hollow, the book was also the key to Hester's final, and most wicked, secret.

After Hester's death, no one dared claim the cottage where she'd worked her foul magic. Crumbling stone walls and rotting timbers are all that remain of the place today. The cottage crouches atop a hill an hour's walk west of Ill Hollow. Hester's Hill, as the locals call it, is a foreboding landmark, but the PCs encounter nothing unusual as they approach. When the PCs enter the cottage proper, read or paraphrase the following:

Any furnishings this one-room cottage once held rotted away long ago. The cottage's roof has collapsed, leaving the interior exposed to the elements. Animal bones blanket the bare dirt floor. Heaped against the north wall are the remnants of a small brick oven. Beside the oven, sitting in a shaft of silver moonlight, is a mottled black-and-white cat.

The "cat" is actually a **weak will-o'-wisp** that once served Speckled Hester. Hester treated the will-o'-wisp much like a familiar and even gave the creature a name: Clover.

Though not truly a cat, Clover plays the part well, cleaning himself, purring, and brushing his tail against the PCs' legs. PCs who try to pet Clover, however, find their hands pass right through the creature, leaving their fingers numb with cold.

Clover politely greets the PCs as they enter. So long as the PCs remain cordial, he answers all their questions and can share the following information with the party:

Speckled Hester

Clover relates the story of Speckled Hester, if the PCs don't know it already. If the PCs suspect Hester is behind Jonah's disappearance, Clover is skeptical. "If Hester were alive again," the cat sighs, "wouldn't I be the first to know?" Clover would like nothing more than to have his mistress back, but he fears the people of Ill Hollow hid her bones too well. Clover's demeanor changes if the PCs explain Hester's bones are missing. "Someone," he says excitedly, "makes way for Hester's return!"

Bonedigger

PCs who inspect the bones on the floor discover they are indeed only animal bones. If asked about the bones, Clover explains that Hester's hound, Bonedigger, continues to fetch them for the hag even after her death. Clover has tried to get Bonedigger to locate Hester's remains, but the "stupid mutt" is too dense to understand him. Clover hasn't seen the hound for several weeks and has no clue as to his current whereabouts. If the PCs suggest Bonedigger may have found a new master, Clover is pleased to be rid of the beast.

Hywela Teague

Clover doesn't know Hywela Teague by name but says a human woman visited the cottage several weeks ago. When the woman discovered *Hester's Black Book*,

Will-o'-Wisps in the Runewild

In the Runewild, will-o'-wisps take many forms. Some appear as cackling skulls, others like cats made of moonlight. Whatever form they take, will-o'-wisps delight in leading heedless mortals deep into Runewild. Though undead, will-o'-wisps have a strong connection to the fey of the forest and are often found serving hags and other wicked creatures.

Clover told her the book contained powerful magic, but that if the woman wanted to learn Hester's greatest secret she'd have to speak with the hag herself. Other than her odd facial markings (which she wouldn't receive until she started using *Hester's Black Book*), Clover's description of the woman matches Hywela precisely.

Jonah Tennet

If asked about Jonah Tennet, Clover feigns concern but admits (truthfully) that he has no idea where the boy might be.

Leaving the Cottage

Clover is helpful until the moment the PCs try leave the cottage. At that point, he rises into the air, his paws alight with electricity. "I'm afraid you can't just leave," Clover purrs silkily, "Not while you're still alive!" He then lunges for the nearest PC (**Initiative** Deception +12).

Other than his unusual appearance, Clover is a normal will-o'-wisp (albeit a Weak one). Clover consumes the life force (using *Feed on Fear*) of any character who drops to 0 Hit Points, but he doesn't pursue PCs who flee the cottage. Clover uses *Go Dark* and flees if reduced to less than 20 Hit Points.

Treasure

PCs who Search the oven can attempt a DC 15 Perception check. On a success, they discover a loose brick that conceals a narrow hidey-hole. Inside are 5 *minor healing potions* and a +1 *ghost touch shortsword*. Clover spits and hisses if he sees the weapon. In addition to the shortsword's normal magical properties, attacks made with it deal an extra 1d6 force damage to will-o'-wisps.

The Caretaker's Cabin

When his children moved to Ill Hollow after their mother's death, Old Moody Harlow continued to live alone in this cabin until he died 20 years ago. The woods in which the cabin sits aren't connected to the

Runewild proper and are relatively free of danger. The PCs can reach Old Moody's cabin from Ill Hollow by foot in about an hour.

When the PCs enter Moody's cabin, read or paraphrase the following:

Floorboards groan as you enter the simple, one-room shack Old Moody Harlow once called home. Creeping vines have invaded the cabin's interior and now threaten to pull the structure apart. Shovels and other tools hang in neat rows along the northern wall. The rest of the cabin's furnishings—a table, a rocking chair, and a few barren shelves—look as though they would collapse at the slightest touch.

Old Moody Harlow's spirit haunts the cabin as a **ghost commoner**. If the PCs spend more than a few moments inspecting the cabin, Moody's spectral form manifests in the rocking chair and demands to know what they're doing in his home.

Old Moody's Ghost

Even as a ghost, Old Moody's resemblance to his grandson is unmistakable. As crotchety as he was in life, Moody's motivations are noble despite his gruff demeanor. Hester's skull (safely hidden beneath the cabin's floorboards) binds his spirit to the cabin. Moody refuses to rest so long as the skull remains in his care.

Moody assumes Speckled Hester has sent the PCs to retrieve her skull. His initial attitude toward the party is unfriendly. To change Moody's mind about them, the PCs must improve his attitude to at least indifferent by succeeding on a DC 18 Diplomacy check to Make an Impression. They must then Request that Moody give up the location of the skull with a DC 18 Diplomacy check. On a success, Old Moody shows them where he's hidden Hester's skull, provided they swear to keep it safe at all costs. If Young Moody accompanies the party, the PCs gain a +5 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks related to Old Moody.

Old Moody doesn't know anything about Hywela Teague or Jonah Tennet. If asked about Bonedigger, Moody doesn't recognize the name at first, as he knew Bonedigger only by the name he gave the hound in life: Titan. PCs who call Bonedigger by this name gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Nature checks made to Command the animal (see **Hywela's Campsite**).

Moody can't physically affect or be affected by anything on the Material Plane. If the PCs anger him, he causes the shovels displayed on the north wall to animate rather than attacking the party directly. Treat the shovels as four **animated brooms** that deal 1d6 bludgeoning damage and have no Dust ability. Moody never materializes fully, even if the PCs claim Hester's skull against his wishes. If the PCs remove Hester's skull from his cabin, Moody's spirit disappears, never to return.

Hester's Skull

If the PCs win Old Moody's trust, the ghostly caretaker shows them the skull's hiding place beneath the cabin's floorboards. Otherwise, the PCs must discover the skull by Searching the cabin and succeeding on a DC 15 Perception check. Hester's skull is a flawless white and appears untouched by time. If the PCs try to damage the skull, they find it to be indestructible. The skull is immune to all damage and magical effects short of a *wish* spell. Furthermore, nonmagical weapons take 3d10 damage each time they are used to attack the skull. If this damage reduces a weapon below its Broken Threshold, there's a 50% chance the weapon outright shatters and is destroyed.

Treasure

Moody takes no pride in having killed Bonedigger, but he points out the shovel he used to do it if asked. The shovel isn't inherently magical, but it functions as a +1 *ghost touch staff* for the purposes of overcoming Bonedigger's damage resistance. Moody's shack contains nothing else of value.

Hywela's Campsite

Abandoned by her parents as a child, Hywela Teague learned long ago how to survive the Runewild's dangers on her own. Her rugged existence has made Hywela hardened and cruel. Hywela avoids other people, and the few who have met her describe her as a creature of the wild, better suited to a life among beasts than alongside other humans.

Hywela's affinity for beasts served her well when, several weeks ago, she tracked Bonedigger to the home of his previous master, Speckled Hester. In the ruins of the hag's cottage, Hywela discovered *Hester's Black Book*. Hungry to learn Speckled Hester's final secret, Hywela tamed Bonedigger and made plans to recover Hester's bones.

Perception +6; tremorsense (imprecise) 30 feet

Languages Sylvan (can't speak any language)

Skills Athletics +8, Stealth +6

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** -1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

AC 16; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

HP 35; **Resistances** bludgeoning 5, piercing 5; **Weaknesses** fire 5

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ claw +8 (agile, finesse), Damage 1d6+3 slashing plus Knockdown

FronDS ♦ fronds +8 (agile, finesse), Damage 1d10+2 mental plus Memory Drain

Pounce ♦ The fiddlehead Strides and makes a claw Strike at the end of that movement. If the fiddlehead began this action hidden, it remains hidden until after this ability's Strike.

Memory Drain (incapacitation, mental) When the fiddlehead damages a sentient creature with its fronds Strike, the creature must succeed at a DC 16 Will saving throw or become stupefied 1 for 1 minute. Further damage dealt by the fiddlehead increases the level of stupefied by 1 on a failed save to a maximum of stupefied 4.

Moon Bears: A breed peculiar to the Runewild, moon bears are the same size as **grizzly bears** and share a similar temperament. The pelt of a moon bear is marked with silver patterns that become increasingly elaborate as the bear ages. Sunbursts, moons of all phases, and constellations both real and imagined are typical. Some human astrologers believe a moon bear's markings mirror the movements of the firmament and use the animals' pelts for divination. Elves, however, view this practice as barbaric.

The moon bears are busy foraging and ignore the party unless provoked. PCs capable of speaking with the bears (via a *speak with animals* spell, for example) can attempt a DC 18 Diplomacy check to make a Request of the bears. On a success, the bears lead the party to Hywela's campsite. On a failure, the bears continue to ignore the party. On a critical failure, the bears attack instead.

Hunting Trap: One of the PCs (chosen randomly) must succeed at a DC 15 Perception check to spot Hywela's trap in time to avoid it. Hywela employs these traps to catch game and to deter unwanted visitors to her campsite.

Hywela stands over six feet tall and is as well-muscled as any man. She wears blood-stained leathers and furs, and carries an enormous woodsman's axe (as a greataxe) slung across her back. The magic contained in *Hester's Black Book* has marred her wide face with a spray of ink-black freckles.

Hywela's campsite rests within the boundaries of the Runewild an hour's trek south of Ill Hollow. If the PCs follow Hywela's blood trail from Ill Hollow, they have little difficulty locating the campsite. Without such a trail, the PCs must succeed on a DC 15 Survival check to find the camp. On a failure, the party can repeat the Survival check after an hour of fruitless searching.

Hywela has seeded the approach to her campsite with cunning traps. Dangerous fey and other creatures lurk in the forest as well. Every hour the PCs spend searching for Hywela's campsite, roll a d6 and consult the random encounter table below. Brief notes regarding the encounters follow.

d6	Encounter
1	No encounter
2	Snare
3	Hunting trap
4	1d2 moon bears
5	2d4 skeletons
6	1 fiddlehead

Fiddlehead: As the fiddlehead prowls in the shadows just beyond the PCs' light sources, the characters may at first mistake the hound-shaped plant for Bonedigger. The fiddlehead is blind beyond the 60-foot radius of its tremorsense, so if the party ignores the fiddlehead, it moves on after a few moments. Otherwise, the fiddlehead rushes the PCs as soon as it senses their approach.

Fiddleheads devour the memories of their victims. Survivors of a fiddlehead attack eventually regain their senses, but at the GM's discretion PCs who eat one the fiddlehead's head-fronds may experience memories that aren't their own. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Will saving throw may be able to glean some useful information from the jumble of otherwise meaningless memories.

HUNTING TRAP

HAZARD 1

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 15

Description Leaves, dirty straw, or other debris conceal the trap's hinged jaws. A length of chain secures the trap to a spike driven into the ground.

Disable Athletics DC 20 to Force Open the jaws or pull the spike from the ground

AC 15; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +1

Hardness 10, **HP** 20 (BT 10); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Snap Shut ⤵ (attack); **Trigger** A creature walks onto the hunting trap. **Effect** The trap's jaws snap shut, making an attack against the creature.

Melee jaws +13, **Damage** 2d8 piercing plus the creature's land speed is halved (or the creature is immobile if the trap is attached to a solid object) until the creature is freed from the trap.

Reset A creature can use an action to reset the trap manually.

Skeletons: Over the past few weeks, Hywela has used the magic in *Hester's Black Book* to animate these skeletons. They now patrol the area around her campsite. A rune of black ink marks each skeleton's forehead. The runes are similar to those described on the horse's grave in **The Investigation**.

Snare: One of the PCs (chosen randomly) must succeed at a DC 15 Perception check to spot Hywela's trap in time to avoid it. Hywela's snares are built specifically to capture humanoid-size creatures.

SNARE

HAZARD 1

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 15

Description Leaves, dirty straw, or other debris conceal a rope or vine snare attached to a bent sapling or counterweight.

Disable Thievery DC 15 to disable the snare without springing it

AC 10; **Fort** +4, **Ref** +4

Hardness 2, **HP** 8 (BT 4); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** slashing 5

Hoist ⤵ **Trigger** A creature walks into the snare. **Effect** The creature is hoisted into

the air, where it hangs upside-down and is immobilized until it Escapes (DC 20). Unless reasonable precautions are taken, an immobilized creature must attempt a DC 15 Reflex saving throw upon being released from the snare. On a failure, the creature lands awkwardly and takes 5 bludgeoning damage, or 10 bludgeoning damage on a critical failure.

Hywela's Camp

Hywela's camp rests beneath a rocky outcropping that screens the light of her campfire and affords her some protection from the elements. The following description assumes Hywela escaped Ill Hollow with Jonah Tennet. If the events of your adventure differ, adjust the description as required.

You come to the base of a rocky outcropping fifteen feet high at its peak. A shelter of saplings and an animal hides leans against the wall of jagged stone. Nearby, a heavily laden sack hangs from a tree like an overripe fruit. A smoldering fire pit fills the area with smoke and shadows.

Bonedigger's ghostly form blends in well with the smoke that fills Hywela's campsite. When the PCs approach within 60 feet of the area, they hear a low growl as the ghostly hound reveals itself (**Initiative** Stealth +9).

Bonedigger

Standing over three feet tall at the shoulder, Bonedigger is large even for a mastiff. Though Bonedigger's body seems solid, his eyes trail wisps of ephemeral smoke. His fur is a mottled mat of black and gray.

Hywela has ordered Bonedigger to guard Jonah (currently hanging in the sack). Though no smarter than a typical hound, Hester's magic and his violent death combined to make Bonedigger exceptionally vicious. He attacks any PC who doesn't leave the area immediately, although he won't pursue those who flee unless they abscond with Jonah.

Bonedigger hasn't forgotten his former self entirely. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Nature check to Command an Animal can dis-



tract Bonedigger long enough to rescue Jonah. The PC suffers a -5 circumstance penalty to the check if Hywela is present. The PC gains a +5 circumstance bonus to the check if they call Bonedigger by his original name, Titan, which the party might have learned from Old Moody at **The Caretaker's Cabin**.

On a critical success, the PC tames Bonedigger, in effect becoming his new master. While tamed, Bonedigger obeys his master's spoken commands to the best of his ability. He may even turn on Hywela if ordered to do so. Bonedigger serves the PC until sunrise, at which point the hound disappears and moves on to the afterlife.

BONEDIGGER

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE N MEDIUM GHOST INCORPOREAL SPIRIT

UNDEAD

Perception +9; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +7, Stealth +9, Survival +9

Str -5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +0, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -2

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

HP 24, negative healing, rejuvenation; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 5 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Speed 35 feet

Melee ♦ ghostly jaws +13 (agile, finesse, magical),

Damage 1d6+2 negative plus Knockdown

Frightful Howl ♦♦ (auditory, divine, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental) Bonedigger looses a frightful howl, forcing each living creature within 30 feet to attempt a DC 18 Will save. On a failure, a creature becomes frightened 2 (or frightened 3 on a critical failure). On a success, a creature is temporarily immune to Bonedigger's frightful howl for 1 minute.

Pack Attack Bonedigger's Strikes deal 1d4 extra damage to creatures within reach of at least two of Bonedigger's allies.

Searching the Campsite

Hywela's possessions are meager. Her lean-to contains the equivalent of an adventurer's pack (worth 7 sp), as well as a snare kit (worth 5 gp). A satchel stuffed with foul-smelling herbs functions as a healer's kit (5 gp). A PC can attempt a DC 15 Nature check to identify the herbs. On a success, they recognize a handful of purple berries among the other plants. The berries are slightly magical: a creature that uses an action to eat a berry regains 1 Hit Point and receives enough nourishment to sustain them a full day. If left uneaten, the berries spoil after 24 hours.

Climbing the rocky outcropping requires a successful DC 15 Strength check. While climbing the outcropping, PCs can attempt a DC 15 Perception check. On a success, they discover *Hester's Black Book* stashed in a crevice 10 feet above the ground.

For more information on *Hester's Black Book*, see **New Magic Items** at the end of the adventure.

Confronting Hywela

Hywela's plan to contact Hester's spirit via a *call spirit* ritual is foiled once she discovers Hester's skull isn't among the other remains. After returning to her campsite with Jonah, Hywela spends the rest of the night tracking down the skull, either by following the party in the hopes they lead her to it, or by deducing on her own that Old Moody must have hidden the skull somewhere in his cabin.

The PCs should encounter Hywela wherever and whenever you think makes most sense. If she's stayed one step ahead of the PCs, she most likely ambushes them either at her campsite or just as they are leaving **The Caretaker's Cabin**. Wherever she confronts the PCs, Hywela demands the party hand over Hester's skull if she believes they have it, attacking or threatening to harm Jonah if they refuse.

Alternately, if the PCs interrupt Hywela's visit to Ill Hollow's cemetery or otherwise interfere with her plans, she may spend most of the adventure running from the party. In this case, Hywela leads the PCs into the Runewild, hoping they stumble into the traps she's laid around her campsite. She then turns the tables on the PCs when they're at their weakest.



As the PCs investigate the three locations outside Ill Hollow, consider Hywela's movements in relation to those of the party. Don't be afraid to let the party encounter Hywela "too early" in the adventure if they happen to bump into her. While Hywela is the main antagonist of the adventure, play can go on even if the PCs manage to outwit or outmaneuver her . . . or vice versa!

HYWELA TEAGUE

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +11

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +8, Intimidation +6, Occultism +6, Stealth +6, Survival +5

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

Items dagger, greataxe, hide armor

AC 19; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

HP 32

Attack of Opportunity ⤴

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ dagger +10 (agile, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing

Melee ✦ greataxe +10 (sweep), **Damage** 1d12+4 slashing

Ranged ✦ dagger +10 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing

Sudden Charge ✦✦ Hywela Strides twice. If she ends her movement within melee reach of at least one enemy, she can make a melee Strike against that enemy.

Hester's Last Hex

Unless the PCs stop her, Hywela Teague eventually recovers Speckled Hester's skull and returns to her campsite with it. Once there, she casts *call spirit* on the skull and beseeches Hester to reveal her final secret.

Hester does so gladly. With a triumphant cackle, Hester's spectral form emerges from the skull and possesses Hywela's body. Over the course of the next seven days, Hywela's body transforms into the hag's, leaving no trace of Hywela behind. Speckled Hester is reborn!

Even if the PCs prevent Hester's return, her skull abides. The skull is impervious to any weapons or magic the PCs currently possess. Destroying Hester's

skull may prove to be one of the party's greatest adventures. In the meantime, the PCs must keep the skull safe, lest it fall into the wrong hands again.

If the party returned Jonah Tennet to his parents safe and sound, the townsfolk of Ill Hollow regard the PCs as heroes. In addition to any monetary rewards they may receive, the PCs are invited to return to town for next year's Harvestide. If the party accepts this invitation, you will have to decide whether Bonedigger also returns—and how the hound feels about the party if he does.

New Magic Items

Bonedigger presents two new magic items: *Harvestide cookies* and *Hester's Black Book*.

HARVESTIDE COOKIE

ITEM 1

CONSUMABLE DIVINATION MAGICAL

Price 1 sp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ✦ Interact

Local tradition holds that these tasty sugar cookies provide insight into one's fortune for the coming year.

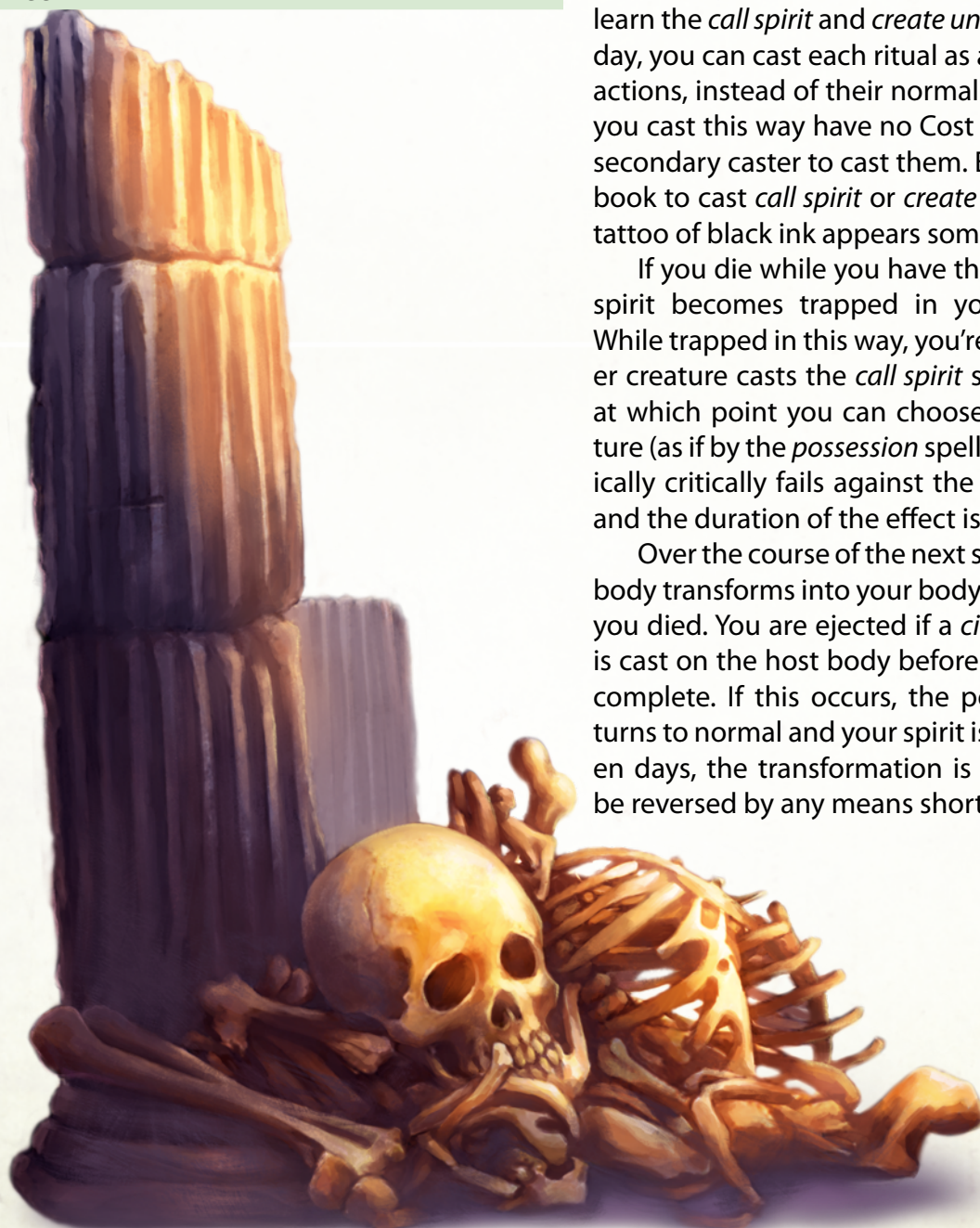
To activate the magic of a *Harvestide cookie*, pull a random cookie from a sack or other container and eat it. Until sunrise, you gain a +1 status bonus to all your checks and DCs related to the shape of your cookie.

For example, if your cookie is shaped like a sword, you gain a +1 status bonus to Strikes made with swords, to skill checks made to Recall Knowledge about swords, and even recovery checks you make after suffering a deadly sword wound. The GM has the final say as to whether a cookie's shape applies, although they are encouraged to be generous in their interpretations.

To determine the shape of your Harvestide cookie, roll twice on the following table. Your cookie either looks like a composite of the two shapes, or its shape changes depending on the angle you look at it. Either way, you gain the +1 status bonus to situations in which either of the two shapes would apply.

If you roll the same shape twice, the cookie *really* looks like that shape. In this case, the bonus you receive increases to +2, but only on rolls related to that shape and no other.

Roll	Cookie Shape
1	Arrow
2	Bird
3	Boot
4	Cat
5	Dog
6	Grinning skull
7	Horse
8	Pointed wizard's hat
9	Shield
10	Shovel
11	Sword
12	Tree



Only the first cookie you pull each Harvestide night provides you a magical benefit. Cookies you pull after the first have no effect. The cookie's magic fades at sunrise, at which point any uneaten *Harvestide cookies* also lose their magic.

HESTER'S BLACK BOOK

ITEM 6

UNIQUE INVESTED MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 230 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk 1

The ink in this magical book slithers across the pages on its own accord. It eventually stains anyone who invests in the book, as well.

While you have *Hester's Black Book* invested, your proficiency in Occultism becomes expert, and you learn the *call spirit* and *create undead* rituals. Once per day, you can cast each ritual as an activity requiring 3 actions, instead of their normal casting times. Rituals you cast this way have no Cost and you don't need a secondary caster to cast them. Each time you use the book to cast *call spirit* or *create undead*, a freckle-like tattoo of black ink appears somewhere on your skin.

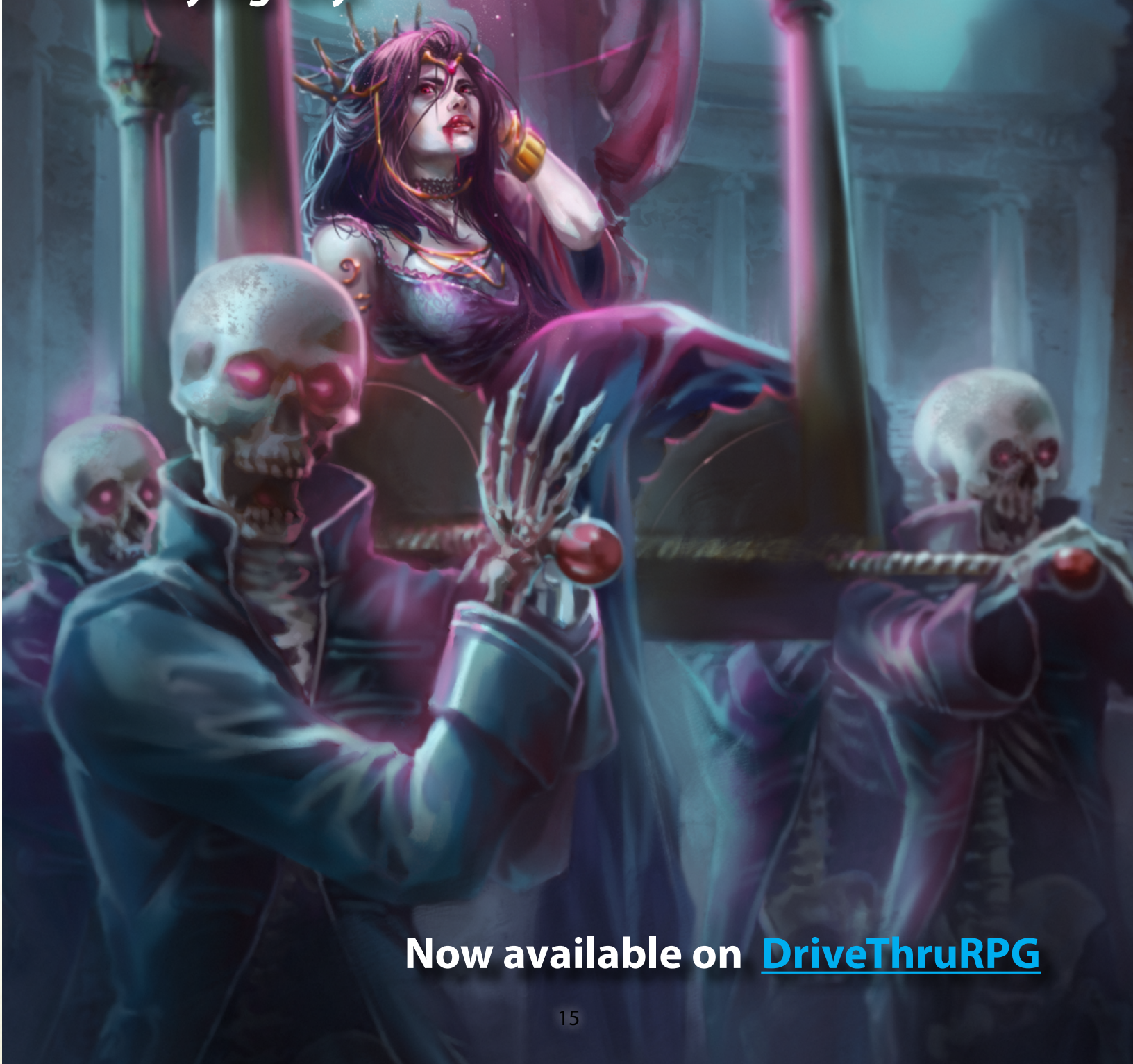
If you die while you have the book invested, your spirit becomes trapped in your physical remains. While trapped in this way, you're helpless until another creature casts the *call spirit* spell on your remains, at which point you can choose to possess the creature (as if by the *possession* spell). The target automatically critically fails against the possession (no save), and the duration of the effect is indefinite.

Over the course of the next seven days, your host's body transforms into your body as it appeared before you died. You are ejected if a *circle of protection* spell is cast on the host body before the transformation is complete. If this occurs, the possessed creature returns to normal and your spirit is destroyed. After seven days, the transformation is permanent and can't be reversed by any means short of a *wish* spell.

Drakonheim

City of Bones

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