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DUNGEON BACKDROP: THE DEATH KING'S FORLORN ISLE



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DUNGEON BACKDROP: THE DEATH KING'S FORLORN ISLE

A keening gale tears across the Bitter Sea, parting the clouds above to unveil a turgid crimson moon. Ominous rumbling resounds from the churning waters below. The surface of the sea boils and bubbles like a witch's cauldron—its waves foaming and swelling like a suppurating sore until a mass of jagged black rock erupts from the lightless depths. The Forlorn Isle has risen. Legend claims the small island holds the tomb of an ancient king whose crimes were so heinous his name was stricken from history. After his death, the weight of his evil deeds caused the isle to sink into the Bitter Sea.

But once every year, when the Blood Moon casts its baleful gaze upon the world, the cold brine rejects its cursed burden and the Forlorn Isle rises again, eagerly awaiting fresh victims. Despite the impressive tally of adventurers lost to the basalt bowels of the so-called Death King's ruined keep, many brave souls have sailed there over the years, drawn like moths to a flame by legends of lost ancient treasure. When dawn breaks, the bleak island sinks into the deep once more, entombing alive those who would steal its sinister secrets.

You are a GM, but you are busy. You want to write your own modules, but you just don't have the time. And you don't want to use commercial modules. You want to make your campaign your own. That's where the Dungeon Backdrop line comes in! Each Dungeon Backdrop presents a fully fleshed out and lovingly detailed self-contained dungeon ready for you to use as you see fit. Stock the dungeon with your own monsters (and—perhaps—their treasure), decide their back story and you are good to go.

Every Dungeon Backdrop is carefully designed to be easily inserted into almost any fantasy campaign and is compatible with virtually any fantasy roleplaying game. Dungeon Backdrops: we describe the dungeon, you add the monsters (and the treasure).

CREDITS

Design: Bart Wynants

Development: Creighton Broadhurst

Art: William McAusland, Matt Morrow and Bart Wynants. Some artwork copyright William McAusland, used with permission.

Cartography: Dyson Logos, Tommi Salama and Bart Wynants

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USING A DUNGEON BACKDROP

Tweak and modify this dungeon to make it your own. The parts of this supplement describing the actual dungeon itself feature extensive space for you to make notes—adding treasure, opponents and so on.

- **Location Descriptions:** The various location descriptions provided herein only describe the basic appearance of the dungeon's rooms, chambers and corridors. They do not include descriptions of any monsters lurking therein. Remember when describing the dungeon to your players the snarling orcs (or whatever) are probably more noticeable than the room's features. Also remember, creatures in the dungeon will modify their home to better suit their needs. For example, the aforementioned orcs may have set up a rough camp—mention these changes when describing the area.
- **Treasure:** The text only presents the details of minor treasures the PCs could discover in the course of their adventure. Most is of little value, but serves to underline the flavour of the dungeon. Remember to add level-appropriate treasure when designing the dungeon.

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DUNGEON BACKGROUND

Ten centuries ago, a multitude of small kingdoms jostled for power in the land that would become the Duchy of Ashlar. Petty rulers controlled these territories, waging constant war against one another to amass wealth and power. Amongst them was Raakus Muurhaja, an evil man renowned for his cruelty and treachery. From his basalt fortress of Helvettiin, which stood perched upon a lonely islet in the Bitter Sea, Raakus ruled with an iron fist. Every full moon, the tyrant sent his soldiers to pillage the surrounding lands and abduct women and children. Those who were carried off to his dark citadel were never seen again. It was whispered Raakus served the demon lord Dagon and that his captives were being sacrificed to the Shadow in the Sea.

Despite their animosity towards one another, the other kingdoms banded together in a bid to destroy Raakus. They raised a great army and besieged Helvettiin as the tyrant-king rained evil spells onto the attackers from the parapets of his jet-black tower. After two days, the victorious besiegers sundered Helvettiin's bronze gates and Raakus was slain by King Voitto in

hand-to-hand combat. Fearing Dagon's wrath, Voitto ordered his men to entomb Raakus' broken body in the dungeons beneath his own fortress. Helvettiin was razed to the ground and the name of Raakus Muurhaja stricken from history.

Three days after the citadel's destruction, the isle inexplicably sank beneath the sea. It rises again every year when the Blood Moon hangs low in the night sky.

ADVENTURE SETUP OPTIONS

When designing the challenges lurking in the Death King's Forlorn Isle, you have three basic options, for the isle's setup.

OPTION 1: RAAKUS RETURNED!

Raakus is a powerful undead being (for example, a wight, lich or anything else you desire). In this scenario, the Death King seeks to escape his sunken prison and conquer the lands of Ashlar anew. Helvettiin's passages are crawling with the undead—the remains of those who have drowned in its reeking halls.

OPTION 2: SHADOW OF THE DEATH KING

The tyrant-king may be dead, but his spirit lingers on. Raakus' ghost patiently waits for adventurers to find a way into his crypt, at which point he seeks to possess one of them; an unwitting vessel to carry Raakus to the mainland. If an NPC provides the hook for this scenario, they might secretly serve Dagon and seek to orchestrate Raakus' return through the heroes' unwitting actions.

OPTION 3: HELVETTIIN'S HEIRS

With the Death King imprisoned, dormant or destroyed, evil sea-dwelling creatures (such as sahuagin, scraggs or the like) lair in Helvettiin's ruins. This option works on its own but also works if you decide Raakus and his undead servants are trapped in his crypt (area 8) while other creatures roam the rest of the dungeon.

COLDWATER

In Ashlar, the nearest settlement of note to the Forlorn Isle is the dismal, smuggler-haunted village of Coldwater. For more information about Coldwater, refer to Appendix 1: The Village of Coldwater or *Village Backdrop: Coldwater*.

ADDITIONAL GM RESOURCES

Depending on your design for the Forlorn Isle, the following resources might be useful to you:

- *20 Things #4: Smuggler's Lair*
- *20 Things #29: Lich's Lair*
- *Monstrous Lair #22: Sahuagin's Sunken Cave*
- *Village Backdrop: Coldwater* (or other Village Backdrop if you choose not to use Coldwater)

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Seafaring characters could easily be shipwrecked on the sharp rocks of the Forlorn Isle and explore the place in search of a means of escape.

Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the party to the Forlorn Isle. Each of the hooks below uses a different notable NPC from the village of Coldwater; if you have placed the Forlorn Isle in your own campaign simply substitute suitable NPCs for those names below.

- **Iargo's Fate:** Last year, Iargo Itkunen (N male half-orc fighter 1) went to Helvetiin to seek its treasures. He never returned, and his mother Uzlen Itkunen (N female half-orc barbarian 1) is desperate to get his body back for a proper burial. Uzlen owns and operates Coldwater's only shipwright business of note and offers a reward appropriate to the characters' levels. She can also provide them with a sturdy fishing boat to reach the Forlorn Isle.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character may hear one or more rumours about the Death King's Forlorn Isle. The character can learn this information in several ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local taverns and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the character learns.

Entries 1, 3, 4 and 6 are always true. Decide on the others based on your own preferences.

1. Once every year, when the Blood Moon rises, the Forlorn Isle rises from the Bitter Sea. When dawn breaks, it sinks back into the sea's frigid depths. (True)
2. Fire won't burn on the Forlorn Isle. Both magical and mundane flames are quickly snuffed out by the evil magic permeating the salt-caked basalt rocks.
3. Many centuries ago, an evil tyrant built a fortress called Helvetiin on the Forlorn Isle. The old kings of Ashlar allied against him and razed the citadel to the ground. (True)
4. Only a small section of catacombs remains of the citadel which once stood on the Forlorn Isle. Entombed within is the body of an evil tyrant whose crimes were so vile his name was stricken from history. Sages later named him the Death King. (True)
5. The Forlorn Isle sits atop the cyclopean tomb of a dark, primeval god who sleeps deep beneath the sea. The Death King was his faithful servant in life and the god raised him from the dead as his immortal champion.
6. Few adventurers ever return from the Forlorn Isle. Those who do claim the Death King's tomb is sealed by a massive stone door inscribed with a strange Elven poem. So far, no-one has managed to open it. (True)

- **The Onyx Trapezohedron:** While her motives remain unclear, Elina Vuolle (LN female human wizard 6), the ruler of the dismal village of Coldwater, hires the characters to recover the *Onyx Trapezohedron*. This mystical gemstone is said to have been owned by the Death King and yet languishes in his sunken crypt. According to whispered legend, the Death King received the black jewel from Dagon himself, and it is said to be the source of his power. Elina offers the party a reward commensurate with their level along with something else of great value—the thanks of a noblewoman of Ashlar, if they retrieve the gem.
- **What's in a Name?** The scholar Armas Hujanen (LE male half-elf wizard 5) seeks to learn the Death King's true name, claiming it can be woven into a spell to sink the cursed isle for good. He pays the characters handsomely to look for clues in Helvetiin, but depending on your design probably has some deeper purpose. Normally Armas can be found in his home in Coldwater researching the place's strange preponderance of hideously ugly villagers, but he makes a special effort to seek out visiting adventurers. He offers to pay the party handsomely for their efforts.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Dungeon Backdrop: Death King's Forlorn Isle is not like a normal commercially available adventure. While we have done the bulk of the work for you describing the dungeon in detail, setting out its history, designing plot hooks to get your characters to the dungeon and so on, there is still (a little) work left: you must stock the dungeon with appropriate monsters and treasures and make any other changes or additions you see fit. In short, you must make Helvetiin and the Forlorn Isle your own!

This Dungeon Backdrop is designed for use with the Duchy of Ashlar and the Gloamhold megadungeon or the Lonely Coast. However, the isle is entirely self-contained and so with minimal effort it can be easily modified to fit almost any campaign world.

The major salient components of the adventure comprise:

- **Sunken Island:** A cursed island surfacing only once a year promises a unique dungeon setting.
- **Time Limit:** The characters only have until dawn to explore, loot and escape the dungeon.
- **A Perplexing Puzzle:** Helvetiin contains a clever puzzle for the characters to solve; characters failing to solve the problem must battle a powerful animate guardian.
- **Raakus Muurhaja:** The Death King was an evil tyrant who ruled the land in ancient times. Legends claim he was granted eternal life by Dagon. The remainder of Raakus' story has been left deliberately vague for you to design.

HELVETTIIN AND THE FORLORN ISLE

A bleak, crag-jagged islet in the Bitter Sea, the Forlorn Isle surfaces approximately one mile east of Coldwater every year on the night of the Blood Moon. But one structure stands upon the Forlorn Isle—the Death King's mighty citadel of Helvettiin which was reduced to rubble centuries ago. Beneath these dismal ruins lie the dungeons of the fortress, accessible only via heavy bronze doors set into the rock on the isle's west flank.

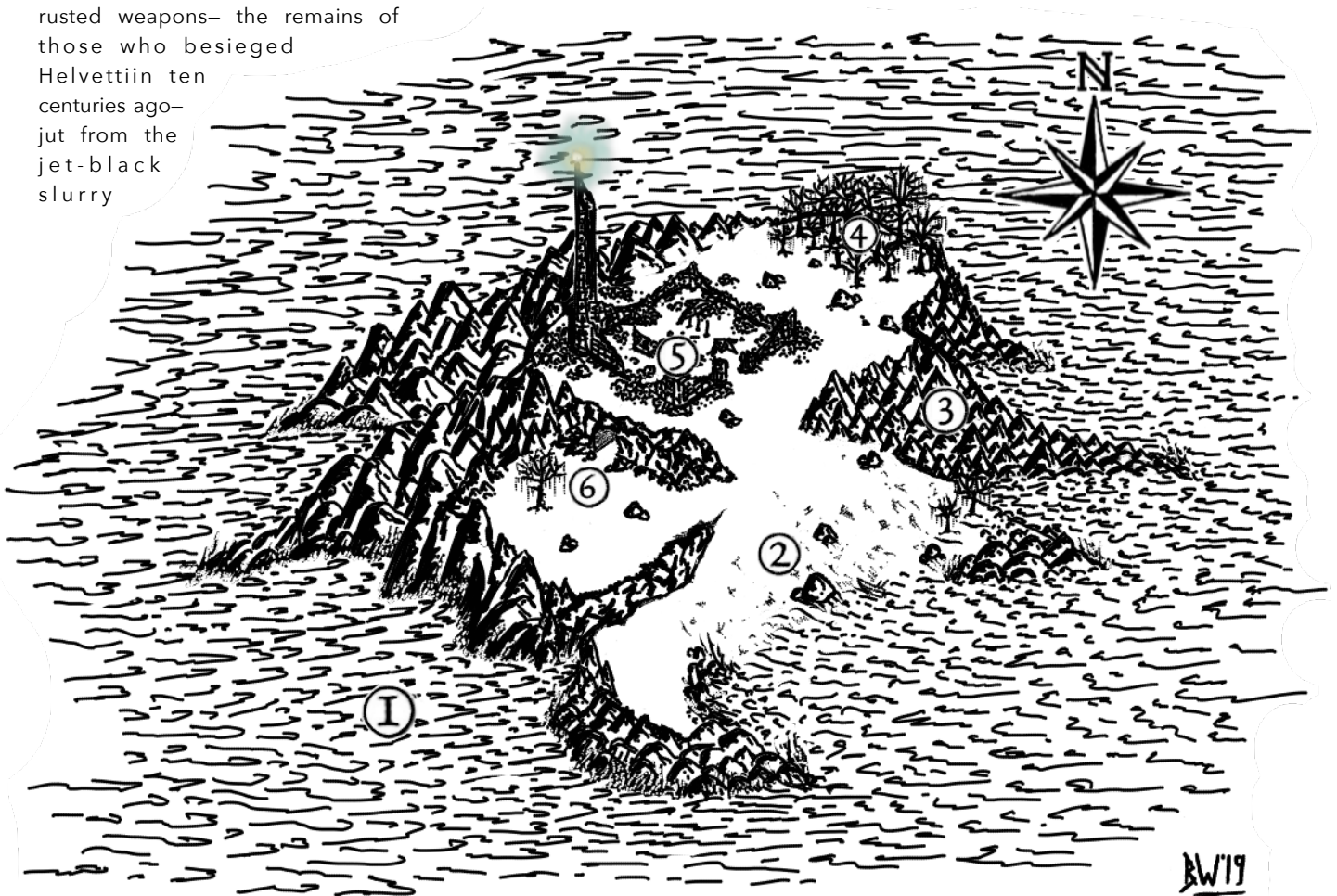
A rugged mass of black stone, pock marked by barnacles and swathed in reeking seaweed is all that now remains of the isle. Crabs, clams and other shellfish brought up from the bottom of the sea provide a feast for countless seagulls whose screeching fills the fog-shrouded sky with their shrill, haunting cacophony which mariners say are the screams of all those souls lost on and near the isle.

Measuring but a half-mile across, the Forlorn Isle takes little time to explore.

1. **The Bitter Sea:** Jagged rocks lurk just beneath the surface of the dark, choppy waters. A shallow-keeled boat is the best option to reach the isle. Even then, the characters must navigate the treacherous waters and avoid being shipwrecked.
2. **Black Silt beach:** Pitted yellow bones and rusted weapons— the remains of those who besieged Helvettiin ten centuries ago— jut from the jet-black slurry

covering the ground like so many charnel toadstools. If you are using "Optional Event: Rival Party" footsteps lead through the foul slurry to area 6.

3. **Crag:** Impaled upon the countless sharp spires of rock are the wrecks of several small and medium-sized boats. The cliffs on the isle's west side are 50 ft. high and slick with algae.
4. **Grove of Sacrifice:** Thick, reeking seaweed hangs from this dismal copse of dead, blackened trees like slimy spider webs. Nailed to the trunks and hidden beneath layers of algae and barnacles are the barnacle-encrusted skeletons of over a dozen victims; their weathered skulls gazing out unseeingly across the churning sea.
5. **Citadel Ruins:** Rising 30 ft. above the surrounding rubble like a glistening black needle, a single crumbling tower wall forms the sole remnant of the Death King's dark citadel. On stormy nights, the tip is wreathed in a nimbus of blue-green fire; a phenomenon known as "Sera's Torch"; mariners consider it a warning from the sea goddess herself.
6. **Dungeon Entrance:** This foreboding cavern hewn into the cliffside hides the only known entrance to Helvettiin's dreary dungeons. When the characters reach this locale proceed to "Helvettiin at a Glance".



REACHING THE ISLE

Whenever the Forlorn Isle rises, the very waters roar at its abomination and the howling wind rails against such an unholy blight. More often than not, a raging storm follows in the wake of the Forlorn Isle's resurgence, increasing the danger and difficulty involved in reaching its black-silted shore. Unless the characters possess magical means of reaching the isle, getting there by boat is their only option.

In order to reach the Forlorn Isle by boat, a character steering the boat must be vigilant against hidden dangers. The party suffers 1d3 events on the way to the island. Effects preceded by "A" occur only when the result is rolled a second time

1. The painful groan of splintering wood briefly drowns out the thunder's roar as the boat grinds across sharp rocks lurking beneath the surface.
 - A. The characters' boat breaks apart on some hidden rock and the party is shipwrecked, washing ashore on the Forlorn Isle's black beach. The characters are now stuck on the isle without a ready means of escape and are possibly missing some of their equipment and supplies. (In this instance, "Optional Event: Rival Party" provides a means for the party to escape the island.)
2. Barbed lightning strikes the waves nearby, followed by a cacophony of rolling thunder.

THE ONYX TRAPEZOHEDRON

An ancient object of fell and awesome power, learned sages have come to believe the *Onyx Trapezohedron* was the source of the Death King's power and a direct conduit to his fell master—Dagon, the Shadow in the Sea. Peasants, adventurers and other uneducated types have a wide-range of wild, and often implausible, theories about this transparent black stone. Characters native to Ashlar—or those that spend any time investigating the *Onyx Trapezohedron* learn the following.

- The *Onyx Trapezohedron* holds the souls of all those slain by the Death King. He used their energy to power his most powerful and evil magics.
- Hewn from the very stuff of the Abyss, the *Onyx Trapezohedron* is not onyx at all, but something else entirely more sinister.
- The *Onyx Trapezohedron* is the Forlorn Isle's keystone; remove it from the island and it won't sink back below the waves. Bring it back to the island once it has been removed causes the isle to immediately sink again.
- The Death King's soul lurks in the *Onyx Trapezohedron* waiting for an unwary explorer to claim the gem as their own. When they do, that person is doomed!

Some, none or all of the above may be true, depending on your setup.

- A. A fiery bolt strikes the boat! All characters suffer 3d6 electricity damage (save against breath weapon halves) and the boat catches fire.
3. Driven by the lashing gale, a massive wave approaches! It rises like a black wall, towering menacingly above the characters before crashing down, swamping the boat.
 - A. The wave is strong enough to knock a character overboard. (The character must roll equal to less than their Strength score on 5d6 or be knocked overboard).
4. As a nearby flash of lightning illuminates the sea, one character catches a split-second glimpse of an enormous pale grey tentacle writhing just beneath the water.
 - A. The same character sees a great three-lobed alien eye staring back at them from the deep and is affected as though by a *fear* spell (save against spell negates).
5. Floating face-down in the frozen brine is the corpse of a fellow adventurer, slain by the creatures of Helvetiin.
 - A. 1d4 zombies latch onto the boat and attack the characters.
6. Coruscating green flame blazes from Helvetiin's ruined tower. A character wise in the ways of religion interprets this as a warning from Serat, Mistress of Storms, to turn back while they still can.

OPTIONAL EVENT: RIVAL PARTY

The characters may not be the only ones interested in unearthing Helvetiin's treasures! At any point during the adventure, a rival adventuring party may arrive at the isle intent on looting its treasures. (Or these adventurers could be Dagon cultists come to the isle for some unspeakable purpose).

These rival adventurers are likely to complicate matters for the party. If the characters lost their vessel or equipment on the journey to Helvetiin, such a rival party might provide convenient replacements. The rival adventuring party comprises:

- **Marke Ahti** (NE middle-aged female human wizard) cares only for herself and lusts after the *Onyx Trapezohedron*.
- **Albin Toivio** (CE male human fighter) believes he is the Death King's descendant and dreams of claiming his birthright.
- **Kaarle Vaito** (CE male human cleric [Baal or Dagon]) lusts after the *Onyx Trapezohedron* and dreams of using it to further his master's goals.
- **Ventla Kupias** (CE female human rogue) wants loot and the comforts it brings—no matter how many corpses she must climb over to get them.

Assign these NPCs levels as you deem appropriate.

HELVETTIIN AT A GLANCE

The dungeons of Helvetiitiin provide a small, self-contained adventure location set amid the crags of a mysterious sinking island. Use the descriptions below as a starting point and adapt them as necessary to suit your own design ideas.

GENERIC DUNGEON FEATURES

Ten hundred years spent at the bottom of the sea have rendered Helvetiitiin's drowned ruins uniformly dark, wet and slimy. All dungeon locations share several generic features.

Illumination: Unless otherwise note, it is dark in the dungeon.

Walls: Skilled masons built Helvetiitiin's walls in ages past. Barnacles, mussels and seaweed cling to the dripping wet stones, providing a rough yet slippery surface.

Floors: Loose, cracked flagstones comprise the dungeon's floor. Fine silt, wet seaweed and rotting algae coat every inch, making it easy to slip and lose one's footing.

Bronze Doors: These heavy doors are pitted and tarnished with age. A thick crust of peeling verdigris conceals time-eaten carvings resembling a tentacled sea monster. Doors open into the area they ward.

Ceiling: The barrel-vaulted ceiling in the dungeon is 15 feet high and dangerously sagging in places. Grey-green stinking seaweed hangs from the many cracks between the stones.

Seawater: All the water in the dungeon is salt water—it oozes from the masonry and forms puddles on the floor. Silt, grey-green seaweed and small crustaceans and like lurk in such puddles.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Helvetiitiin comprises the following notable locations:

1. **Entrance:** Great weathered bronze doors looming inside a dark hollow in the rock comprise the dungeon's entrance.
2. **Sloped Passage:** This narrow passage has a slippery floor which descends sharply toward area 3.
3. **Flooded Chamber:** Long ago, this was Helvetiitiin's dreaded torture chamber. It now sits half-submerged in seawater at the lowest part of the dungeon.
4. **Hall of the Guardian:** An ensorcelled statue guards the entrance to the Death King's crypt. Only those who solve its riddle may pass.
5. **Cruciform Chamber:** This is the largest room in the complex. Two hidden alcoves provide ideal spot for an ambush.
6. **Barricaded Room:** The dilapidated old guardroom is where the last adventuring party to explore the island barricaded themselves inside.
7. **Secret Passage:** Undisturbed since Helvetiitiin's fall, seawater this razor-sharp clam-lined passage lined.
8. **The Death King's Crypt:** The citadel's former prison is where the Death King was entombed by his enemies.

DUNGEON DRESSING

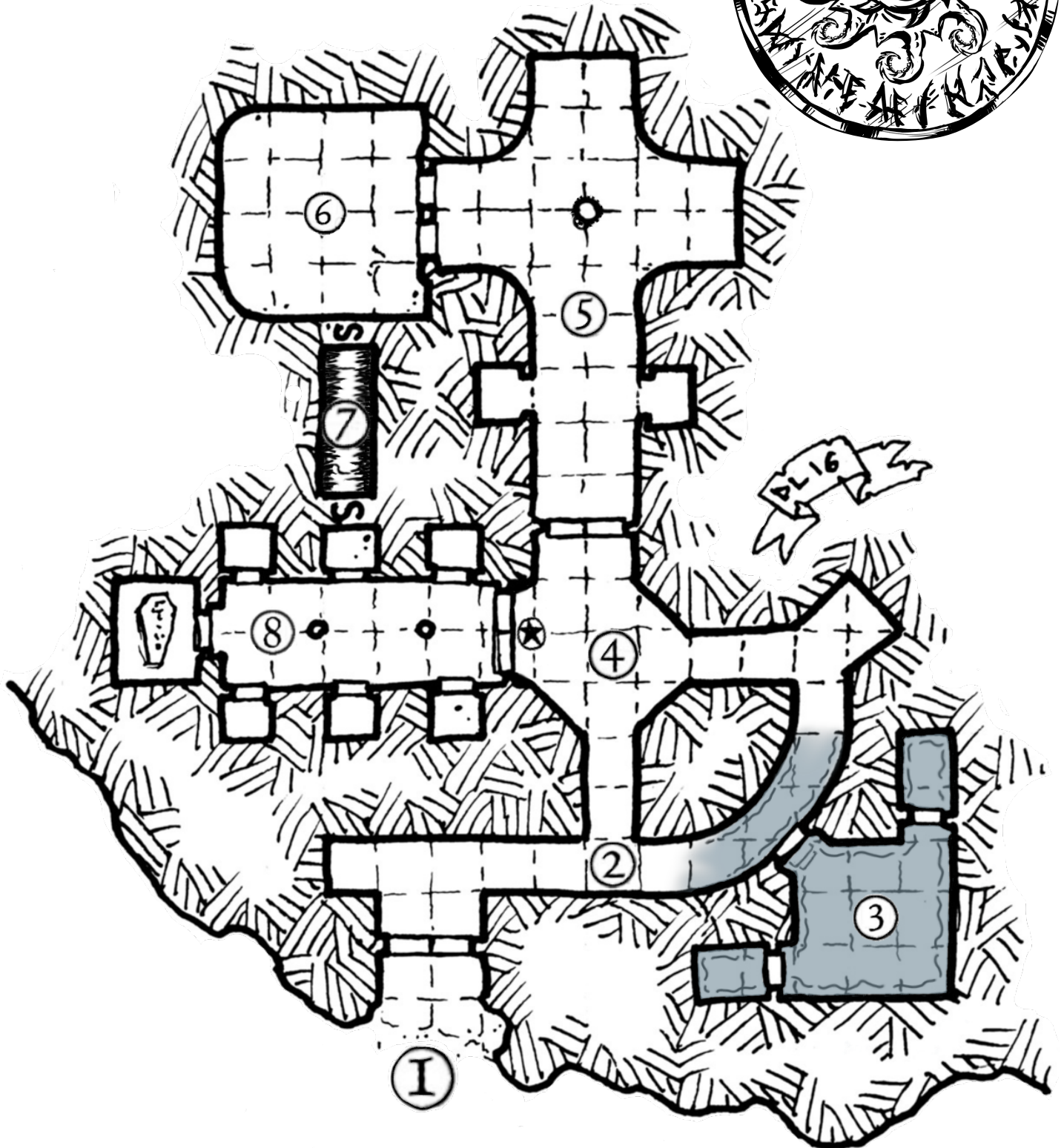
Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

1. Tiny crabs nest in the seaweed. Characters disturbing the weeds are swarmed by 2d12 diminutive crabs.
2. The corpse of an adventurer lies twitching on the floor, its blotchy skin bloated with rot. If disturbed, the abdomen bursts open and 1d6 eels slither out.
3. Splashing noises sound from a shallow puddle where a large, ill-tempered moray eel is trapped beneath the seaweed. It attacks anyone who approaches.
4. A rotted skull sitting in a corner abruptly rises a few inches off the ground and scuttles towards the party, gnashing broken yellowed teeth. A large hermit crab inhabits the skull's brain pan.
5. A faint sulphurous odour and a slight ripple in the air hint at the presence of noxious gas. It could be harmless, suffocating or even explosive (unless rumour #2 is true).
6. A soft green glow shimmers across the wet basalt walls. Investigation reveals the source as bioluminescent algae.

THINGS TO FIND

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. Jet-black mussels encrust a centuries-old corpse huddled against the dripping wall. The mussels contain a total of 2d6 blood-red pearls, each worth 10 gp.
2. A seven-foot long trident impales a cracked human skull to the floor with two tines.
3. A rusted tinderbox and four unburnt torches, warped and split by the salty water, lie scattered about.
4. Slimy algae cover a length of rope lying stretched across the floor. Sturdy dwarven knots mark every five-foot section. The nearest end is cut and frayed, while the other trails off into the darkness ahead.
5. Scores of pale fleshy tentacles protrude several inches from cracks in the wall. They quiver slightly when approached. The "tentacles" are edible molluscs feeding off the algae in the dungeon. A party of hungry adventurers could subsist on them for several days.
6. Four heavy, bloated wineskins hang from a tangle of seaweed. While their contents have soured, the skins are intact and could be used as improvised floatation or breathing devices.



GM NOTES

The deep water in area 3 is perfect for undead or aquatic creatures to hide in and ambush the characters.

1: ENTRANCE

Great weathered bronze doors looming inside a dark hollow in the rock form the entryway to the dungeon.

The hollow stretches wide like the maw of some enormous sea monster oozing its foetid breath. Several feet into its gullet a set of tall bronze doors stands ajar, mutely beckoning—or perhaps daring—you to step inside.

Illumination: The Blood Moon's pale crimson light illuminates the entranceway with dim light. Beyond ten-foot inside, however, darkness reigns.

Bronze doors: These tall double doors open when the isle rises from the deep and magically close when adventurers reach area 8 or interact with the statue or puzzle in area 4. They also open when the *Onyx Trapezohedron* (found in area 8) is brought within ten-foot.

2: SLOPED PASSAGE

This narrow passage has a slippery floor which descends sharply toward area 3.

The dripping black walls of this sharply descending passage are encrusted with mussels and barnacles. Strands of rank seaweed and rotting algae hang from the ceiling like slimy green cobwebs.

Slippery Slope: The eastern branch of this passage descends five feet on either side of the door leading to area 3. Characters moving down the passage must roll equal or less than their Dexterity score on 3d6 to avoid slipping and landing prone in front of the door.

Murky Water: The water in the southern branch gradually deepens to approximately two-foot deep in front of the door to area 3.

Door: The door to area 3 is bolted shut from the inside, and is slightly swollen with moisture. However, the mortar around the hinges has worn away.

3: FLOODED CHAMBER

Long ago, this was Helvettiin's dreaded torture chamber. It now sits half-submerged in seawater at the lowest part of the dungeon.

Rotted seaweed and several bloated bodies float atop a black mirror of ice-cold brine in this dank, dark chamber. Heavy shackles blossoming red with rust line the walls.

Chest-Deep Water: The water conceals an impressive array of rusty torture devices, greatly hampering movement.

Doors: The doors to the side chambers have small trellised windows.

Side Chambers: These contain more torture implements, as well as the rotted corpse of a drowned adventurer, swathed in dark seaweed.

4: HALL OF THE GUARDIAN

An ensorcelled statue guards the entrance to the Death King's crypt. Only those who solve its riddle may pass.

Shattered skulls and broken bones lie strewn across the cracked flagstones of this battle-scarred chamber. A gigantic headless, four-armed giant blocks the west doorway.

Battle Damage: The damage to the flagstones, walls and bones was inflicted by a heavy, blunt instrument. Clever characters easily identify the statue as the likely culprit.

North Doors: These heavy doors are hard to open and can be pushed open with a +1 on the open doors roll.

West Doors: The doors leading west are blocked by a massive statue. A short poem is engraved into the left-hand door, while the right has eight images embossed upon it.

Giant Statue: The "statue" is a stone golem (or other kind of animate guardian). It remains dormant until someone tries to force open the west doors or turns the wrong image. Once animated, it hunts down and attacks all intruders. The golem returns to its dormant state in front of the doors when it has not encountered any intruders for one hour.

Text: Crude Elven runes spell a strange poem, engraved into the bronze doors:

**NOW I LIVE
DESIRE NOT SO LONG**

**NO, LOST ONE
RISE, DEVIL
I WON**

Images: Eight embossed images are arranged in a circle, representing a collection of mythical creatures. Clockwise from the top, they depict a:

1. Winged lion
2. Cyclops
3. Two-headed serpent (one head at each end)
4. Man-scorpion hybrid
5. Basilisk
6. Minotaur
7. Horned dragon
8. Griffon

Closer inspection reveals each individual image to be mounted on an axle, allowing it to be turned like a key.

SOLVING THE RIDDLE

The poem is a palindrome; its sequence of letters looks identical when viewed from either end. The correct solution is to turn the two-headed serpent: the only creature sharing the poem's peculiar property.

When the correct answer is given, the door's guardian steps aside and the doors to area 8 creak open.

GM NOTES

A rampaging stone golem could make short work of low-level characters. When faced with a lower level party, play the golem as a slow, ponderous brute, giving the characters a chance to run and hide until the construct returns to its dormant state. (Alternatively, replace the golem with a more appropriate guardian creature).

GM NOTES

If evil aquatic creatures dwell in Helvetiin (Adventure Setup option 3), area 5 is a likely place to encounter their leader.

The corpse in area 6 belongs to Iargo Itkunen. Those who knew Iargo in life can confirm this when shown his medallion of Serat. Iargo's mother, Uzlen, desperately wants his body returned for proper burial.

5: CRUCIFORM CHAMBER

This is the largest room in the complex. Two hidden alcoves provide ideal ambush opportunities.

A single pale glowing eye without pupil or iris unblinkingly gazes at you from the chamber's centre. Seawater drips from the thick curtains of algae lining the walls, filling the air with the constant murmur of falling water.

Glowing Eye: The "eye" is a large luminescent jellyfish with its tentacles entangled in the seaweed wrapped around the central pillar. Though harmless while trapped, it can still deliver a nasty sting if disturbed or touched.

Hidden Alcoves: Concealed by curtains of dripping algae, these alcoves provide an excellent hiding place or spot from which to launch an ambush.

Doors: The northern door is barricaded from inside. The southern door stands slightly ajar affording a narrow view of what lies beyond.

6: BARRICADED ROOM

This dilapidated old guardroom is where the last adventuring party to explore the isle barricaded themselves inside.

Huddled in the far corner are the decayed remains of a dead adventurer clad in rusted chainmail. Oily, stinking water oozes from the south wall, covering the stones in a waxy sheen.

Remains: Kept in place by the weight of its armour, the corpse in the corner has remained relatively intact. A silvered crossbow bolt is buried in the back of its skull. The prominent brow and broad jawbone suggest the bones belong to a healthy and muscular male half-orc. A pewter medallion bearing the image of Serat, the Mistress of Storms, hangs from his neck. The body has been comprehensively looted of all portable, valuable items.

Barricade: Several spikes and assorted debris were used in barricading the doors leading to this room. It seems the southern door was subsequently cleared—possibly to allow someone to leave...

Oozing wall: Water seeps from a five-foot wide section of stone along the south wall. The water has a distinct fishy odour.

Secret Door: Marked by the area of oozing wall, this secret door is easier (-1 on the d6 rolled to spot it) than normal to notice. However, its mechanism is rusted and in poor repair and requires a successful find/remove traps roll to operate or a successful open doors roll to force open. When the door (or the one in area 8) is opened for the first time, a deluge of reeking brine pours out soaking everyone standing in front of the door.

7: SECRET PASSAGE

Undisturbed since Helvettiin's fall, this passage is filled with seawater and lined with razor-sharp clams.

The walls of this narrow passage bristle with razor-edged clams. Matted strands of pale grey algae hang from the ceiling almost all the way to the floor.

Illumination: Dripping algae extinguish all open flames and reduces the light radius from other sources to 5 feet (dim light). The slightly swaying algae throws weird shadows on the walls which look, to nervous explorers, a bit like questing tentacles.

Grey Algae: A profession of wet and slimy grey algae hangs from the ceiling, almost reaching the floor. The algae obscures vision of what lies further into the passageway.

Dagger Clams: Growing up to sixteen inches long, these leaf-shaped clams sport keen serrated edges meeting in a sharp point. Characters squeezing through the passageway suffer 1d6 damage for every 5 feet moved that round; a successful save against breath weapons negates this damage while moving slowly and carefully at no more than half speed gives a +2 bonus to this saving throw.

Secret Doors: From the secret passage, the rear of the two secret doors is obvious; characters in the passageway automatically spot both doors.

8: THE DEATH KING'S CRYPT

The citadel's former prison is where the Death King was entombed by his enemies.

The smell of mould and decay hangs heavily in this ancient prison. Seven dismal cells, each one sealed by a tarnished bronze door, line the walls.

Cell Doors: These doors have small trellised windows and are bolted shut from the outside, but not locked.

Cells: Each cell holds the barnacle-encrusted, seaweed-choked skeleton of one of Raakus's soldiers.

Secret Door: This secret door is easier (-1 on the d6 rolled to spot it) than normal to notice. However, its mechanism is rusted and in poor repair and requires a successful find/remove traps roll to operate or a successful open doors roll to force open. When this door (or the one in area 6) is opened for the first time, a deluge of reeking brine pours out.

Sarcophagus: The Death King's basalt sarcophagus is plain and devoid of adornments. Its heavy lid can be pushed aside with a combined Strength score of 40 or a successful bend bars/lift gates roll.

On the inside of the lid, the name "Raakus Muurhaja" has been scratched deep into the stone at least a dozen times. Along with Raakus Muurhaja's mouldering remains the sarcophagus contains a glistening black gem of irregular cut—the *Onyx Trapezohedron*.

GM NOTES

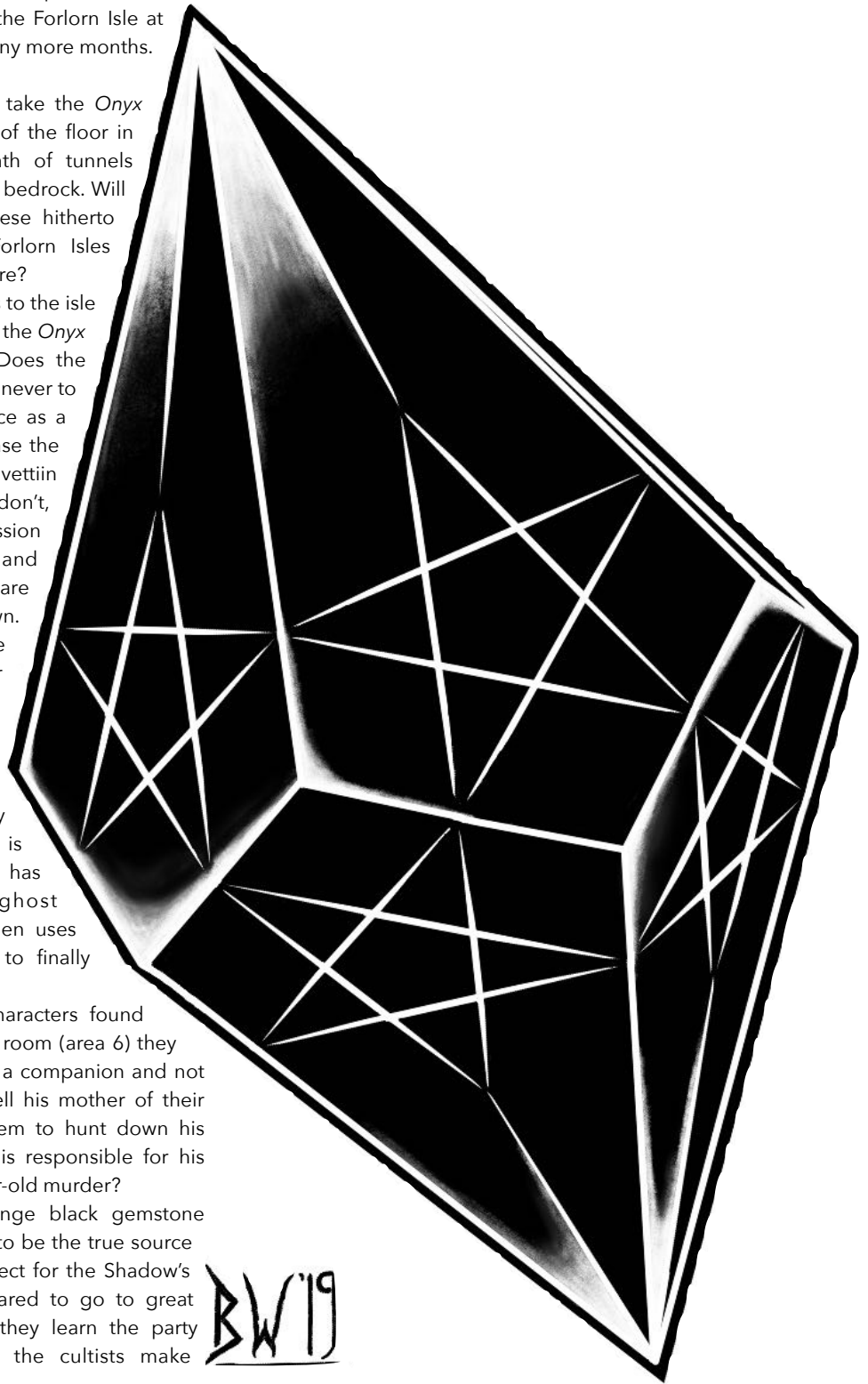
Unless you decided Raakus walks again (Adventure Setup option 1), the sarcophagus in area 8 contains Raakus' withered cadaver—the Onyx Trapezohedron clutched in one fist. The fingers of his other hand are worn to stumps from scratching his name into the sarcophagus' lid.

Refer to the Onyx Trapezohedron sidebar for more information about this fell stone and its powers.

CONCLUSION

When the foul creatures of Helvettiin have been defeated, the adventure doesn't necessarily end. Below are several suggestions on how to continue the story. Several of the options below may be combined to keep Helvettiin and the Forlorn Isle at the forefront of the characters' minds for many more months.

- **Tip of the Iceberg:** If the characters take the *Onyx Trapezohedron* hidden in area 8, part of the floor in area 4 collapses, revealing a labyrinth of tunnels burrowing deep down into the island's bedrock. Will the characters be able to explore these hitherto unknown passageways before the Forlorn Isles sinks below the ocean's waves once more?
- **Fate of the Forlorn Isle:** What happens to the isle after the characters leave (perhaps with the *Onyx Trapezohedron* in their possession)? Does the isle sink to the bottom of the Bitter Sea, never to return or does it remain on the surface as a now-permanent fixture? In the latter case the characters might claim the ruins of Helvettiin as a new base of operations. If they don't, the island is quickly visited by a succession of pirates, smugglers, adventurers and freebooters; more than one group are bound to claim the island as their own. No doubt many deaths will result as the various groups battle for dominion over the isle.
- **Raakus' Revenge:** Countless sacrifices to Dagon have earned the Death King immortality many times over. By breaching his crypt, the characters may have paved the way for his return! It is even possible one of the characters has become possessed by Raakus' ghost (Adventure Setup option 2), which then uses the unfortunate's body as a vehicle to finally escape the Forlorn Isle.
- **Murder Most Foul:** Assuming the characters found largo Itkunen's body in the barricaded room (area 6) they can deduce the boy was murdered by a companion and not one of Helvettiin's creatures. If they tell his mother of their discovery and suspicions she asks them to hunt down his companions and find out which one is responsible for his death. Can the characters solve the year-old murder?
- **The Onyx Trapezohedron:** The strange black gemstone found in the Death King's crypt is said to be the true source of Raakus' powers and is a sacred object for the Shadow's followers. The cult of Dagon is prepared to go to great lengths to recover the gem, and if they learn the party possesses the *Onyx Trapezohedron* the cultists make repeated attempts to secure the gem.



APPENDIX 1: COLDWATER AT A GLANCE

Ruler: Lady Elina Vuolle

Government: Overlord

Population: 188 (109 humans, 59 deformed humans, 18 half-orcs, 1 gnome, 1 half-elf)

Alignments: CN, N, NE

Languages: Common, Orc

Resources & Industry: Smuggling, fishing

An isolated place, perched upon an inhospitable coast at the head of a muddy coastal path, Coldwater is not an easy, or pleasant, place to visit. Few who visit the village do so a second time. The village huddles at the mouth of a steep-sided valley leading down to the sea. Here, the seabed quickly drops away and the waters are deep, dark and cold.

Widely (and correctly) thought of as a haven for smugglers and other miscreants, rumours swirl as thickly about the village as the persistent sea fogs that often blankets the place for days at a time. Other rumours—whispered in taprooms up and down the coast—speak of darker things: of unwholesome practises carried out in worship of some ancient, depraved power; of travellers going missing near the village; and of an ancient set of steps buried at the base of nearby cliffs and revealed only at particularly low tides.

Whatever the truth, Coldwater's folk are sullen, distrustful of outsiders and some are said to suffer from horrible deformities. Even the village's ruler—the aged Elina Vuolle—hates the place and leaves its folk to mainly fend for themselves. Two powerful commoner families dominate day-to-day life: the Eerolas and the Purhos. Trapped in a low-grade, but vicious, family feud the two families subtly work against one another and use the other villagers as their pawns. Street-fights, knifings and the like are not uncommon occurrences in Coldwater.

As well as being beset by all sorts of foul rumours, Coldwater stands perilously close to a great swath of stunted, warped and discoloured vegetation known locally as the Blight which sprawls across the wind-swept hills north of the village.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Coldwater, a character may hear one or more rumours. The PC can learn this information in several ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local taverns and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the character learns.

1. Armas Hujanen is digging in his cellar for something best left buried. He dug so deep, his house almost collapsed!
2. Elina Vuolle has nothing but disdain for Coldwater and its folk. She's tried to sell it—and her title—several times.
3. A mysterious set of stairs pierces the cliffs of Devil Cove; they are only accessible at particularly low tides.
4. Many of the Purho are horribly disfigured; they take a perverse pleasure in their appearance and often drown healthy babies born into the family.

VILLAGE LORE

A character may know something about Coldwater, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the characters are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Coldwater is a dump—the place is a dismal cesspit of the worst sort. The people are sullen and tremendously ugly; there is no reason to go there.
- The folk of Coldwater are of the worst moral fibre. Many are smugglers and rumours of an evil cult based in the village refuse to die.
- A nearby cove has a strange feature buried in its cliffs—a sunken staircase only accessible at particularly low tides.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: Dark of hair and pale of skin, many of the villagers appear to be unwell in a general, non-specific way; some are horribly disfigured.

Dress: Villagers wear loose, ill-fitting woollen or leather clothes suited to their trade.

Nomenclature: *male* Arvo, Ilari, Kaarlo, Valto, Viljo; *female* Aila, Eeva, Helmi, Pia, Ulla; *family* Eerola, Itkonen, Purho, Varala.

D20 MALE NAME		D20 FEMALE NAME	
1	Arvo Varala	1	Pia Varala
2	Ilari Eerola	2	Ulla Eerola
3	Valto Purho	3	Aila Purho
4	Kaarlo Itkonen	4	Pia Itkonen
5	Viljo Eerola	5	Helmi Eerola
6	Reku Tornio	6	Aamu Toiva
7	Pentti Neuvo	7	Elsa Itkonen
8	Immo Tuuli	8	Tilda Kostio
9	Soini Viti	9	Rauna Tiera
10	Niko Miela	10	Ulla Miela
11	Antti Vartia	11	Siiri Vartia
12	Klaus Vesi	12	Elina Vesi
13	Kalle Toivio	13	Ilta Toivio
14	Manu Ora	14	Ventla Ora
15	Joakim Tiera	15	Veela Tiera
16	Erkki Mielo	16	Miina Mielo
17	Kuura Purho	17	Auni Purho
18	Kaapro Eerola	18	Inga Eerola
19	Piri Eerola	19	Ilta Eerola
20	Auku Purho	20	Vinina Purho

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Coldwater comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Vuolle Manor:** Perched on the side of the valley, Vuolle Manor overlooks the village. Its battlemented walls give spectacular views of the surrounds.
2. **Waterside:** The harbour is the busiest—and smelliest—place in the village. Here, a gallimaufry of fishing vessels and small merchant craft jostle for berths.
3. **Itkonen's:** Here, Uzlen Itkonen builds and repairs fishing vessels and small merchant craft. The dockyard is always busy.
4. **Sauli Eerolas's Home:** Here dwells the patriarch of the Eerola family.
5. **Crooked House:** This partially sunken building is the home of Armas Hujanen. Part of the cellar's foundations has collapsed, giving the house its name.
6. **Chapel of the Mistress:** Dedicated to Serat (the uncaring Mistress of Storms) this small chapel is one of the most substantial buildings in the village. On misty nights its bells toll endlessly to guide home those still out on the water.
7. **The Stopped Man:** Coldwater's only inn and tavern, the Stopped Man is a bastion of cheap alcohol, surly service and draughty, flea-infested accommodation.
8. **Atro Purho's Home:** Atro Purho dwells in this large, ramshackle building. Extensive cellars intersect with a sea

cave; here much of the Purho's clandestine business is conducted.

9. **Devil's Cove:** Strange goings on and several disappearances conspire to keep the populace away from this nearby cove.
10. **Devil's Point and the The Sunken Stair:** Only exposed at particularly low tides, these stairs lead to a chamber containing a seemingly unopenable pair of stone doors.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

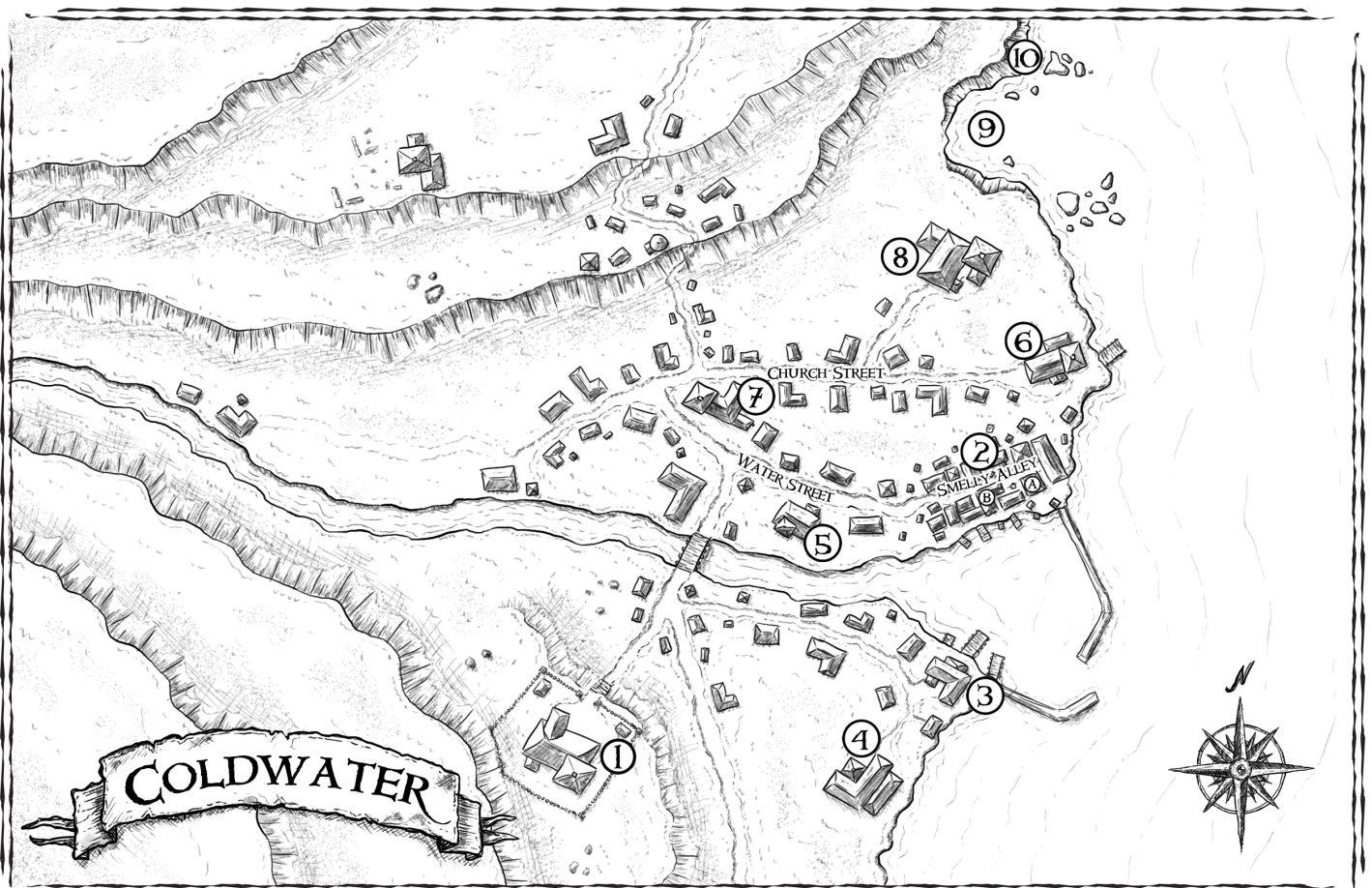
Armas Hujanen (location 5; LE male half-elf wizard 5) Armas has come to Coldwater to study the high incidence of deformity in the populace.

Atro Purho (location 8; N male deformed human rogue 4) Young and dynamic, Atro has an implacable hatred for the Eerolas blaming them for his own ill fortunes.

Elina Vuolle (location 1; LN female old human wizard 6) Elina hates Coldwater (and her lot).

Sauli Eerola (location 4; NE male middle-aged human fighter 2) Patriarch of the Eerola family, Sauli once served as a soldier but now runs the family "shipping" business.

Uzlen Itkonen (location 3; N female half-orc barbarian 1) Uzlen runs the local shipbuilding business and tries to stay out of the Eerola's and Purho's feuding as much as possible.



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