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Mystery at Morfurt By Todd Pote

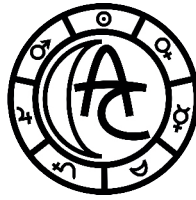


An Adventure for 4-6 Characters of Levels 1-3





MYSTERY AT MORFURT



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INTRODUCTION

Several children have gone missing from the village of Morfurt and they seem to have disappeared without a trace. The villagers fear that evil has returned to the ruins of an old abandoned tower. Answering the plea for help, the Earl of the region dispatched a party of adventurers to investigate.

Notes for the Game Master

The Mystery at Morfurt is a Ballista™ adventure for a small group of low-level characters (about 6-9 total levels). It is a short and straightforward scenario that introduces a village setting which can serve as a starting point to a new fantasy campaign. The adventure centres upon the disappearance of a group of children through the actions of a gnomish slaver and his minions. It features minor dungeon and cave exploration. It is recommended that the GM read the adventure at least once to prepare running the scenario presented.

History

Several hundred years ago, a minor noble built a tower on a hill in the wilderness, far from the settled lands of humanity. He sought to tame the wilderness and claim the region for his own rather than fight his older brothers for a portion of their father's estates to the east. He failed, being killed, tales say, by a band of marauding ogres that descended from the hills to the northwest. Having no heirs and being so far from civilization, the tower stood empty for many years.

About fifteen years after the death of the young noble, a small band of clerics moved in and began a mission in the tower. Relics found in the area surrounding the tower suggest that they worshipped some sort of nature deity, but no one knows for certain. Several adventurous settlers came with the priests to escape the tyranny of serfdom, where they could at last own their own land and profit from their labour. The barbarian tribes that dwelt in the area remembered the predatory incursions of the young noble and greeted the clerics and settlers with some bitterness, which boiled into hatred when the clerics began denouncing the barbarian totems and ancestors as false and unworthy of worship. The clerics and settlers were slain to the last, their dwellings and the tower put to the torch. This short-lived settlement was the actual beginning of Morfurt.

Some seventy years later, the barbarians were driven out by an army from the north. This army, which stories say hailed from Floures near the faraway Fire Mountains, rebuilt the tower and used it as an outpost for their frontier troops. Artifacts found within the forest and around the tower seem to support this possibility, which, however, remains uncertain since Floures fell to ruin and was lost in a massive volcanic eruption. The settlers that came with the army built their homes upon the foundations of the original buildings that were destroyed by the barbarians decades earlier, and they lived and farmed there while the

army kept the peace for nearly forty-odd years. Thus Morfurt was reborn. Near the end of these four peaceful decades, the army garrison was slowly reduced, until ten years later when no soldiers remained at all. The town also shrank as families, worried for their security and safety, departed for more protected lands within the empire. The more robust and independent-minded village-folk remained and prospered.

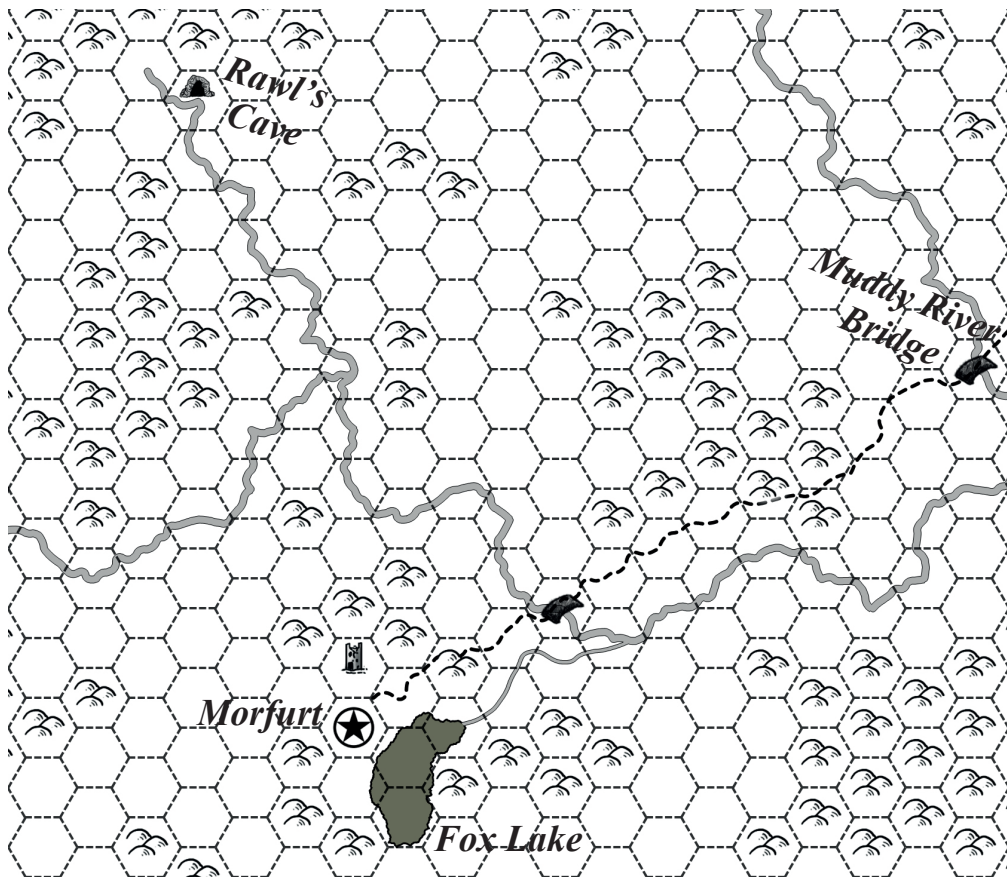
Since no one was interested in its upkeep, the tower fell into ruin over the next ninety years, and the village began growing slowly, as non-humans settled in, finding comfort in its solitude and isolation. Druids and rangers made their homes in the surrounding forests, aiding the native sylvan folk to keep the region safe from the mountain dwelling goblinoids (and worse). Since the tower was abandoned and ignored by the villagers, no one noticed that a group of bandits had begun occupying it, using it as a base for raids and thievery farther away. At most, people only noticed that more woodmen had settled in the area.

Once more, a force of arms came to the tower, this time led by the Earl Londark from the east. Much to the amazement of the villagers, the bandits were cornered in the tower and slain to the last man. The battle shattered the tower beyond any hope of repair and Morfurt then became an official holding of the Earl, to the dismay of the villagers. The bodies of the bandits were not buried, but rather hanged from the remains of the tower as a warning to any other would-be thieves in the region. In the following years, tales began to spread in the village and surrounding forest about the tower being haunted. These tales persist to the present day, claiming that the ghosts of the slain bandits haunt the fallen stones and rotted timbers piled within, bound to the site of their death, cursed to eternal restlessness after being denied proper burial.

Over the next 150 years, the villagers eventually came to avoid the tower completely, considering it a place of ill luck. To cross even the shadow of the tower in midday was enough to ensure sour milk from the livestock the following morn. The simple folk of Morfurt would make a ward against evil if even their gaze fell upon the tower when they looked upon it during their labours.

Current Events

Recent sightings of unearthly lights and glowing figures swaying from invisible ropes around the ruins have rekindled the old tales in the village. Eerie moans and screams echoing from nowhere can be heard by those brave enough to climb the hill to the tower. Even worse, several children have gone missing from their beds at night, without a trace. Search parties have scoured the forest and hills for miles around Morfurt, without luck. Even the ruins were checked and found to be nothing more than mounds of impassable rubble and weeds. Everyone is blaming the ghosts of the tower for the disappearances.



Each Hex = Approx. 1 Mile

Goblin

SZ: S; MV 20'; SV: P
 HD: 1d6; AC 6 (14)
 AT: Weapon (1d6)
 SP: Darkvision 60', -1 to hit in sunlight

Orc

SZ: M; MV 30'; SV: P
 HD 1d8; AC 7 (13)
 AT: Weapon (1d8)
 SP: Darkvision 60', -1 to hit in sunlight

Wolf

SZ: S; MV 50'; SV: P
 HD: 2d4; AC 8 (12)
 AT: Bite (1d4+1)
 SP: Scent, Low Light Vision

ENCOUNTERS OUTSIDE OF MORFURT

Beyond a radius of five miles outside of the village of Morfurt, there is a 1 in 6 chance that the party will stumble upon an encounter. Verify once in the morning, once in the afternoon, and once after sundown.

D12	ENCOUNTER TABLE
1-3	1 - 6 Goblins
4-6	Pair of Orc Scouts
7-11	Pack of Wolves
12	Rawl the Ogre

REGIONAL PLACES OF INTEREST

Beldine Bridge: Located four miles northeast of Morfurt, the bridge crosses the Beldine River. It is a crudely built covered bridge and way house of log and planks. The way house is accessed by a narrow stair in the centre of the bridge. A large common room and small kitchen serve as a hostel for travelers and a refuge for the three families that live on the east side of the river. Murder holes are plugged in the floor of the way house until needed, making life difficult for would-be attackers trying to reach the stairway. The bridge-keep, one Nathan Hawkfist, calls the way house home for himself and his small family (wife Ella and son Jossun) after retiring from the earl's guard.

Muddy River Bridge: Located thirteen miles northeast of Morfurt as the crow flies, the bridge crosses the Muddy River. The stone pylons and log planking have resisted even the most severe flood waters to date. On the west side of the bridge, a small stone blockhouse serves as home and fortress for the bridge-keep, Elthion Elfkin. In times of trouble, the five families that live just south of the bridge near the Goldleaf River take refuge in the large common room of this blockhouse, within which stores for a month are set in a storeroom near the small kitchen. Elthion Elfkin, who has no family as yet, also serves the five local families as a healer.

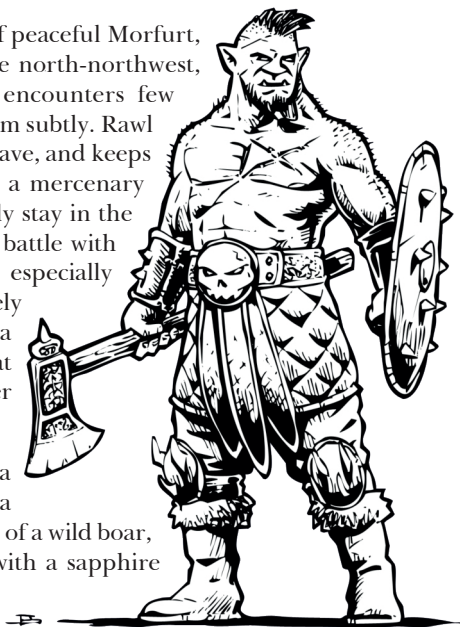
Fox Lake: Full of trout, small-mouth bass, catfish, and home to numerous ducks, geese, and other waterfowl, this lake is located almost a mile south of Morfurt. Several miles long and not more than half a mile across at its widest, the blue-green waters of this pristine lake are rumoured to be home to the fey folk. The lake itself is named for the many red foxes that hunt along its shores for fowl and frogs.

Rawl's Cave: Unbeknownst to the inhabitants of peaceful Morfurt, Rawl the Ogre dwells some sixteen miles to the north-northwest, where he has plenty of game to hunt, and encounters few intruders, save for a few Druids who influence him subtly. Rawl seldom wanders more than a few miles from his cave, and keeps company with a band of orcs who hire him as a mercenary from time to time. The orcs pay well and usually stay in the mountains farther west of the hills, where they battle with barbarian tribes. Rawl has hated all intruders, especially humans, ever since a knight and his troops gravely injured him when he was helping the orcs on a raid. Intruders into his lair quickly discover that he enjoys smashing humans repeatedly whenever he encounters them.

The ogre's hoard is hidden in a hold under a large, 800-pound rock, and consists of 160 gp, a dented helm containing a human skull, a haunch of a wild boar, a soiled battle pennant, and a silver necklace with a sapphire pendant (*Necklace of Protection +1*).

Ogre

SZ: L; MV 20'; SV: P
 HD 4d8; AC 5 (15)
 AT: Great Club (2d6+3)
 or fists (1d10)
 SP: Low Light Vision



THE VILLAGE OF MORFURT

Morfurt is a small village built amidst rolling hills, with scattered stands of trees in a small vale where villagers farm and raise sheep and cattle. Wild forests surround the vale that shelters the village for many tens of miles. The predominant feature of the village is the ruins of an old tower rumoured to be haunted by the ghosts of slain bandits. Other tales surrounding the ruin stretch back further than living memory. Low mossy rock walls divide the village farms and fields from each other and a general sense of neighbourly respect and friendship pervades the overall atmosphere.

The villagers, most of whom are related in some fashion or another, welcome newcomers and make them feel at home. The most recent newcomers to the village include Sprucenose the gnome, who is a mushroom hunter and merchant, and a young human couple looking for a fresh start away from distant Ireford and its ruling Earl.

Bryce, Reeve of Morfurt

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: M
HD: 6d6; AC 9 (11)
AT: Shortsword (1d6) or
Heavy Crossbow (1d10)
SP: None*

No other newcomers have settled in Morfurt in the last two years.

- Size: Village
- Population: 40 adults + 16 children
- Wealth: Little
- Leadership: Bryce, Reeve of Morfurt

Culver Kegger

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: M
HD 2d6; AC 10
AT: Club (1d6)
SP: None*

Recently, several children have gone missing and rumours of evil curses, ghosts, and flying monsters are spreading throughout the village. The Reeve secretly sent a plea for help to Earl Londark several weeks ago. The PCs arrive in the village as the Earl's response to the Reeve's missive with orders to assist him in any way possible. Success will mean a well-earned payment of 50 gold coins each.

Laera

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: M
HD 1d6; AC 10
AT: 1d3
SP: None*

The Reeve can tell the PCs that there have been no footprints, signs of forced entry, or any other tell in the searches for the missing children. This has many thinking of magical abduction or worse. The usually friendly manner of the villagers is being overtaken by sadness and fear.

The Fox and Goose Ale House

The Fox and Goose Ale House is a timber-and-wattle two-story building. The sign hanging over its door depicts a fox and goose facing each other off. Several small windows and a pair of thick plank doors are visible from outside the building.

The Ale House is run by Culver Kegger and his wife Laera. Their three sons and one of their daughters live in the village. Their other daughter lives in distant Kargath with her husband and children.

The Ale House has three simple rooms for rent, and the taproom, where the Reeve can often be found enjoying a pint. The food is simple but well prepared. The Fox and Goose serves as the village stronghold

in times of danger. Laera has a small garden behind the inn that provides the vegetables she serves for the meals.

One of Culver's grandchildren is among the missing, a situation which has him somewhat upset and temperamental.

Stables

The stables are located in a long, crude, timber-and-wattle barn, with room for a wagon and several horses. A small room at the back serves as the stable master's office and tack room.

The stables are run by Pintel Culverson and his oldest son Raendahl Pintelson. Pintel's youngest daughter was the second child to go missing. Any news of her abductors will send him, and his father Culver, on a mission of retribution.

Smithy

The smithy is a low-walled stone building with a roof of slate tiles and a large chimney of stacked stone. A pair of heavy wooden doors are open during the day and closed at night. The large, open interior contains a pair of anvils, a forge, billows, various hammers and other smithy tools, and a nearly completed plow. No weapons or armour are visible anywhere within.

The village blacksmith is Murgar Flamehammer, a hill dwarf who found the simple folk of Morfurt ready to accept his meagre talents without bias. Only a mediocre smith amongst his own clan to the southwest, Murgar is treated as a master craftsman by the villagers. He will not work on weapons or armour other than spears or arrowheads, since his skills are not sufficient to produce such items.

He is inordinately fair to his clients and has known most of the villagers since they were children themselves. He is furious over the children's disappearances and sometimes wanders the forest south of the lake and around Fox Creek looking for them on his own, hammer in hand. PCs will find a willing ally in Murgar should they need help with finding the culprits behind the abductions.

Murgar has also befriended the only gnome in the village. When business is slow, he and Sprucenose spend their time smoking their pipes and gossiping outside of the smithy or at the gnome's cottage across the road. Murgar does not know that his friend is not who he seems, nor that Sprucenose is the one behind the abductions. He only knows that the gnome goes on mushroom hunting trips for days or weeks at a time throughout the seasons.

Village Shrine

The village shrine is a single-story timber building with no windows. The entrance into the dark, cool interior consists of a simple timber archway. A high peaked thatch roof laced with ivy makes the building seem taller and more open than it actually is. The back of the room is a hemispherical alcove

Pintel Culverson

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P
HD: 2d6; AC 8 (12)
AT: Pitchfork (1d4)
SP: None

Raendahl Pintelson

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: M
HD 1d6; AC 9 (11)
AT: 1d3
SP: None

Murgar Flamehammer

SZ: S; MV 20; SV: P
HD 2d10; AC 9 (11)
AT: Hammer (1d4+3)
SP: Dwarven Traits

lit by rows of tallow candles standing in wrought iron sconces. Within this space are three wooden two-foot-high pedestals upon which small stone statues of two females and one male in various poses and garb rest. Flat stones almost three feet in diameter rise six inches from the floor in front of each statue and pedestal.

The shrine is maintained by Striella the Healer, the wise woman of Morfurt, who lives by herself in a small hut near the edge of the village. Villagers come to her for herbal remedies and for her skills as a midwife. She has spent much time at the shrine praying for the return of the missing children, most of whom she brought into the world. She can be found at the shrine most of the time.

Weaver's House

Striella the Healer

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: M
HD: 2d6; AC 10
AT: Light Mace (1d6)
SP: None*

The business and residence of the village weaver is a small two-story building of rough wood and mud bricks, with many small windows and a hewn plank door. On the lower floor is a small weaving loom where cloth and rugs are woven out of the wool thread produced by the spinning wheel in the corner. Small bales of carded wool are stacked neatly in one corner. Two of the bales are dyed a deep burgundy and set aside from the others. A narrow stair rises up to the second story along the back wall. A small garden is visible behind the house.

Julya the Weaver

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: M
HD: 1d6; AC 10
AT: 1d3
SP: None*

The second floor of this house is the private quarters of Julya the Weaver and her family. The children, Asleigh, twelve, Sean, ten, and Lidia, nine, often play outside or spend their time listening to Sprucenose's stories.

Derrick the Trader

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: M
HD 3d6; AC 9 (11)
AT: Staff (1d6)
SP: None*

Heavily pregnant with her fourth child, Julya is quite concerned with the current crisis of the missing children. Her husband, Derrick the Trader, is often absent, selling her wares throughout the region, sometimes as far away as Kargath.

Quilcene the Polite

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P
HD: 1d12; AC 8 (12)
AT: Cane (1d4)
SP: Half-Elven Traits*

Asleigh will be the next child to go missing in the village, three days after the PCs arrive and one day after Sprucenose leaves for Kargath to sell his latest crop of mushrooms, in case the PCs had not solved the mystery by then.

General Store – Quilcene's Commodities

A long log building with a thatched roof, plank door, and a pair of windows looking out over the street, the general store is mostly a single large room filled with shelves of locally made items, foodstuffs, clothing, tools, and items from Kargath that are essential to everyday living. The back of the building has a second door opening into a flower garden, which is overlooked by a single window.

The back door and window are the only points of entry into the room where Quilcene the Polite lives alone, her husband long dead and her children having gone out on their own. She has become the unofficial grandmother for the residents of the village, adult and children alike. Quilcene is the oldest resident in Morfurt, and a source of information

to those who inquire politely. Village folk help her maintain the building and keep things up and running.

Quilcene does not believe that a wild animal or beast was involved in the children's disappearances, as these would have left a mess had they been the culprits. When people around her discuss the missing children, Quilcene's politeness wavers, and a hardness around her eyes and mouth betrays her inner rage.

Produce Stand

The produce stand is a low lean-to wooden building with a thatch roof that is divided into six stalls facing the village square.

Once a month on market day, which for the purposes of this campaign is a score of days from the PCs' arrival in town, these stalls are occupied by local farmers trying to sell their crops and goods to villagers and visitors from other small settlements in the region.

Tannery

The tannery, a small single-story mud brick building with a thatch roof, rests before a larger circular mud brick building with low walls and a thatched roof. The smaller building has a couple of windows and a door of rough hewn planks. The larger building has a log door with a simple bronze lock. Outside, in the walled-in yard, there are several sets of stakes, between one of which a stretched-out hide has been placed.

During the day, the tanner, Frenn Hidetaker, and his wife Shara work in the larger of the two buildings, where they scrape, stretch, and tan hides and furs for sale in the village and abroad. They have no children as yet, and live in the small house near the road.

Frenn is very quiet about his past and sometimes gets violent if questioned about it, especially if he is in his cups. Frenn was banished from his tribe, the Bloodstags, by his cousins after his father was executed for breaking taboo by killing one of the sacred blood stags. This tribe is located to the northwest of Morfurt, some three weeks' travel away.

Frenn has spent plenty of time on the search parties for each missing child. He knows that no animal took the children away, and suspects that the culprit uses evil magic. Having lived in the village less than four years, he has not earned the same level of trust that the other residents share with one another. His occasional violent drunken outbursts have made it so that few will listen to his thoughts on the matter. When drunk or subtly prodded on the subject of the children's abductions, he will only say that it looks as though something swept the ground, erasing any tracks. He and his wife are good friends with Kiel and Amber, the newest couple in the village.

Millstones

The village millstones are covered by a large circular thatch roof supported

Frenn Hidetaker

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P
HD 1d10; AC 8 (12)
AT: Spear (1d6)
SP: Barbarian

Shara

SZ: S; MV 20; SV: P
HD 1d6; AC 9 (11)
AT: 1d3
SP: None

by thick log poles. A sturdy pole yoke sticks from the millstone on its side atop a large flat stone. A pair of dirt tracts circle the two stones at a constant distance as if something were pacing along the same path over and over again.

Oxen are used to turn the millstones while villagers feed the grains to be ground into meal and flour. The building is usually empty until the late fall harvests, at which point it becomes a centre of activity for most of the village, including the children.

Cemetery and Shrine to the Dead

A low moss-covered stone wall surrounds the village cemetery. Simple stone markers fill this garden of remembrance, some covered with moss stains or having rounded edges. An interior wall marks the boundaries of the original cemetery from the more recent expansion. There is a small wooden log building with an open awning on the side adjacent to the outer wall of the cemetery. Under the awning, there is a small stone that was chiseled flat across the top, supporting a well-detailed grey marble figurine of a robed woman.

The building is the home of Agraban the Thin, the caretaker of the cemetery and the only priest in the village. Agraban keeps the gravestones clean and knows the location of each and every sleeper within his garden. People sometimes come to him for healing should Striella's cures fail them. Otherwise, he keeps to himself most of the time, preferring the quiet of his "neighbours" to the comings and goings of the other villagers.

Agraban (Cleric)

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: M

HD: 2d8; AC 9 (11)

AT: Heavy Mace (1d8)

SP: Spellcaster

Since he cannot detect any undead among the ruins, he knows that it must be a beast or some fell magic causing the children to disappear. He also knows through communing with his goddess that the children are alive.

The Mushroom Merchant's Cottage

The mushroom merchant's home is a simple timber-and-wattle walled cottage with a thatch roof, located across the road from the millstones and smithy. A pair of smallish wooden chairs rest against the wall outside the door. The cottage has several windows and a door of hewn planks.

Inside the cottage, there is a single room with a simple bed, a pair of small chairs, and next to the window there is a table with a lantern upon it. Mushrooms dry on racks near the fireplace, and wooden cutlery and dishes rest upon low shelves. A fire-blackened iron pot hangs over the cold ashes in the fireplace. A couple of small wooden crates with moss lining are stacked next to the door. The tower ruins can be seen up the hill through the window.

Hidden under the bed is a small locked chest. Within it are two books on mushroom lore with little wear on the covers, however the pages are dingy and dog-eared. There is also a small bag containing 30 gp.

The mushrooms on the rack appear to belong to several species. If there are no druids in the party, another member could realize that a couple of the species present do not grow in this region (**WIS: CL5**).

The gnome whom the villagers know as Sprucenose lives in the cottage, where he spends a good deal of his time sitting and trading stories with the blacksmith, Murgar, and smoking his pipe. On occasion, the gnome will entertain the village children with stories of his travels around the region. When he is not around, the villagers know him to be out looking for mushrooms, which he sells in the village and as far away as Kargath. Sprucenose moved to Morfurt almost two years ago, and he goes out of his way to offer advice to those who look like they may need it. He has spent some time talking with the Reeve and assuring folk that he will be keeping an eye out for signs of the missing children while he is off on his mushroom-gathering trips. All in all, he is very helpful and generous with his time.

He has even helped the villagers search the surrounding area, lending his knowledge of wood-lore to try to find the children. It was he who first mentioned that some sort of flying beast might be responsible for the abductions.

The villagers do not know that his real name is Bimgrackle the Blackheart, a foul slave taker and member of the Council of Chains. His rank in the Council is denoted by the chain upon his cloak clasp. Whenever he would sit outside and spin stories for the children, he listened to them, finding out their dreams and desires. Later on, he would use illusions to lure the children out of their homes to where he and his minions captured them. His minions would then erase all traces of their presence. During the search parties to find the missing children, he told the villagers that he suspected the culprit to be a flying creature, in order to further confuse them, and to push their thoughts away from the possibility that the children may have been kidnapped.

Prior to his arrival in the village, Sprucenose and his minions created a hidden lair within the old tower ruins, using his magic to scare away any curious onlookers. Since the ruins were already thought to be haunted, this did not require much creativity or effort on his part. Carefully concealed beneath the ruins, the lair has proven to be a perfect place to hide the children stolen from the village as well as settlements all the way to Kargath itself.

Srucenose is seldom in the forest hunting mushrooms or away selling them. Instead, he is at the tower attending to his minions and checking on his prisoners, or elsewhere luring more children away to capture. He has contacted his superiors in the Council and arranged a meeting in Kargath in two weeks' time to deliver the children for export. He will leave town on another mushroom hunt two days after the PCs arrive in the village.

Srucenose placed the books in his village cottage to keep his cover intact, and the crates found in his home are the original containers in

Srucenose (Bimgrackle the Blackheart)

SZ: S; MV 20'; SV: M

HD 4d4; AC 5 (15)

AT: **Dagger +1** (1d4+1)

or **Light Crossbow** (1d6)

SP: *Gnome Traits,*

Spellcaster, Carries

Bracers of Armour +1,

Potion of Cure Light

Wounds x2, a *Potion of*

***Invisibility*, a cloak with a bronze chain clasp.**

Rollo the Hedgehog

SZ: S; MV 10'; SV: P

HD 1d8, AC: 3 (17)

AT: None

SP: *Familiar*

which his mushrooms were originally brought, having been purchased in Kargath by Council lackeys and smuggled to him through the forest. He uses the lantern on the table by the window to signal his minions in the tower whenever he has news, or when he needs to meet them in the forest at night. If confronted about the fact that the mushrooms do not belong to local species, or if the PCs come too close to discovering his duplicity, Sprucenose will give the PCs directions to Rawl's cave, either telling them that he gets his mushrooms from deep within the cave, or that he found a bit of torn night dress in its vicinity. He will then produce a piece of cloth torn from one of the captured children's clothing in the tower to further authenticate his story, with the hope that the ogre will slay them for him and thus remove the threat of discovery. If forced to go along with the PCs, he will guide them to the cave, and then he will vanish into the brush once their backs are turned, fleeing back to his lair within the ruins. If the PCs leave him behind, he will be ready for a fast getaway should they return, again fleeing to the ruins as discretely as the situation allows.

Sprucenose will not fight to the death, only enough to either kill his enemies or to make good his escape (or the appearance thereof). He thinks nothing of sacrificing lackeys or allies in order to save himself. He will use illusion and trickery to throw off pursuit, then he will return later on to exact his revenge.

THE TOWER RUINS

The tower appears as a moss-covered shell, rising only a few tens of feet into the air. Small trees and brush grow amidst the rubble, and there are decades' worth of debris within the centre of the broken walls. A single rusty moss-covered door is located in the tower base, wedged partially open by stone debris.

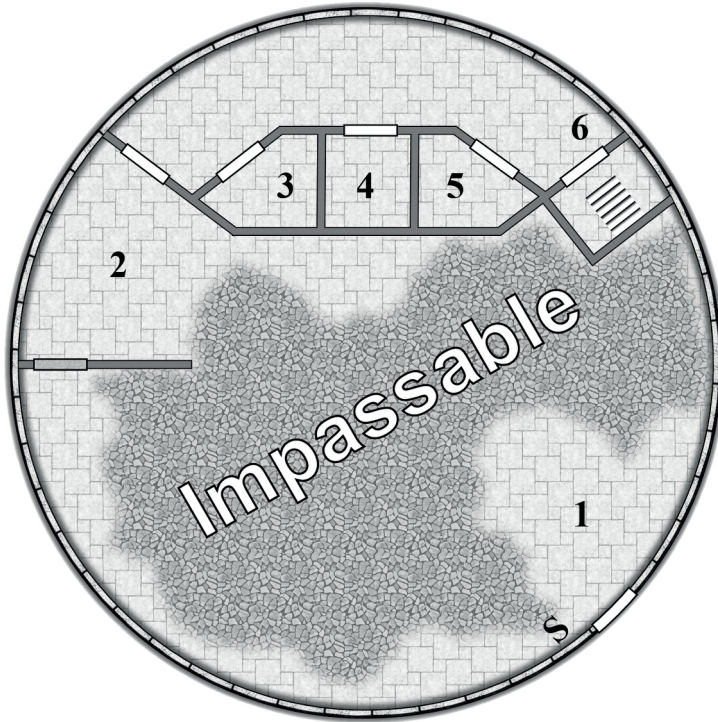
Around the tower, the grass is cropped short by years of livestock grazing on the hill. Brambles and other shrubs grow around the tower base and outwards from it. Worn, moss-covered blocks of broken stone lie scattered around the tower and in the grass across the hilltop. Hollow and broken, the tower itself seems to be a ghost showing none of its former strength or life.

During the early morning and evening hours, the area south of the tower is filled with the smells of cooking food and smoke. Most of the villagers attribute this to the ruin's haunted reputation. A careful search (**Wis: CL2**) will track down the actual source of the smells. A pile of stones within the depths of a large bramble bush just a few feet from the tower itself hides an old soot-stained clay pipe. The pipe is no wider than a grown man's fist. In spite of the state of the tower, the odours rising from the pipe are warm and fresh.

Should the PCs drop a stone or coin down the pipe, it will land in the forge coals of **area 10**, thirty-five feet below, and will alert the villains in their underground lair, who in turn will have a warm reception

waiting for any intruders, and will be on alert for at least the next four hours.

This discovery may serve as proof that the tower is not as abandoned or haunted as the villagers believe it to be. The piles of rubble and the vegetation all serve to conceal the presence of the new inhabitants, who are taking advantage of the tower's ruined appearance, which is further enhanced by a few select illusions and ghostly sounds from Bimgrackle.



1. Room of Rubble

The door is heavy, its wood solid despite years of neglect and weathering. It opens inwardly, though only with great effort, on rusty hinges that protest raucously. The door will then only open enough to allow a single thin man to squeeze through into a small area free of debris. A great number of moss covered stones, rotting beams, and medium-sized trees growing from the stone rubble prevent the door from opening further. Spiderwebs crisscross the gaps between stones and many other insects scurry through and over the piles of debris. The sky can barely be glimpsed through the gaps in the rubble and vegetation canopy above. The air is musty and rich with the scent of age-old decay and earth despite of the shade.

The small area beyond the door has enough room for a single medium-sized creature or two small-sized creatures. When the door is closed, anyone standing within the small area inside will be able to discover a

narrow passage free of rubble and debris along the tower wall. The passage leads to a surviving interior wall with a dark hole broken through it. The hole is about three feet high and just over two feet wide. Beyond, the air is still and as musty as the entry, though darker.

The area on the far side of the rubble is unreachable from the entry side due to dense plant growth and twisted wreckage. There is a wooden door on the other side that allows access to the narrow area beyond the rubble pile. It is from here that Bimgrackle has been casting his illusions, peering through the gaps in the vegetation and stone. The door has been replaced and the hinges are well oiled. Neither door into this area is locked.

2. Beyond the Hole

Beyond the hole is a small, dark room littered with piles of rubble from the shattered section of interior wall and ceiling. Many mushrooms grow in the darkness around moss-covered stones that lie scattered about the floor and against the curving wall. The collapsed area of the wall is adjacent to the small entry hole by which this room is accessed. A pair of skeletal arms reaching outwards and draped in delicate spiderwebs protrude from the moss-covered pile of stones. Roots dig into the stone from above, and bits of sky may be glimpsed through the gaps. A straight wall extends from the curved wall, perpendicular to the partially collapsed wall. Centred within it is a charred looking closed door with no visible hinges.

Rupert

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P
HD: 1d10; AC 5 (15)
AT: Longsword (1d8+1)
SP: Wears studded leather
armour, and carries a
dagger, a longsword, and a
pouch containing 3 gp, 6
sp, and a small brass key*

The door is nearly new, with a charred surface meant to blend with the surrounding ruin, should someone somehow brave this far into the tower. The door is barred from the other side, though a dagger could be slid through the gap between wall and door in order to attempt lifting up the bar (**DEX: CL3**). Otherwise, the door may only be opened by breaking it down (**STR: CL5**). Breaking down the door will have a 50% chance of alerting the villains beyond. Failing these two options, the door can be hacked down in one turn, alerting everyone. If the villains are alerted, then they will be well prepared to deal with the intruders.

The skeletal arms have been planted in the rubble pile to frighten the locals. Only the forearms and hands stick out from under the rock.

Beyond the door is a dark and silent hallway. The floor, though dusty, is clean of any debris and the ceiling is solid and well shored. No roots, moss, or gaps are visible anywhere along the length of the hallway. Several wooden doors are set in the wall and at the far end of the hallway.

3. Rupert's Room

This small room is bare of any decoration or embellishment. The furnishings consist of a simple cot with a worn wool blanket and a poorly made wooden table covered with melted candle wax. There is no candle stub on the table. Against the wall, behind the sturdy wooden door is a 12-inch wide x 6-inch tall x 18-inch long wooden chest. A large brass padlock prevents the chest

from being opened. A dented chamber pot is located in the opposite corner near the door and is the source of the foul odour permeating the room.

Upon examination, the chamber pot is half full. The table near the bed wobbles when touched, as its legs are not quite the same length. The padlock may be picked opened (**DEX: CL0**) though only one attempt is allowed. The door to this room is obviously newer than the tower itself, as the iron hinges are well oiled and free of rust. The door is not locked.

The room and its contents belong to Rupert, one of Bimgrackle's henchmen. Rupert will only be in his room during the evening hours, and will be sleeping there unless alerted by noisy intruders breaking down the door from **area 2**. If alerted, he will grab his gear, except for the chest, and will attempt to flee to **area 7** to alert his fellow henchmen. Rupert will not wake Kargan (**area 5**), as he is unwilling to be slowed down and to risk the latter's temper.

If caught sleeping, Rupert will immediately surrender, hoping to be spared to have the chance to escape later.

During the day, Rupert will be in **area 10** making meals for those within the tower and seeing to other simple chores.

Rupert's chest contains several pairs of socks that are heavier than they should be, and that clink (they contain 70 gp), a loincloth, a grey wool shirt, and a wooden hairpin carved into the shape of a bird in flight (value 2 gp).

4. Bimgrackle's Room

Like Rupert's room, this small room is also bare of any decoration or embellishment, and its furnishings also consist of a simple cot with a pair of small wool blankets, and a poorly made wooden table with its top partially covered with melted candle wax around two candle stubs. A handful of mushrooms are scattered across the wax-covered top as well. A child-sized chair is adjacent to the table, and a dented and aged empty chamber pot is located in the opposite corner near the door.

The door to this room is obviously newer than the tower itself, and the iron hinges are also well oiled and free of rust. The door is not locked. This is the room where Bimgrackle stays when he is at the tower. None of his henchmen will disturb the room without his direction, fearing their master's anger.

The table near the bed wobbles when touched, as its legs are not quite the same length. The table has a false compartment beneath its top (**WIS: CL0**) within which are several sheets of thin parchment, a wooden stylus, and two small vials of black ink. One of the vials is half empty and the sharp tip of the stylus is stained black. Upon close examination, the top sheet of parchment is not as smooth as it should be. Should charcoal or some other agent be used to rub across its surface, a semi-legible copy of a message will be made visible.

Master,

I will be bringing a coffle of goods to you in Kargath. The quality is good and they should be easy to move once they reach the markets. I will meet you in a fortnight at the Heron and Hammer during the hour of the Mare. The goods will be kept nearby for your inspection of course. I doubt any culling will be necessary.

Your servant,

Bimgrackle

Sprucenose (Bimgrackle the Blackheart)

SZ: S; MV 20; SV: M
HD 4d4; AC 5 (15)
AT: **Dagger +1** (1d4+1)
or *Light Crossbow* (1d6)
SP: *Gnome Trails, Spellcaster, Carries*
Bracers of Armour +1, Potion of Cure Light Wounds x2, a Potion of Invisibility, a cloak with a bronze chain clasp.

Rollo the Hedgehog

SZ: S; MV 10; SV: P
HD 1d8, AC: 3 (17)
AT: None
SP: *Familiar*

Kargan (Half Orc)

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P
HD: 1d10; AC 4 (16)
AT: *Battle-axe* (1d8+3)
SP: *Wears studded leather armour, and carries a small wooden shield, a black iron chain wrapped around his left forearm, a pouch containing 5 gp and a small brass key that is slightly bent*

Bimgrackle will only be in the tower if he has already been discovered by the PCs or if he has left Morfurt on a "mushroom hunt". Otherwise, he will be at his cottage in Morfurt playing the part of the friendly Sprucenose, and trying to redirect the Earl's agents away from himself (refer to the **Mushroom Merchant** entry in the **Village of Morfurt** on **pg.10** for detailed information on Bimgrackle).

While he is at the tower, Bimgrackle will be sleeping in this room during the day, and at night he will be in **area 9** checking on his merchandise. He keeps his personal possessions with him at all times.

If alerted by noisy intruders breaking down the door from **area 2**, the gnome will flee to **area 9** to alert his henchmen. He prefers to avoid any personal confrontation, seeing himself as too important to be exposed to risk. If unable to flee, he will attempt to bluff the PCs by claiming to have been captured by the villains in this ruin not far from the village. If unable to convince them of this deception, he will surrender and wait for his chance to escape when the PCs' attention slips.

5. Kargan's Room

This small room is bare of any decoration or embellishment. The furnishings consist of a simple cot with a worn woollen blanket carelessly tossed aside, and a nearly broken wooden table covered with melted candle wax. The remains of a mashed flat candle stub are clearly visible on the table top. Behind the cot and partially hidden under the blanket against the wall is a small 12-inch wide x 6-inch tall x 18-inch long wooden chest. A large brass padlock prevents it from being opened. There is a foul odour permeating the room, one of stale sweat and the contents of the full dented and aged chamber pot located near the door in the opposite corner.

The door to this room is obviously newer than the tower itself, its iron hinges well oiled and free of rust. It is not locked.

Kargan will be sleeping here during the night, the sounds of his snores clearly audible in the hall outside his door. Kargan has something of a foul temper and can be counted on to attack first and to think about things later. If it weren't for his master's magic being able to turn him as weak as a mewling kitten, none of his companions would be safe from his temper. At no time will he surrender (a fact Bimgrackle is

counting on should he be forced to flee) and his battle cry will alert those remaining in the ruins in case they are unaware that there are intruders about.

During the day, Kargan will be in **areas 9 or 10** helping with breakfast (20% of the time) or in **areas 13 or 14** filling water barrels (80% of the time), grumbling and complaining the whole time. Kargan goes nowhere unarmed.

Kargan's chest is locked with a small, marred brass padlock (**CL0 to pick**). Inside the chest are six small bags containing 600 sp each, a polished elven skull, a copy of a wanted poster from Stone Port stating "100 gold pieces reward dead or alive for murder", and a new red woollen shirt.

6. Stairs Going Down

Beyond the unlocked wooden door at the end of the hallway, there is a dark stone landing at the top of worn flagstone steps. These steps descend gradually, their path curving around to the left into the deepening darkness. Faint muffled noises can be heard from someplace below. The warm air rising up from the depths smells a bit of smoke, cooking food, and earthy mustiness.

The door to this room is obviously newer than the tower itself, its iron hinges well oiled and free of rust. It is not locked.

During the day, the noises heard are those of Rupert and Kargan performing their chores and Stephan and Wella's snoring (**area 8**). During the night, one can hear the latter two playing cards in **area 7** and complaining about being cooped up within the ruins for so long while the boss is out enjoying himself in town.

Should the PCs have alerted the villains of their presence with noise, then the only sounds from below will be a moaning breeze and a slow creaking of some sort.

7. Guardroom

A heavy-looking iron portcullis bars entry into the small room beyond the bottom of the stairs. A poorly built wooden table, flanked by two shoddy wooden stools, is visible in the centre of the room on the other side of the portcullis. Something is visible on top of the table. To the far right is a stone archway leading off into darkness. Adjacent to the archway is a windlass of stone and iron anchored to the floor. An iron chain, red with rust, wraps around the spindle before rising to a pair of equally rusty iron staples in the stone ceiling. The chain passes to someplace unseen above the portcullis. There is a wooden door in the far left corner of the left wall. The air is stuffy and smells of earth, sweat, and smoke.

The square openings between the horizontal and vertical grated bars of the portcullis are just over a hand span in size. The portcullis is in good condition in spite of its age and faint rust. It is possible, though

slightly difficult, to toss things through the gaps of the portcullis. Should anyone try to throw an object through the gaps of the bars, they will suffer a -2 penalty on any check or attack rolls made. If they fail their attack roll by 6 or more, the object thrown will hit the bars. Daggers, darts, and the like will rebound while flasks of oil and the like will immediately apply their normal effects to the portcullis and to any creature within range of their damage.

The room is lit by a hooded lantern hanging from an old iron torch sconce six feet above the floor, set in the wall adjacent to the portcullis.

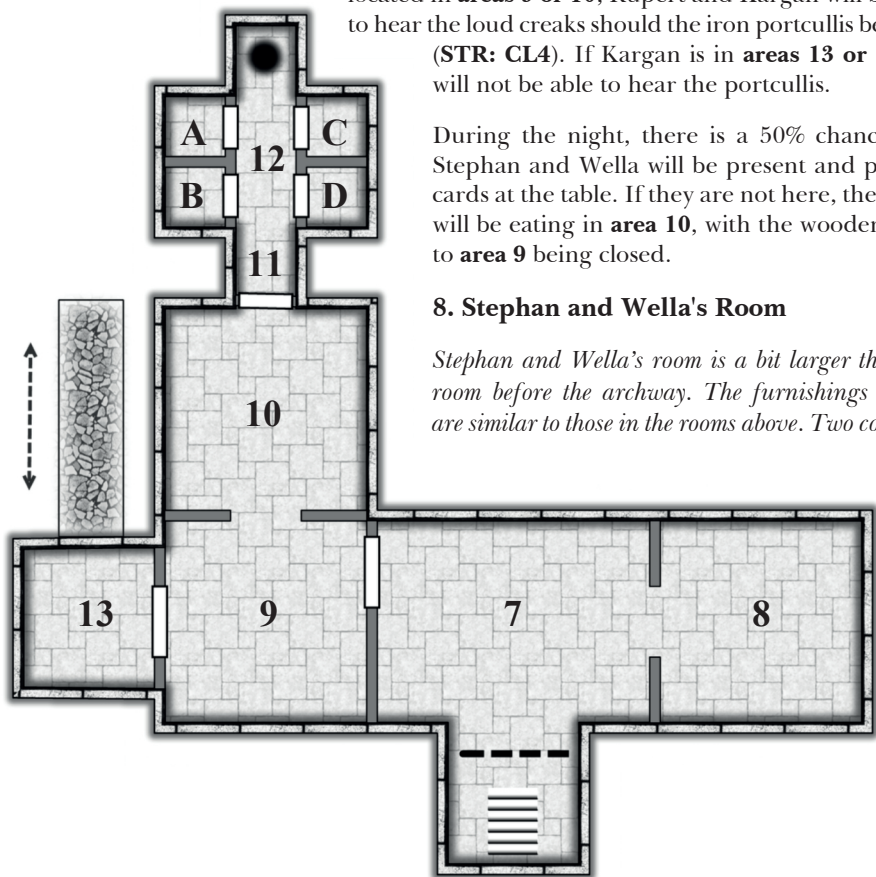
Should the villains be alerted to the presence of intruders, this lantern will be extinguished and the room plunged into darkness, the table turned over as an improvised breastwork. Wella and Stephan will be behind the overturned table, their cards scattered about on the floor, waiting with crossbows. Any other survivors of their band will be waiting in **area 9**, where they will retreat should the PCs get by the portcullis. Anyone trying to lift the portcullis will be sniped at by the two rogues.

During the day, the room will be empty and a deck of worn and stained cards will be placed on the table. These cards are but a crude copy of actual cards, and they appear quite dirty. If they are located in **areas 9 or 10**, Rupert and Kargan will be able to hear the loud creaks should the iron portcullis be lifted (**STR: CL4**). If Kargan is in **areas 13 or 14**, he will not be able to hear the portcullis.

During the night, there is a 50% chance that Stephan and Wella will be present and playing cards at the table. If they are not here, then they will be eating in **area 10**, with the wooden door to **area 9** being closed.

8. Stephan and Wella's Room

Stephan and Wella's room is a bit larger than the room before the archway. The furnishings within are similar to those in the rooms above. Two cots with



worn woollen blankets are located in opposite corners from each other. Between them is a pair of poorly built wooden tables with melted remains of wax candles covering their tops. At the foot of each cot is a small 12-inch x 8-inch x 20-inch iron bound wood chest. Each chest has a keyhole below the chasp of the lid, and no visible hinges. Both chests show signs of previous fire damage. Seven feet above the floor on the wall opposite the cots, an empty torch sconce juts from the wall.

Wella and Stephan will only be encountered here during the daytime when sleeping (see **area 7**). The room is almost always dark since the two rogues spend so little time there.

Stephan's cot is the nearest to the archway. The chest at the foot of this cot is locked but not trapped (**CL1 to pick**). The chest contains a small pouch filled with 60 gp, an egg-sized red jasper (50 gp), a good otter fur cloak (40 gp), two pairs of wool socks, and a pair of leather breeches.

Wella's cot is the farthest from the archway. The chest at the foot of this cot is locked (**CL1 to pick**) and trapped (**Scythe Blade Trap**). The chest contains two small pouches, each containing 35 gp, a bundle of 15 letters wrapped in a bloodstained blue silk ribbon (to Wella from a female of intimate acquaintance), a green wool skirt, a blue silk shirt (the same colour as the ribbon), and a small metal mirror.

9. Store Room

The room beyond the solid wood door is dimly lit by a single hooded lantern, which hangs from an empty iron torch sconce that protrudes from the stone wall on the far side of an archway to the right. The sconce is set just over six feet above the floor. Boxes, barrels, and sacks are piled up against both walls. There is a solid-looking wooden door in the far wall.

The boxes, barrels, and sacks contain flour, oil, water, dried meats, fruit, vegetables, wool blankets, wooden bowls, small grey tunics, iron shackles, and mushrooms. If the villains within the tower are alerted to the presence of intruders, these boxes, barrels, and sacks will be moved to provide a bulwark against invaders from behind which the villains will fight.

The door to this room is obviously newer than the tower itself, its iron hinges well oiled and free of rust. It is not locked.

Details pertaining to the villains that may be encountered here are listed in the descriptions of **areas 3 through 7**.

10. Kitchen

The archway leads into a small, dimly lit chamber. The light from the hooded lantern that hangs from an iron torch sconce on the far wall brightens the room considerably more than the glowing embers from the brazier in the near right corner. Wisps of smoke from the coals in the brazier rise into a fist-sized clay pipe, which rises into the stone ceiling. The brazier is flanked

Stephan (Rogue)

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P
 HD: 1d6; AC 5 (15)
 AT: Rapier (1d6) or Light Crossbow (1d6)
 SP: Wears leather leather, Carries a rapier, a light crossbow, 10 bolts, a black iron chain worn as a belt, a pouch containing 8 gp, 3 sp, 6 cp, and an iron key.

Wella (Rogue)

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: M
 HD: 1d6; AC 6 (14)
 AT: Shortsword (1d6) or Light Crossbow (1d6)
 SP: Wears leather leather, Carries a rapier and light crossbow, 10 bolts, a black iron chain worn wound into the pony-tail of her hair, a pouch containing 10 sp, a small blue quartz (13 gp), and an iron key.

Scythe Blade Trap (CL1)

Failure to detect/disarm the trap causes it to off if the chest is opened. A Dex Save will be required of the character opening the chest to avoid being hit or suffer 1d4 dmg.

by small, poorly built wooden tables covered with gouges, cut marks, bits of flour, meat, and other scraps of food across their tops.

In the centre of the chamber, there is a large wooden table that seems to have been repaired several times with scraps of lumber and rope. The table is flanked by simple wooden stools, the nearest of which is closest to the archway. Against the far left wall, there is a set of rickety wood shelves upon which wood bowls and simple wood spoons are stacked. Iron pots and kettles are stacked on the lower shelves.

To the right of the hanging lantern, there is a wooden door with a heavy wood beam, which rests across the door in thick iron brackets bolted to the stone wall. A heavy iron key hangs on a leather cord below the lantern.

The beam weighs 200 pounds and will require at least two people of average strength to lift it. It is much easier to slide it from the brackets. No more than two creatures may make the attempt at a time.

The leather cord on which the key hangs is looped over the iron torch sconce, and is easily removed by a creature of at least medium size. Smaller creatures will need to climb the wall or stand upon a chair to reach the key.

If it is daytime and the PCs have managed to make it this far without alerting the villains to their presence, Rupert will be in the kitchen cooking and feeding the merchandise. Kargan has a 20% chance of being here helping him (see **areas 3 and 5**).

If it is nighttime and the PCs have remained undetected, then Stephan and Wella will have a 50% chance of being in the kitchen, eating (see **area 7**).

11. Dungeon Corridor

The corridor beyond the heavy wooden door is lit by a weak flame in a hooded lantern hanging seven feet above the floor from an empty torch sconce on the right wall between two other doors. Both the left and right walls have two small wooden doors, each facing the other on the opposite wall. Each door has a thick iron pull ring with a large keyhole below, about four feet above the floor. At the far end of the hallway, there is a low rock wall or a stack of some sort. An eerie moan and the sound of running water echo faintly from the far end of the hall near the rocks. A cool breeze blows through the hall, causing the lantern flame to dance and sway.

The rock wall consists of a ring of stones around a black hole measuring six feet in diameter. The sound of rushing and falling water can be heard clearly from below and the cool breeze blows upwards from the darkness. The shaft is 60 feet deep and ends in **area 15**. In earlier times, the bodies of those that died within the cells of the tower or those who perished under questioning were tossed down this hole. The walls of the shaft are worn almost smooth, and are layered with a slick, wet coating of slime. The slime is harmless unless eaten, and even then it only makes creatures slightly nauseous.

Each of the small (6-ft x 5-ft) wooden doors is locked. The key found in **area 10** opens these locks, allowing the doors to swing outward on well oiled hinges. If someone takes the time to listen (**Wis: CL1**), the sounds of muted whimpering may be heard (refer to **area 12**).

12. Dungeon Cells (A-D)

A) The cell is unlit, small, and smells of unwashed bodies, filth, and stale air. Two small shapes cling to each other, shying away from the light carried by the PCs. Dirty, vermin infested blankets lay tossed on the stone floor. An overflowing chamber pot is in the back of the cell.

This cell contains Amber Pintel's daughter and Byron Garmanson, both from Morfurt. They are frightened, filthy, and pale but otherwise in relatively good health. It will take several hours for their eyes to adjust to anything but the dimmest light.

B) Like the previous room, this cell is also unlit, small, and smells of unwashed bodies, filth, and stale air. Two small shapes cling to one another, shying away from the light carried by the PCs. Dirty, vermin infested blankets lay tossed on the stone floor, and an overflowing chamber pot is in the back of the cell.

This cell contains Myra Williamsdaughter and Sayla Elfkin (half-elven), both from near Kargath. In addition to being thin and weak, both girls are filthy, pale, and very frightened. They have been imprisoned in the darkness for nearly two months and cannot bear any sort of light for some time. Each has had very bad nightmares since the beginning of their captivity. The people of Morfurt will take them in as they recover while the Reeve sends word of their rescue to Kargath.

C) NOTE: If Asleigh Weaver has disappeared by this time, she will be found within this cell, otherwise the cell is bare and empty.

The cell is unlit, small, and smells of unwashed bodies, filth, and stale air. A little girl huddles within, clutching a vermin infested blanket, briefly shying away from the light carried by the PCs. A partially full chamber pot is in the back of the cell.

Asleigh is a bit bruised and her nightclothes are torn, having put up quite a struggle when Bimgrackle's henchmen captured her. She is otherwise in good health, having been here only a short while.

D) The cell is unlit, small, and smells of unwashed bodies, filth, and stale air. A small boy huddles within, clutching a vermin infested blanket, shying away from the light carried by the PCs. An overflowing chamber pot is in the back of the cell.

The boy in this cell is Colin the Younger from Mortfurt. He has been here for several weeks and fares little better than the girls in cell B.

Except for Ashleigh, none of the children will trust their saviours when they arrive. However, none will show resistance, having been cowed into submission by the slavers.

13. Water Room

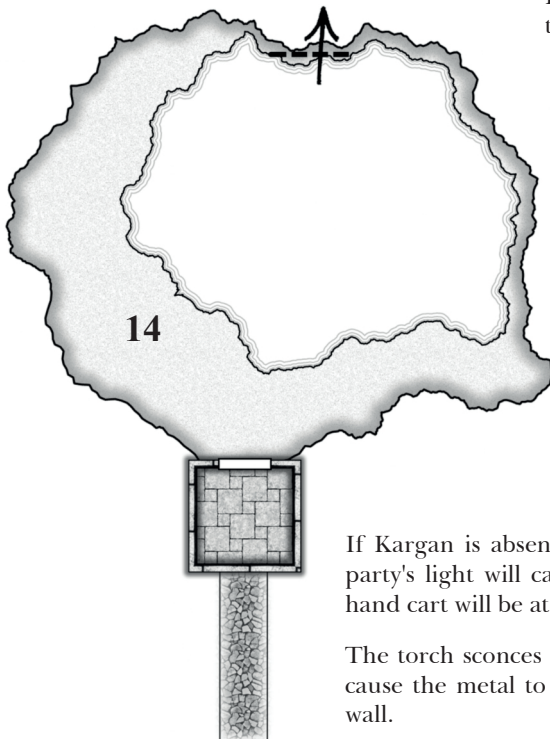
Beyond the heavy wooden door is a small room, within which the moist, cool, fresh air rises from a ramp that descends into the darkness below. The muffled sound of cascading water rumbles from wherever the ramp leads to. A pair of empty barrels rests against the wall adjacent to the ramp.

Unless Kargan is working in this room, an unlit hooded lantern hangs from an old iron torch sconce in the far corner, jutting out from the stone wall some six feet above the floor. Should Kargan be in this room, the lantern will be lit.

The ramp leads to a stout wooden door with a heavy iron latch, locking it from this side. If Kargan is absent, the door will be locked (**CL0 to pick**). If he is working below, the door will be open, allowing access to **area 14**.

14. Waterfall Cave

The cavernous room beyond the door resounds with a thunderous waterfall. A wide ledge carved from the limestone walls of the cavern ramps down to the pool of water at the base of a twenty-five-foot-high waterfall, which tumbles down from the ceiling. The ledge itself starts out fifteen feet above the uneven floor of the cave. A smooth path leads from the ledge ramp to the edge of the pool, which drains away through the far wall. A wide, partially submerged opening is visible from the ramp, stone bars jutting from the tunnel roof downward into the rushing water.



Rusty remnants of iron torch sconces set in the cave wall are spaced out along the ramp about seven feet above the ground. The cool wet breeze blasted out by the waterfall causes flames of torches and lanterns alike to flicker and dance violently.

Should Kargan be here, his lantern would be set at the foot of the ramp, away from the waterfall. Its light would cast shadows throughout the cave, moving and dancing with the motion of the flame. He would be filling a barrel with another on a hand cart. Blinded by rage, Kargan will attack intruders the moment he sees them, regardless of their numbers (see area 5 description).

If Kargan is absent, the cave will be dark and empty. The party's light will cast shadows throughout the cave and the hand cart will be at the top of the ledge.

The torch sconces are so rusty that any sort of pressure will cause the metal to disintegrate, breaking them off from the wall.

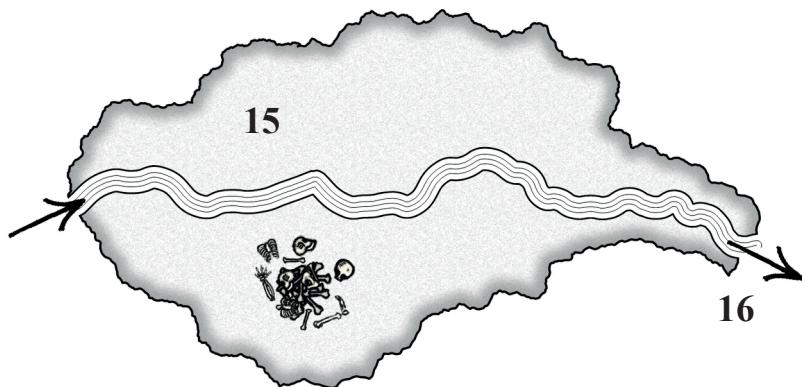
The water is very cold and pure, though the pool is only four feet deep in all places except under the plunging waterfall, where the stone has been worn away at a depth of over twenty feet. Anyone who falls into this pool runs a high risk of drowning. The depth of the stream is only a few feet deep.

The stone bars are part of a gate that was built by the priests who settled the tower centuries ago. The gate is locked by a heavily corroded brass padlock (**CL:10 to pick**). The centuries have worn away the streambed and the bars within the water, creating a two-foot-high by six-foot-wide opening below. Small creatures can squirm their way through the opening while larger creatures attempting to do the same will possibly become stuck. Each stone bar will suffer 15 points of damage before breaking off and allowing enough room for medium-sized creatures to pass.

15. Cave of Bones

The stream flows into the Cave of Bones, entering through one wall and exiting by way of a taller and slightly wider tunnel on the opposite side. The ceiling is fifteen feet above the stream, with a gaping six-foot-wide hole ascending into darkness, located almost exactly at the centre of the cavern. Beneath the hole is a reeking pile of fresh offal and refuse. The ceiling opening has a toothy look due to numerous stalactites and dripping straw-like stone fingers. There are a few columns formed by stalactites merging with stalagmites below. Bleached skeletons calcifying from the limestone-rich water lay impaled upon or scattered around the numerous stalagmites rising from the damp cave floor. Most of these skeletons are so old that the slightest touch can turn bone to dust in spite of appearances.

At the back of the cave near a far corner, there is a dark tunnel with what appear to be steps carved into the stone, climbing gradually away from the stream.



The characters may notice that there are no flies here, nor any sign of rats, spiders, or other vermin normally attracted to refuse and bodies (**WIS: CL0**).

The current is slightly stronger in the Cave of Bones than in the Waterfall Cave, and the ceiling of the tunnel at the entrance of the Cave of Bones is slightly higher than at the exit of the Waterfall Cave. This is due to the stream grade, which a dwarf has a normal chance of spotting (**WIS: CL0**).

The circular hole in the ceiling is the bottom of the shaft in **area 11**.

16. The Sink

When traveling down the tunnel, the flow of the stream accelerates noticeably, and the water becomes increasingly shallow. The passage appears to end where the water froths and churns around, forming a whirlpool that spans the full width of the tunnel, a black funnel at its heart descending several feet before vanishing into the dark water.

The water current in the sink is strong enough that creatures turning around to fight it will have a chance of being swept off their feet within a ten-foot radius of the whirlpool. Trying to wade back upstream to **area 15** requires will be challenging (**STR: CL0**). Failure means that the unfortunate creature will be swept off their feet and consumed by the hungry vortex at the end of the tunnel within two rounds. Creatures sucked down the whirlpool will suffer 1d6+2 damage as they are smashed against stone walls, and will land in a shallow pool of streaming water before sliding away downstream, ending up in **area 18 or 19** where they have a last chance to save themselves. The tunnel into which they are swept beyond the whirlpool is only three feet deep with two feet of air space above it.

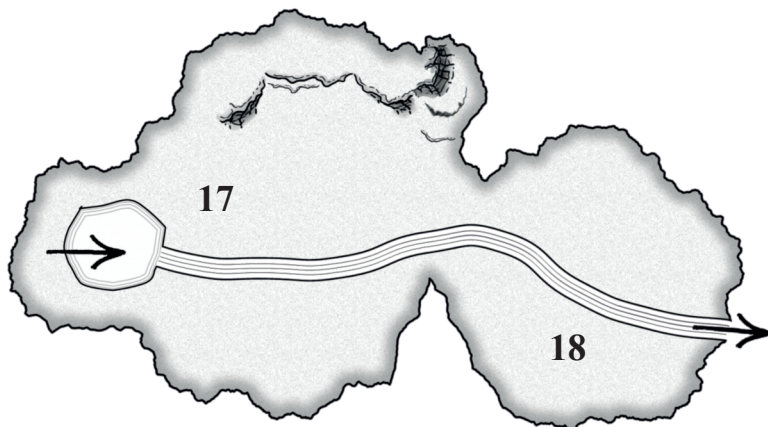
Climbing back up the pipe through the whirlpool is impossible, and anyone attempting to do so will suffer 1d3 points of stun damage as they are drenched by water and slammed relentlessly into the stone wall.

17. Cavern of the Dead

The narrow passage widens out into a larger cavern where the muffled sound of running water echoes. Cool, wet air moves through the passage into this cavern, carried forward from behind and tainted by the smell of offal. The uneven stone floor of the cave slopes visibly upwards to the left in a gradual incline. The ceiling is at least twelve feet high and studded with stalactites, some of which descend all the way to the floor of the cavern where they reach to join with the rising stalagmites. Unlike the glistening walls of the first two caves, some of the stone here is appears to be dull, dry, and flaky.

Scattered about the stone formations and crags of the cavern floor are countless bones. Very few of these bones are covered with mineralized stone. The majority, however, are scattered and bleached white. There is a large opening in a wall adjacent to the one through which the PCs entered.

Touching any of the bones, even those that appear mineralized, will cause them to turn to powder. There is a fourteen-foot-wide by three-foot-tall tunnel opening in the wall where the floor beyond drops away, worn smooth by centuries of water before the cavern dried. The drop is only six feet deep. The slope beyond the drop is worn so smooth and steep that characters who drop down into it without any precautions must make a save (**DEX: CL0**) or go sliding and tumbling down into **area 18**. Any damage inflicted during this chaotic descent is at the discretion of the GM.



Ghoul

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P

HD: 2d8; AC 6 (14)

AT: Claws x2 (1d3) and bite (1d6)

SP: Paralysis, Darkvision

The real danger here is a ghoul, hiding amongst the stone formations, its odour masked by the smell of offal in **area 15**. This foul thing has been here since the first days of the tower, feeding on the bodies tossed down the shaft from **area 11**. The ghoul was once one of these bodies, its former life long forgotten to madness and hunger. Its hatred of the living has grown considerably in the last 150 years since its last substantial feast. Unable to dig through the stone walls of the cavern or escape beyond the underground falls in **areas 16 and 20**, the creature has been trapped here with its hunger and solitude as its only companions. It will attempt to attack from behind. Failing that, it will attack the largest creature first, seeing only a large meal with which to temper its raging hunger.

The ghoul is the reason why the priests created the stone gate in **area 14**. Should the characters spare the ghoul after breaking through the gate, it will not be long before the creature terrorizes the villagers of Morfurt and causes problems throughout the region. The ghoul will follow the characters through the ruin if they flee from it. Closing the doors behind them through the various rooms of the tower will only delay the creature an hour per door before it reaches the surface. It will not venture forth from the tower during daylight hours, but once night falls, the hunt is on. If the characters descend through the shaft in **area 11**, it will be a race to get up the rope to safety before the ghoul can follow. The last character to climb the rope may well find themselves facing the horrid creature alone.

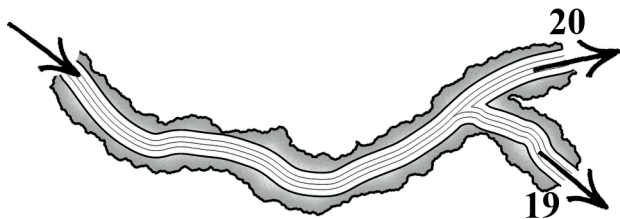
18. Dying Cavern

This is a large, dark cavern with a high ceiling filled with cool, moist air generated from the loudly churning stream below. The stone walls and formations are all dull and dry throughout the greater part of the cavern, in spite of the moisture in the air. The wind wails mournfully as it passes through, as if in an eerie dirge for the cavern itself.

A singular oddity among the stalagmites, stalactites, and stone columns is a large seven-foot-long egg-shaped dome of dirty white stone that rises four feet from the floor. The texture of the dome's surface is far more abrasive than the smooth limestone in the rest of the cavern.

The uneven floor of the cavern has an almost imperceptible slope until it nears the stream along the wall. The ground then slopes downward sharply into the cold, rushing, three-foot-deep water. The stream is about five feet below the bulk of the cavern floor level, and it enters through a tunnel in one wall and exits along another tunnel in the opposite wall, with both extremities having approximately the same width and height. A strong breeze rushes out from the exiting tunnel and a dull, stone-shaking rumble can be heard from beyond the dark entrance, drowning out the mourning wind of the cavern. An old rusty iron chain can be seen anchored to the stream bank, two feet above the water.

The egg-shaped stone is merely a dolomite formation. If ground to powder, it can be used as a scouring agent in soaps and such. If carved into small, four-inch by three-inch by three-inch blocks, it may also be used as a sanding stone for wood. Blocks are worth a gold coin each. Powder is worth a gold coin per pound.



Creatures being swept downstream from **area 16** may make an attempt to grab an iron chain (**DEX: CL0**) at each turn, on entering the tunnel flowing from **area 18**. This is where the chain begins and sags into the water. By succeeding, the creature may backtrack to the previous cave

or control their passage and pull themselves out at **area 19**.

Otherwise, any creature in the water from **area 18** and onwards must fight the current (**STR: CL1**) or risk being swept downstream to **area 20** and to their death.

19. Cave of Serpents

A set of steps carved from limestone rises upwards from about four feet above the rushing waters of the stream. A rusty iron chain is secured tightly to the tunnel wall upstream from the steps, extending downstream into darkness where it dips into the loudly rushing water. At the top of the steps is a small cave with dripping stalactites on the ceiling above stalagmites that have been carved away and have only just begun to reform. At the back

of the cave is something not native to the cave itself: a limestone encrusted chest of aged and corroded bronze two feet tall by two feet wide by four feet long rests upon a block of cut stone two feet above the floor. To either side of the chest facing each other are poised stone serpents rising two feet above the chest and equally encrusted with mineral deposits. A keyhole is visible just below the corroded opening clasp, protected from mineralization.

The chest is only partially covered by limestone which can be easily broken away. The chest itself is locked and trapped. Trying to open the chest without the proper key (now lost for centuries with the death of the priests who put it here) will cause the stone serpents to animate and attack. Due to the more severe mineralization around their lower bodies they are incapable of moving away from their current location and can only attack those who come within five feet of the chest itself.

The lock may be picked (**CL2**) and the chest, once opened, reveals the lost and forgotten wealth of the slain priests of old. It consists of four dry and cracked leather sacks of 100 gp each each, an oilcloth wrapped suit of medium-sized banded mail (value 250 gp), a masterwork light mace, and a cracked and dry wooden scroll case with various animals carved into its surface. The mace has its head forged into the shape of a mountain ram's head conveying a +1 bonus to attack rolls (value 1,325gp). The scroll case contains a single vellum scroll bearing three **cure light wounds** spells. The chest itself is worthless, except for its weight in copper for scrap metal.

20. End of the Line

The water of the stream becomes shallower and the current picks up along with the blowing wind. The thunderous roar of turbulent water drowns out everything, including the beating of your own heart. Ahead, the stream vanishes as if cut off by the infinite blackness beyond.

The tunnel opens into a vast underground chasm hundreds of feet deep and nearly a hundred feet across. The stream plunges over the lip into this precipice, falling into the eerie silence of the black abyss. Any creature carried along with the stream from **area 18** as it makes its final plunge falls to their inevitable doom somewhere in the depths of the earth, lost for all eternity.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure comes to a successful and happy conclusion with the recovery of the missing children and the capture or deaths of the guilty slavers. Should Bimgrackle manage to escape, it is almost certain that he will return bearing a grudge against those that foiled his plans.

The Reeve will send along a message for the Earl with the characters as they return for their well-earned reward of 50 gold coins each.

Stone Serpents (2)
 SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P
 HD: 2d10; AC 2 (18)
 AT: Bite (1d3+2)
 SP: Immunity to the following: Poisons, Disease, Paralysis, Stunning, Sleep, Death Attacks, Any mind influencing effects, and Paralysis, Possesses Darkvision and Blindsight.

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Mystery at Morfurt An Adventure for 4-6 Characters of Levels 1-3

Several children have gone missing from the village of Morfurt and they seem to have disappeared without a trace. The villagers fear that evil has returned to the ruins of an old abandoned tower. Answering the plea for help, the Earl of the region dispatches a party of adventurers to investigate.

What is Ballista™?

Ballista is a line of gaming material compatible with the rules of *Swords & Wizardry* published by Frog God Games, *Castles & Crusades* published by Troll Lord Games, and other old school fantasy roleplaying games.

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How To Use This Book

This is not a new game. Instead, it uses a distillation of elements found in the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game whose roots stretch back to 1974. Elements in this book have been simplified and streamlined to offer an easy and fast-paced gaming experience. The material contained herein is compatible with the rules of *Swords & Wizardry* published by Frog God Games, *Castles & Crusades* published by Troll Lord Games, and other old school fantasy roleplaying games.

Attributes & The Game

Each player character has six attributes which will be tested throughout the game as they face different challenges. These are commonly known as saving throws or skill saves. Depending on the circumstances, the challenge or hazard in question will test a character's Strength (**Str**), Dexterity (**Dex**), Constitution (**Con**), Intelligence (**Int**), Wisdom (**Wis**), or Charisma (**Cha**). When presented in a Ballista™ Adventure, these will provide a Challenge Level (**CL**) ranked from a scale of 1 to 10 representing the difficulty. If any of these challenges originate from an opponent or creature, the Challenge Level is determined by the opponent's level or Hit Dice (**HD**). This is then added to a base of 15 resulting in a value ranging from 16-25. This is the number the player will need to match or best in order to pass their save or check. To do this, the player rolls a twenty-sided die (**d20**) and adds to it his characters level and any applicable modifiers.

It should be stressed that any challenge mentioned in the book, the affected attribute, and challenge levels are suggestions only. The Game Master (**GM**) is free to assign other challenges and difficulties.

Understanding the Encounters

All the various encounters are listed in the side margins of this book and contains shorthand which not everyone may be familiar with. They are, in the order they appear: Size (**SZ**), Movement (**MV**), Saves (**SV**), Hit Dice (**HD**), Armor Class (**AC**), Attacks (**AT**), and Special (**SP**).

Sizes are Small, Medium, and Large with the typical adventurer being in the Medium category, if using miniatures, a Medium creature occupies a 5-foot square space on a battle grid. Likewise, Movement is measured in feet and the number given will always be divisible by 5.

Saves indicate what advantages this opponent holds. Frequently, this will either be listed as Physical (**P**) or Mental (**M**) but sometimes may be specific enough to list particular attributes. The encounter in question would receive a bonus in instances when a saving throw is required against their listed Saves.

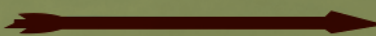
Hit Dice has two uses. One is to give a challenge / skill level to the encounter. The other is to determine health or hit points. The first number value given is the level and the hit points are determined by rolling what is indicated.

Armour Class provides two numbers and you will be using one value or the other for combat. Some systems use a descending system of Armour Class (where lower is better) and other games use ascending Armour Class. Both start at a base of AC 10.

Attacks provides the type and number of attacks and the damage they do. If the encounter hits their target, the damage is deducted from the targets hit point total.

Special simply lists any abilities, qualities, or resistances that need to be noted for the encounter in question.

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Battle

Should player characters find themselves in battle, resolving combat is relatively easy. Combat is measured in rounds and proceeds as follows:

Determine if anyone was surprised if the situation warrants it. Those who were surprised do not get to act until the following round.

Roll Initiative. A ten-sided die (**d10**) is used to determine the order of combat for the duration of battle.

Combat and Magic. In initiative order (highest to lowest), each participant may move up their movement rate and perform a single action such as attacking opponents within range, casting a spell, or another simple task. When attacking, a player rolls a twenty-sided die (**d20**) and adds their 'To Hit' bonus and relevant modifiers and measures this total against their opponents Armour Class (**AC**). If this matches or beats that number, a score is hit and damage is dealt. When a creature or opponent attacks and no 'To Hit' bonus is listed, the number of Hit Dice (**HD**) is added to the attack roll instead. Spellcasters may cast spells though some spells may require more than one round to cast and risks being interrupted.

At the of the round, a new round begins until the battle is ended.

Damage

There are two types of damage: regular and nonlethal. Regular damage comes from inflicted wounds and should this amount of damage exceed the hit point total, unconsciousness and possibly death will follow. Nonlethal damage taken are effects that could subdue and render one unconscious but will not kill a character. Save for the intervention of magic, only time and rest will allow for the healing and recuperation of any hit points lost.

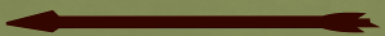
Bonuses & Penalties

With any situation or challenge, there may be times where the party or a character may find themselves in either a disadvantageous position or have the upper hand. The same could be said of their adversaries. In those situations, when rolling a save or an attack, they will need to roll a bonus or penalty die (**d20**) to go along with it. In a situation where a bonus is called for, they take the best of the two rolls; a penalty would take the worst of the two.

Magic & Miscellanea

Magic and other fantastic elements are abundant in this sort of game. While the scope of these things is too broad to be covered in any detail here or the rest of the book, an easy way to handle spellcasters is to provide them with a number of magical abilities equal to 1 plus their level or Hit Dice (**HD**) and determine a Challenge Level (a scale of 1-10) for the spell or effect they are trying to create. The GM needs to take into account the scale of this magic and take into account factors such as area, range, damage, and how it much 'bends' reality around them while keeping in mind it is a fantasy setting after all. A check will need to be made to see whether or not the spell caster was successful. If the caster succeeds, opponents targeted by this magic get a save to either avoid or minimize the effects and the caster takes half the determined Challenge Level (rounded down) as nonlethal damage due to the effort. If the caster fails, the spell does not work and they receive 1 point of nonlethal damage for the attempt. Spellcasters reduced to zero hit points through the use of magic falls unconscious.

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Continued from front cover..