



THE GIANT'S TRIBUTE

For ten years the people of the village of Rowanrest lived in the shadow of a giant, a lazy brute named Roog Muttonfist. Regular tributes of livestock and beer were a small price to pay to keep the huge lout from knocking down houses or eating people, and the farmers of Rowanrest had enough to spare. But something went terribly wrong with this month's offering. Last night Roog came down to Rowanrest and demanded people instead of sheep—and the terrified villagers know that the giant might destroy the whole town and kill everyone if they refuse him.

The Giant's Tribute is an adventure for master characters. The group completes the adventure when they deal with the giant and uncover the reason for the unsettling demand.

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shadow of the demon lord



ROWAN VALE

The village of Rowanrest huddles in a vale at the eastern end of the Barrows. The people are simple farmers, woodworkers, and quarrymen, largely forgotten by the world outside their sheltered valley. No one is rich, but no one goes hungry, and if the woods and hills around their home are sometimes dangerous, well . . . vale folk look out for each other, and that's as it should be.

Rowan Vale is a few miles off the Emperor's Road linking Sixton and Crossings, so travelers often pass it by unless the weather (or an outbreak of banditry) is bad enough to encourage them to seek a roof over their heads at night. Rowanrest's chief industries are grain, fruit, cheese, mutton, and beer, all of which find buyers in neighboring communities and, in the case of the village's Rowan Triple Stout beer, as far away as Sixton. A local quarry also produces fine slate, prized throughout the region, so much so that the slate can be found on the roofs of many fine buildings in Crossings.

Most of the people in Rowan Vale are humans, although several families of halflings own good-sized farms at the lower end of the vale, and the quarry is run by a family of dwarves. "Unnatural" visitors such as clockworks or orcs are regarded with some suspicion, but few vale folk would be rude enough to say so openly. Rowan Vale is older than one might suspect, and ancient ways linger here; most vale folk keep to the Old Gods.

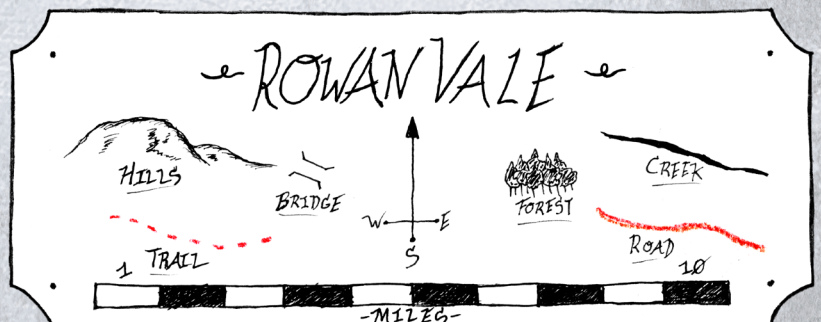
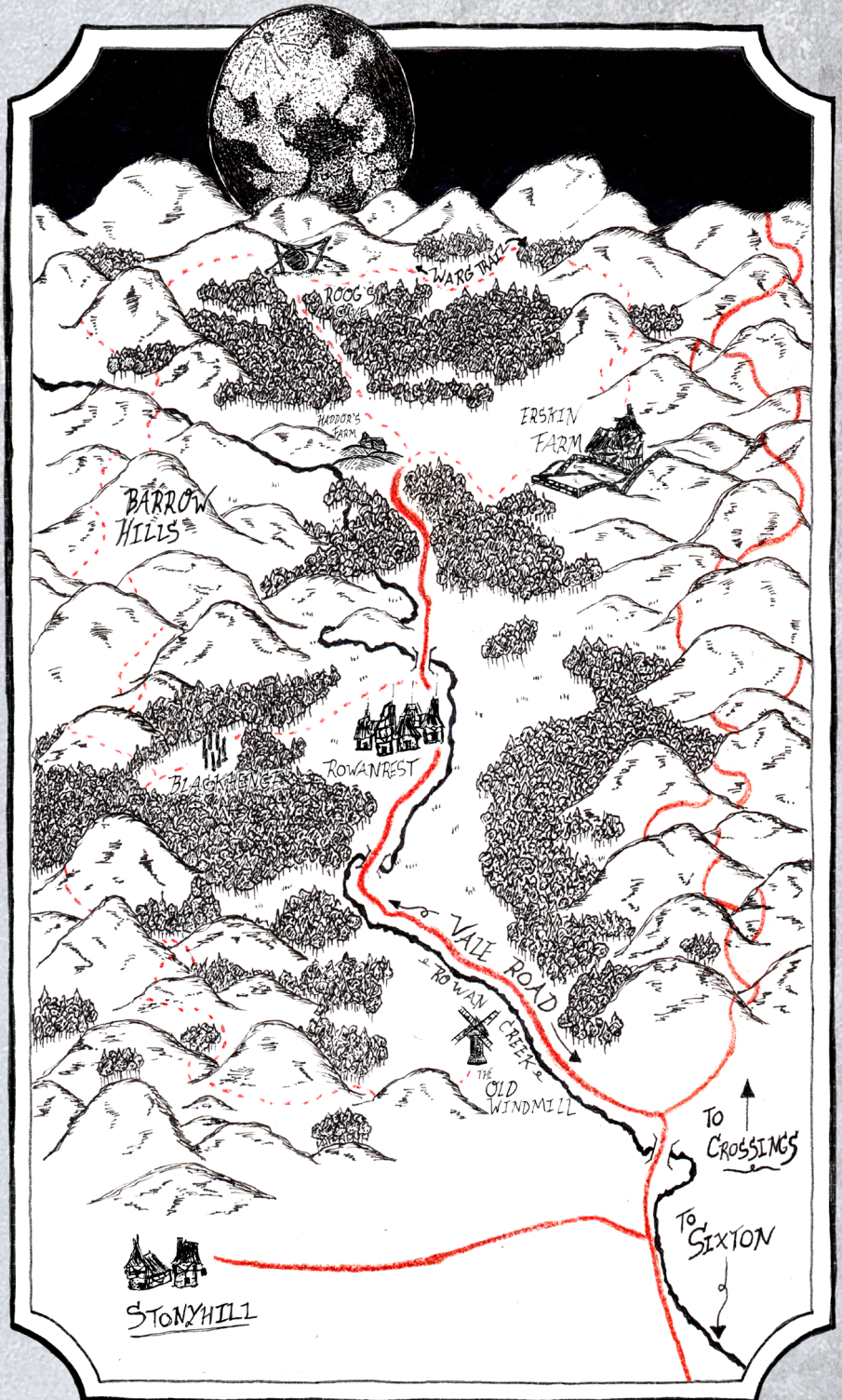
POINTS OF INTEREST

The events take place within ten miles or so of Rowanrest. Well-worn footpaths and tracks link most of the outlying farms to the village; the biggest is the Vale Road, a cart track that winds its way along the valley floor. Dense thickets of mixed forest (including plenty of rowan trees, of course) separate the cultivated fields and dominate the valley slopes.

While there are a dozen or more farms or pastures the group could visit, the adventure keys on a few specific points of interest.

Rowanrest. This is the principal village of the area, described below.

Erskin Farm. Located on a hillside four miles (or five miles by road) north of the vale from Rowanrest, this is the home of Jall Erskin. It's a small stone house surrounded by large pastures with fieldstone fences.



The Old Windmill. Abandoned a generation ago, this grist mill stands near the foot of the vale, roughly three miles south of Rowanrest. Its vanes are tattered frameworks with no scraps of canvas remaining, many roof shingles are missing, and the doors and window shutters are long gone.

Blackhenge. A sinister ring of moss-covered standing stones, Blackhenge stands in the middle of a large, dense copse on the east side of the vale. The path leading to Blackhenge is overgrown and rarely used, since the Vale folk generally avoid the place. They say Blackhenge has “a bad feel to it,” though no one knows who built it and no one can relate any specific story of evil doings there. One empty socket in the ground is evidence of where a prominent menhir has been recently removed.

Roog’s Cave. Pretty much everyone in the vale knows where Roog’s cave is located, and steers clear. The giant Roog Muttonfist lives in a shallow cave—more of a steep overhanging bluff—about eight miles northwest of Rowanrest. The giant has “improved” his home by uprooting trees and making a crude lean-to that stands a good ten yards tall against the bluff. Discarded bones (mostly of sheep) litter the ground nearby.

Stonyhill. The closest neighboring settlement to Rowanrest, Stonyhill lies in the next vale to the south, about nine miles off as the crow flies, although it is much easier to get there by taking the Vale Road down toward the Sixton–Crossings road, going south a couple of miles, and then following the Stonyhill track. Stonyhill is a lot like Rowanrest. The people of Stonyhill are also dealing with the threat of Roog the giant, although no one in Rowanrest knows that.

THE TRUTH ABOUT BLACKHENGE

Blackhenge has a dire reputation, and for good reason. Long ago, the powers of Faerie imprisoned thirteen demons within its stones. For centuries the old spells held, but now old bindings are coming undone. One of the trapped demons, a clever and hateful creature named Drezial, stirred in its imprisonment. When the simpleminded giant Roog happened to pass by, he felt drawn to one of the old stones. He plucked it out of the henge and carried it back to his cave. Roog became obsessed with his new find, handling it and staring at it, and over the course of a few days he unwittingly provided Drezial with the power it needed to wrench itself free of the old prison and possess the foolish giant.

The spreading blot of Roog-Drezial’s influence drew worthy servants down from the Barrow Hills, beastmen ready to follow a strong leader. Roog-Drezial plans to unleash a campaign of horror and evil in the Rowan Vale—but first he intends to free the twelve demons still

imprisoned in Blackhenge. He wants sacrifices from Rowanrest and Stonyhill to wake Drezial’s sleeping brothers, and he is already preparing the necessary rites.

ROWANREST

The village of Rowanrest is home to about eighty people. Another hundred or so live in farmhouses or cottages scattered up and down the vale within an hour’s walk. Notable buildings include a smithy, a general store, and two woodworkers’ shops. The Skallengard Quarry, run by a pair of dwarf brothers, lies a quarter-mile outside town.

The Creekside Inn. Rowanrest’s only public house is the Creekside Inn. The taproom is full of Vale folk most evenings. However, the Creekside is currently badly damaged by Roog’s attack (see “The Giant’s Threat,” below), and for now the taproom and guestrooms are closed. The proprietor is a lean, balding man of forty named Flind Hopjack. Flind is genial and gossipy by nature but prone to panic in the face of minor setbacks; the current situation has him rushing about in total uselessness.

Elder Warren Bowman. The principal authority figure in the Rowan Vale is the elder, a sort of mayor, peacemaker, and judge who settles small disputes and presides over village occasions. The current elder is Warren Bowman, a round-faced man of sixty years. Warren has decided not to give in to Roog’s threats, but he has no idea how the vale folk are going to deal with an angry giant, so he’s trying to organize some kind of militia.

Marva Willowgreen. Marva is the village witch. She is a plump woman of forty-five who is well regarded in the village, valued for her knowledge of herbal remedies for various ailments and her wise counsel to those in need of advice. Marva is urging Elder Warren to get people to a place of safety and let Roog knock down the village, while privately considering whether the giant could be poisoned.

GETTING STARTED

Rowanrest is far off the main road across the Northern Reach, so you’ll need to come up with a reason to get the characters to the village. The characters could be fleeing danger—beastmen are all over the place here. They might be headed to Sixton or Crossing from a previous expedition into the wilderness, or they might have heard a strange story about a vanished standing stone and be moved to investigate. Since the stone weighs a few tons, people have been wondering about who took it, though a few clever people have put forward Roog, the giant, as the culprit since he has the strength to do such a thing. Everyone in the village is in a panic, fearing the very real threat casting a shadow over their simple lives.

THE INN IS CLOSED

When the characters arrive in Rowanrest, most of its people are gathered around the biggest building in town—a modest inn with a signboard that identifies it as the Creekside Inn. Two windows have been smashed out, the roof has several gaps, and there is a hole in the second-story outer wall in which a sheep's corpse is embedded. Closer inspection shows tufts of wool, spatters of blood, and other gory bits scattered all over the scene. Inside, the bodies of a dozen more sheep are lodged in the rafters, sprawled out across tables, or lying on the floor amid debris from the broken roof. Several villagers are grimly working on removing the carcasses. Flind Hopjack, the innkeeper, rushes from place to place, wringing his hands and shouting, "This is terrible, terrible! No, be careful, don't break any more glass! There, over there, it's a leg! Oh, get it down, get it down!"

Asking what happened (or just standing and staring long enough) results in Elder Warren, the town's leader, saying, "It was the giant Roog. He got angry, I guess, and must have thrown Jall's sheep in a rage. Gods, what a mess! I wonder what's crawled up his arse? That damned giant's never done anything like this before."

THE GIANT'S THREAT

It doesn't take much questioning to get Elder Warren (or any other villager) talking about what happened. For ten years or so, a giant named Roog Muttonfist has been living nearby. Like most giants, Roog is a fat, stupid lout with a mean streak, but he's lazy, and he doesn't cause much trouble as long as the townsfolk see to it that he gets "tribute"—some livestock or beer—every now and then. A couple of days ago the farmer Jall Erskin drove a dozen sheep up to Roog's cave for this season's tribute, but Jall never came back. Last night Roog came over the hillside and thundered toward the town, roaring and spitting in anger, bombarding the inn with flung sheep.

When Roog finished, he bellowed a new demand: "I don't want your filthy sheep! Send me six people, young or old, or I'll take and eat you all! Bring them to the old windmill tomorrow at midnight or face my wrath." The demon chose this place for its position between Rowanwood and Stonyhill; his beastmen lackeys will collect the sacrifices and meet him at Blackhenge.

THE VILLAGERS

This is a good opportunity for the group to meet the key personalities at Rowanrest (Elder Warren, the innkeeper Flind, and Marva the witch), delve into the backstory, and decide on a course of action. The villagers are astonished and horrified by Roog's demand—they all believe that the giant is too lazy and stupid to be this malicious, and they share this information with the characters if they ask.

Giving the sacrifices to the giant is of course impossible—there aren't enough willing villagers, but everyone is terrified at the prospect of what Roog will do if they defy him.

If the players appear to be heroic types, the villagers beg them to deal with the giant. If they are sinister in appearance or mercenary in nature, Elder Warren offers to hire them for the job. Together the folk of Rowan Vale can scrape up about 200 gc, mostly in smaller coins, jewelry, and gems.

Some possible questions and answers at this point include:

How do you live with a giant that close? "Look, no one likes it, but as giants go, Roog hasn't ever been that much trouble. We give him some mutton and beer, and he leaves us alone."

Where is Roog now? "Maybe back at his cave? No one's gone to look after Jall never came back."

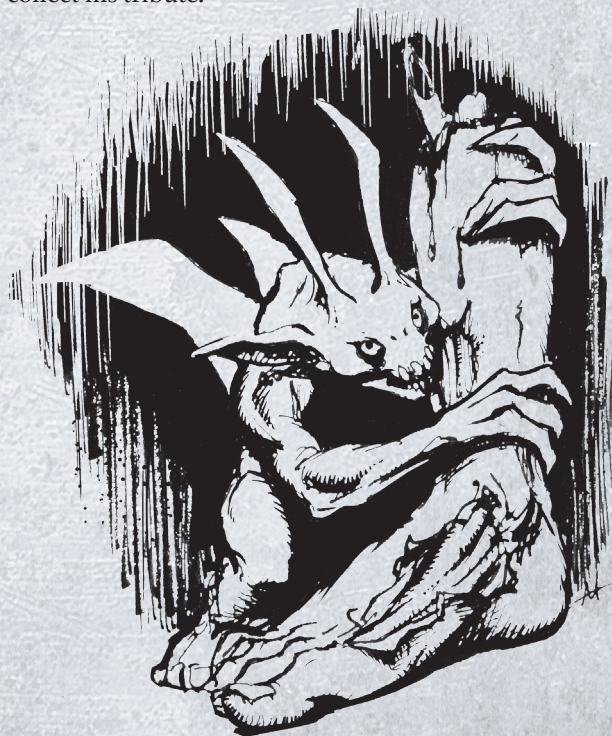
Where is Roog's cave? "Near the head of the vale, about eight miles off."

Who is Jall? "Jall Erskin had the job of driving a small flock up to Roog's cave. His farm is about four miles up the Vale. We sent someone up to check on him first thing this morning, but there's no word yet."

Let's just deal with Roog when he comes to the windmill. "Good idea! It's just a couple of miles down the road. But you'd better be ready for a fight."

NEXT STEPS

The group can develop three strong leads from this setup: They can go to the Erskin farm to figure out what went wrong, they can look for Roog's cave, or they can wait it out and go to the windmill to ambush Roog when he comes to collect his tribute.



ERSKIN FARM

The Erskins are a family of sheep farmers who have kept flocks in the pastures above the Rowan Vale for a hundred years or more. Currently the household consists of Jall, his family, and three hired hands. The spread includes a farmhouse, a bunkhouse, a large shearing shed, and a square mile or so of pastureland. When the characters arrive, they find the place destroyed—dozens of sheep lie

slaughtered and the house is a smoking ruin. None of the Erskins or their workers survive; their burned bodies lie in the wreckage of the house.

A pack of 6 wolves (as **medium animals** with the **Pack Fighting** trait) is currently engaged in devouring sheep carcasses behind the shearing shed; when characters approach the farmhouse, they hear the sounds of crunching and growling coming from just behind the building. The wolves have all the food they need and aren't interested in more prey at the moment, although they react aggressively if suddenly confronted.

The farmhouse was burned and the sheep were slaughtered by a band of wargs drawn by the demon to serve the giant. Characters who examine the slaughtered sheep discover a mix of hacking wounds and large bites, but nothing that suggests they were smashed by a giant.

Studying the area carefully might reveal additional clues with a Perception challenge roll. On a success, a character finds odd tracks around the farmhouse—oversized wolf-like pawprints, mixed with the marks of sheep hooves. The tracks head back into the woods. (The wargs drove off several dozen sheep when they left, leaving a trail the group can follow.)

THE WARG TRAIL

The warg band, consisting of 5 wargs led by a large, black-furred warg named Grazzul, a **warg champion** with the **leader** role, is not far ahead of the characters, since driving the sheep without scattering them in panic is proving difficult for the beastmen. The wargs head for Roog's cave. The wargs move quickly, so the character leading the group must make three Strength challenge rolls with 1 boon to catch them before they reach the cave. Three successes indicates the group overtakes the wargs and takes them by surprise. With two successes and one failure, the characters catch up to the wargs as they reach Roog's cave. Two or more failures indicates that the wargs get there fast enough to secure the sheep and be ready for the characters



when they come to the cave. Characters approaching the cave must make successful Perception challenge rolls or be surprised by the wargs that notice their approach.

ROOG'S CAVE

Roog is not here, but there are signs that the giant wrecked his home in some kind of violent fit. The tree trunks of his crude shelter are scattered or broken, and nasty blood spatters and pools of drying vomit lie nearby. If the characters search the cave and the nearby area, they find three clues:

- Jall Erskin's body is wedged in the branches of a tree, 5 yards above the ground. He was a middle-aged human farmer. Oddly enough, his left side seems to have been scoured away—flesh is missing, but the body displays no bite marks. (The possessed Roog killed him with an erode spell.) Any character knowledgeable about magic or who knows the erode spell can determine that a Destruction spell killed the shepherd, a useful indicator that something is definitely wrong with the giant.
- A large boulder near the shelter seems out of place. It's made of dark stone covered with slimy moss, about 2 yards tall and nearly 6,000 pounds in weight; a large pit or cavity in one side appears to have melted out. The stone is cold to the touch, with a palpable aura of menace. (This stone imprisoned the demon Drezial at Blackhenge.)
- Large, wolf-like pawprints are scattered around the area (left by the wargs who came to serve Roog-Drezial).

If the group comes here first before investigating the farm, the wargs that raided the Erskin farm might return with their rustled sheep (see "The Warg Trail," above).

THE OLD WINDMILL

The Old Windmill appears deserted when the characters approach. Those who make an effort to scout out the scene stealthily or observe the windmill for a time catch glimpses of people trying to hide in the windmill ruins. This group consists of half a dozen humans from the nearby village of Stonyhill: 2 ex-soldiers equivalent to **brigands**, and 4 **commoners**. The leader is Wyrna, a stern woman who is one of the ex-soldiers. The villagers in Stonyhill also received a visit from Roog last night and the same demand for sacrifices, but when they heard of Rowanrest's trouble with the giant, Stonyhill's leaders came up with a desperate plan: waylay the group coming from Rowanrest, seize Rowanrest's offerings, and present them to Roog as Stonyhill's tribute.

If the villagers from Stonyhill see the characters bringing sacrifices from Rowanrest, they carry out their plan and attack the group. If the Stonyhill folk see the characters approaching with no sacrifices in tow, they become flustered and uncertain, realizing that Rowanrest means to fight the giant. When the two groups meet and converse, the Stonyhill folk say that they decided to fight it out too and they're waiting to ambush Roog. If the characters accuse them of lying or planning to betray Rowanrest, the Stonyhillers leave in a huff, but if the characters suggest joining forces, Wyrna changes her plan and throws in with the group. The Stonyhillers fight as allies in the next scene.

TRIBUTE COLLECTION

At sundown on the day of the group's arrival in Rowanrest, Roog collects his tribute . . . but not in the way the characters might be expecting. The giant sends a large band of beastmen to collect his tribute for him. This group consists of 5 **fomors**, any wargs that survived an encounter with the characters earlier plus 3 wargs, and the **warg champion leader** Grazzul if he's still alive.

If the beastmen find no sacrifices waiting to be led off, they are furious, and they attack immediately. If they are confronted by a force too large to fight (for example, the players convince the Stonyhillers to stand with them), the beastmen promise the players that "Our master will slay you all, fools!" and retreat back down the trail toward Blackhenge. If the characters actually give the sacrifices to the beastmen (hopefully as part of a ruse), the fomors tie them up and carry them off, escorted by the wargs. Unless they are stopped, the wargs deliver the offerings to the giant, and he ritualistically executes them to release the remaining demons from their stones.

The wargs fight to the death, but the fomors won't. When three or more of the wargs fall, any remaining fomors flee along the trail, potentially betraying Roog-Drezial's location to alert characters. Even if the characters can't pursue immediately, a search for tracks to determine where the beastman party came from reveals the trail that leads to Blackhenge.

BATTLE AT BLACKHENGE

When the characters arrive on the scene, they find wooden stakes driven into the ground before each of the twelve remaining stones, with brush and tinder ready. **Roog-Drezial** (see below) is here, along with another 5 **fomors**. When he sees that the characters have come to confront him instead of bringing offerings for the sacrifice, Roog-Drezial laughs. "I asked for sacrifices from the town, and

this is what I get? No matter. Your burned bones will serve to wake my sleeping brothers. And when that work is done, I will find a suitable punishment for the fools who sent you to me.”

Roog-Drezial opens the battle by casting *detonate* on a small outlying stone marker near the spot where the path opens out into the middle of Blackhenge, an area with a 5-yard diameter, hoping to catch multiple characters at once in the blast (and incidentally targeting any who might be hanging back from the fight). He is happy to crush foes in melee, but if characters manage to stay out of his reach, *rend* spells or thrown boulders are acceptable alternatives. The fomors skirmish around the edges of the combat, darting in for quick attacks and trying to stay out of the giant’s way.

If the characters manage to defeat Roog, Drezial streams out of his mouth and nostrils as a foul black mist, coalescing into a **large demon** 1 round later. It fights on, hoping to overwhelm or drive off the heroes and take possession of a new host after the battle. Drezial can also be forced out of Roog by means of an *exorcism* spell (see the *exorcist* master path) or from a similar effect.



ROOG-DREZIAL

DIFFICULTY 250

Size 3 demon-possessed giant

Perception 15 (+5); darksight

Defense 15; **Health** 100

Strength 17 (+7), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 13 (+3), **Will** 17 (+7)

Speed 12

Immune gaining Insanity; dazed, frightened

Crushing Footfalls When Roog-Drezial moves into a space occupied by a creature on the ground, the creature must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 3d6 damage and falls prone. If it’s already prone, it takes 1d6 extra damage. A creature makes this roll once per round regardless of how many times Roog-Drezial moves through its space.

Giantfall When an effect knocks Roog-Drezial prone, its body covers an area on the ground that is as long and as wide as it is tall, starting at the edge of its space and extending away from the source of the effect that knocked it prone. Roog-Drezial deals damage equal to 2d6 x its Size to everything in the area where it falls. A creature can make an Agility challenge roll with a number of banes equal to the giant’s Size (minimum 1 bane). On a success, the creature takes half the damage and moves to the nearest open space outside the area. On a failure, the creature becomes trapped under the giant’s body.

A trapped creature is prone, blinded, immobilized, and totally covered. It can use an action to make an Agility challenge roll with 3 banes. On a success, the creature moves to the nearest open space and removes all afflictions imposed by Giantfall.

Demon-Possessed When Roog-Drezial becomes incapacitated, he dies and the demon Drezial streams out from his mouth, forming into a large demon in an open space within short range of the giant’s corpse. The demon has the Spellcaster (superior) trait, with the spells and tradition as described below, and Wings. Note any castings expended while the demon possessed the giant.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Fist (melee) +7 with 3 boons (5d6)

Boulder (long range) +7 with 1 boon (3d6)

MAGIC

Power 3

Destruction *ruin* (4), *rend* (2), *sunder* (2), *entropic power* (1), *erode* (1), *detonate* (1)

CONCLUSION

Defeating Roog-Drezial earns the group the gratitude of Rowanrest. If the characters failed to defeat the giant, Roog-Drezial soon heads into the Barrow Hills, plaguing all the settlements in this part of the Northern Reach; a demon-possessed giant is a terrible foe indeed. Finally, if the people of Rowanrest learn that the Stonyhillers were planning to give their people to the giant, a bitter feud erupts between the villages; there will be bad blood here for generations unless the characters can bring about some kind of reconciliation.