

PAUL 'WIGGY' WADE-WILLIAMS

HELLFROST

DESCENT INTO MADNESS





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DESCENT INTO MADNESS



● INTRODUCTION ●

This adventure is designed for a group of four characters with between 30 and 35 XPs, but can be run with more advanced parties. Most encounters are based on a number of antagonists per hero, and thus automatically allow for increased party size. Where a scene uses an unnamed Wild Card villain, add one additional villain for every two Wild Card player characters above four.

As written, the main protagonists are crazed orc warriors, dire wolves, crazed lunatics, and semi-corporeal evil thoughts known as Manifested Thoughts. For higher Ranked parties, add one additional Extra to a detailed encounter for each party Rank above Seasoned. For instance, if an Heroic party of four characters faces two orc warriors per hero, the heroes encounter a total of 10 orcs (eight because of the party strength and another two because the party is two steps above Seasoned). In the orc-inhabited temple, add one priest, two warriors, and two dire wolves to the general populace (not the detailed encounters) for each Rank the party is above Seasoned.

The adventure is not tied to any particular land, thus allowing the GM to set it wherever he chooses. The only locations of interest are a small village and the “lost” temple. Likewise, the season is for the GM to determine.

The temperature is less important in this adventure than some others in the *Hellfrost* line. The GM should still keep an eye on temperature and the characters’ winter protection, as they may find themselves pulling a long guard shift at night. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players’ Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

A selection of pre-generated Novice characters can be found at our website, www.tripleacegames.com, though you will need to grant them the appropriate number of advances as described above.

Generic Treasure: The crazy villagers each carry 1d6 gs worth of coin and cheap jewelry. Orc warriors have

2d6 gs worth of treasure, while the chieftain has 1d10 x 25 gs of loot on his person. This is in addition to gear presented in the stat block.

PLOT OVERVIEW

Many centuries ago, a priest of Hoenir, god of knowledge, was posed a philosophical question by a colleague (“What is truth?”). At first the priest thought little of the conundrum, but as time passed its solution began to gnaw away at him. Eventually, he forsook his daily duties and dedicated his life to solving the riddle, for that in itself was a test of devotion and faith.

Time passed, and the priest’s body succumbed to the ravages of old age. Yet so strong was his desire to find the solution that he refused to ascend to the afterlife when his time was due. While his physical remains rotted to nothingness, his spirit continued to mull the seemingly unsolvable problem posed to him many decades before. The priest was not undead, for he retained his soul, yet his comrades grew fearful of his continuing existence in the mortal realm.

Unwilling to slay someone they saw as doing their god’s work, albeit beyond the point of reason, the other priests simply prayed for their comrade’s soul and abandoned the temple.

The original temple was constructed centuries ago. The main structure was above ground, while beneath were carved tunnels and chambers for additional storage. When the time came to abandon the structure, the clerics did so without haste. All the furnishings were carefully removed, along with the sacred libraries. All that remained were empty chambers—and the ever-seeking philosopher.

Unsure as to what might occur if the philosopher ever reached the end of his train of thought, and wary that others might disturb him with unknown, and possibly dire, consequences, the clerics secretly hired artisans and wizards to create a series of traps designed to keep the philosopher in and intruders out.

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The clerics' plan was to make periodic checks on the temple to ensure the defenses had not been breeched and the philosopher was still bound. Rightly fearful of what their colleague had become, the Gray Sages were still curious as to how events would unfold—such an event had never been recorded, and this was a chance to study history in the making.

Alas, the new temple fell to orc raiders decades ago and the occupants slain or dragged off into slavery. Having told no one outside their inner circle of the philosopher's existence, all knowledge of the entity was lost when the second temple fell. Yet details were duly recorded, kept locked away in a secret chamber in the new center of worship.

Meanwhile, the cogitating priest's logical thought and reason drifted into insanity as the years drifted by. Driven to utter despair by his failure to find the solution, the priest's spirit transformed into something new—a soul-bound philosopher, a spirit trapped in the mortal realm by his eternal quest.

The years continued to tick by, unnoticed by the philosopher, who remained sealed within the ancient temple. A month ago, two adventurers located the warded entrance and, their minds filled with images of lost treasures beyond measure, breeched the barricade. Although the soulbound philosopher was no longer capable of motion, his insane thoughts had become semi-corporeal and independently willed. The treasure-seekers died and the philosopher's madness was unleashed into the world.

At sporadic intervals, the philosopher let's loose an insane howl, which carries on the wind and tears at the sanity of all who hear it. Not many miles away from the temple lies a small, inconsequential hamlet. Affected by the howling wind, most of the inhabitants are now completely mad.

CRAZY PEOPLE

The heroes begin in a small temple of Eira. Why they are present should be determined by the GM, his ongoing campaign, and the players. As examples, they may be recovering from injuries taken in a previous adventure, purchasing herbal remedies or alchemical devices, or visiting a sick relative.

As written, the adventure assumes they have been injured and have sought medical aid. Because of the golden hour, the characters are seeking aid in natural healing rather than spells. The introductory scene should be altered as necessary to fit your campaign.

Merciful Daughter Agatha, the priestess who has tended your wounds, nods satisfactorily as she removes the last of your bandages. "You have healed well," she smiles. "Eira has truly been benevolent."

Before she can continue, loud shouts and screams

can be heard from outside the infirmary. Agatha excuses herself and rushes to investigate. As the door opens you catch sight of two Peacekeepers wrestling a man to the ground. The door swings shut. Moments later the sounds fade away. A few minutes later Agatha returns with a worried look on her face.

"I apologize for the disturbance," she says, glancing back at the door nervously. "We have had a recent spate of patients come to us with...well, problems of the mind, shall we say." She finishes checking your scars. "Yes, you may be discharged." Agatha pauses, looking at you thoughtfully.

"Would you be willing to undertake a small investigation for us? In return for your services for a short while we will waive the costs of your healing and the herbal remedies we have used. I'm sure the temple will also be willing to lower the fees for any future healings, as an added incentive."

The characters' current bill should be calculated using the notes in the adventure's appendix. Agatha also offers 1,000 gold sciends worth of free future medical expenses at any temple to Eira. She does this by providing the party with a letter. When presented at a temple of Eira, any medical expenses incurred by the party (or alchemical devices or herbal remedies purchased) are deducted from the current total. The letter is stamped and signed by the senior priestess. Haggling can increase the amount to a maximum of 2,000 gs. Under no circumstances will hard cash be offered as a reward.

AGATHA'S TALE

Whether the party accepts, or perhaps just wishes to know more before agreeing, is left to the characters. Assuming they are at least curious, Agatha tells the party what she knows.

"For the last few weeks strangers have been found wandering aimlessly in the countryside. All have suffered madness, though to date none seem to display the exact same symptoms. Our magic has not revealed the cause, nor has it provided a cure. Whatever has afflicted these poor souls is neither spell nor curse.

"Those suffering hallucinations seem the worst afflicted. They must be seeing such terrible things. With no medicine to help we have had to enter their world and convince them their visions cannot harm them. We cannot cure their ills by magic, but the powers of words should never be underestimated.

"From what we can deduce from their ramblings, all of them come from a village two days to the

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west. Our Peacekeepers would normally be sent to investigate, but most are out on quests. Those few we have must remain here to safeguard the temple. Thus, we turn to you to help us cure these addled citizens."

The party is granted permission to see the insane patients if they desire, but nothing of use can be gained from them. Their symptoms are varied—some show signs of obsessive-compulsive disorder, others of mania or hallucinations, while two have sudden and violent fits of hysterical laughter.

If the characters agree to investigate, Agatha provides simple directions to the village. The temple doesn't supply any provisions or other equipment—it isn't a charity. Medical supplies are available for purchase, though the heroes must pay in advance unless they are particularly famous (Glory 40+). Those with the appropriate Glory can purchase supplies against their reward money rather than parting with hard cash up front.

A SHORT WALK

Three encounters occur during the two day trip to the village. Unless the GM has something specific in mind, such as a blizzard, the weather is assumed overcast with light precipitation appropriate for the season.

CALL OF THE WILD

Squatting on their haunches around a fresh deer carcass is a number of naked men and women.

Their hair is unkempt, their bodies unwashed, and their eyes filled with a bestial wildness. One raises his head and sniffs the air. Slowly, his head turns toward you. With a feral snarl he leaps to his feet and charges, his companions close behind.

The men and woman are former villagers now afflicted with lycanthropy. They aren't werewolves in the traditional gaming sense (there are no werereatures in Rassilon)—they are normal humans who *believe* they are wolves. They have formed a pack, led by an alpha male, and have survived by eating whatever meat they can scavenge from carnivores' kills.

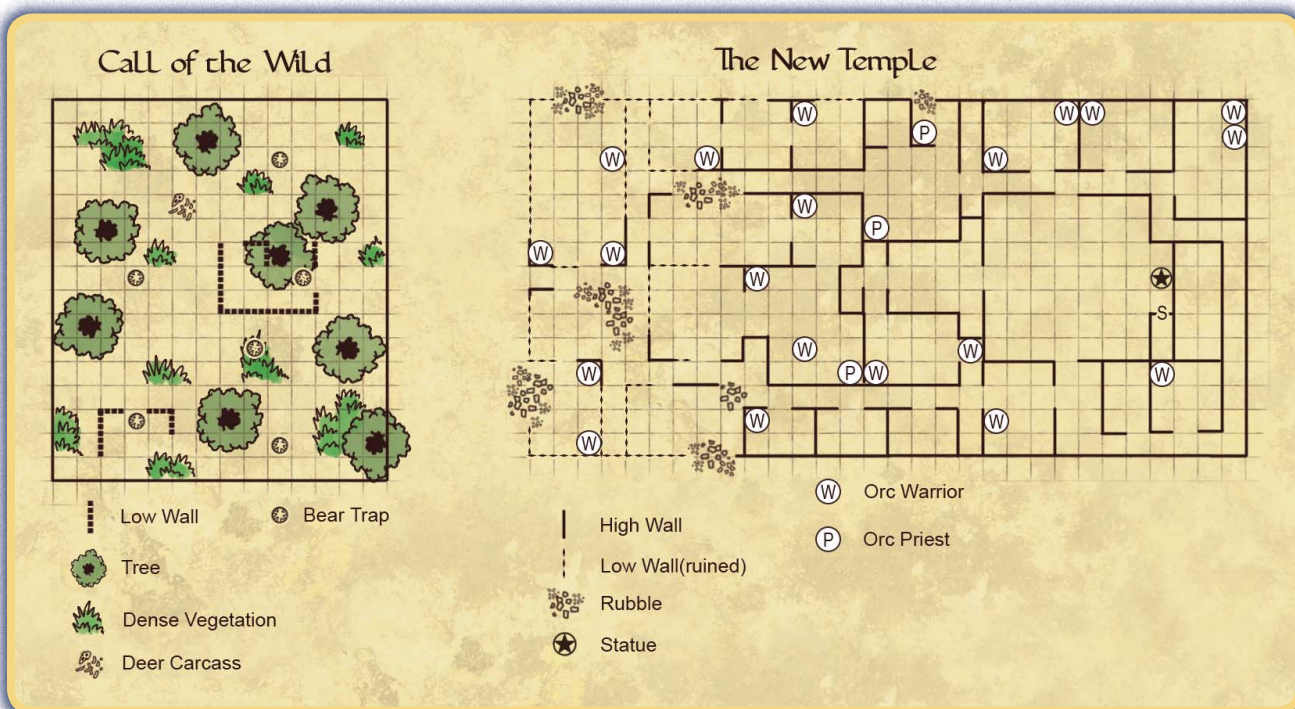
Terrain: Areas of dense vegetation are difficult ground. Tress can be used as Cover and provide +8 Armor. They are impassable terrain and block line of sight. The walls are only 3 feet high. Walls provide Cover (Armor +6), but only block line of sight to and from prone characters.

Monsters: The lunatics are completely lost in their bestial fantasy. No amount of reasoning can halt their attack or convince them they are not wolves. None of them speak, though they do snarl and howl during the encounter. Although they think themselves beasts, they are not subject to spells such as *beast friend*. Magic designed to affect the mind of sentient beings, like *puppet*, works against them as normal.

Initially the number of lunatics equals two per hero. All begin within 2" of the deer carcass. At the start of the third round, another one lunatic per hero emerges from the woods. They enter play on the eastern edge of the map.

❶ **Violent Lunatics (3 per hero):** See page 16.

Traps: The area is dotted with bear traps concealed



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here and there by hunters from the village before the madness afflicted them. Any hero about to step on a bear trap is allowed a Notice roll (–2 if running and –2 if the trap is in an area of dense vegetation) as a free action. With success, the character spots the traps. He can either move through the square as difficult ground or step around it. On a failure, the trap snaps shut around the victim's leg. He suffers 2d6 damage (only leg armor protects) and cannot move until he frees himself. Escaping the trap requires a Strength roll at –4 as an action.

Tactics: The lunatics may think they are wolves, but they don't act like them in combat. Instead of fighting as a pack they simply charge the nearest enemy and begin punching, scratching, and biting. Gang Up bonuses apply as normal, but the lunatics don't deliberately seek to use these tactics.

NOTHING TO SEE HERE

This encounter occurs during the afternoon of the second day. According to Agatha's directions, the village lies only a few miles ahead.

The peace and tranquility of your march was suddenly broken a few minutes ago by cries for help. Ahead, you spy a large man in peasant garb swinging a long-bafted axe. "Help me!" the man cries as you approach. "In the name of the gods help me drive these fiends back!" Strangely, the man is completely alone.

Heroes who cast *detect arcana* discern no invisible monsters, but they do pick up a faint aura around the villager. Similarly, no impressions can be spotted in the mud. This by itself is not proof there aren't any invisible monsters, of course, but it may give the party pause for thought.

In fact, there are *no* invisible monsters—the peasant is a victim of the soulbound philosopher's madness. In his mind's eye, he sees himself beset by invisible foes. *Insight* reveals the man is insane, but it also reveals he utterly believes he is facing down fearsome beasts in mortal combat. Casting *mind rider* allows the caster to "see" the monsters. The beasts take no particular form, changing wildly between orcs, ogres, giants, and dragons at random (the villager has seen none of these, and so his imagination is running wild).

Hacking and slaying at the imaginary creatures does not "slay" them in the madman's eyes. He must be convinced his foes are slain. Hence, a hero must go through the motions of combat or spellcasting (he doesn't actually have to cast), but instead of an attack roll, he rolls Persuasion opposed by the madman's Spirit d6. Each success and raise convinces him one of his opponents is dead. There are four "monsters" in total.

Another option is to use *dispel* or *negate arcana* on the villager. Either spell requires the hero to overcome the soulbound philosopher's Spirit (d12+1 plus Wild Die). With *dispel*, the villager does not become sane—he

does, however, believe his current foes are slain by a powerful spell. For *negate arcana*, the madman sees it only as a ward—to him, the invisible monsters have only been repelled, and lurk outside the spell's area of effect. For higher Ranked parties, using *puppet* to convince him the monsters are gone is a workable solution. This is resisted by his Spirit d6.

If the heroes stand back and watch the scene unfold, perhaps because they're not sure what to do, the madman falls to the ground clutching his chest a few minutes later. A successful Healing roll indicates no physical injuries. Rather, the man is in a state of catatonic shock. *Healing* is of no use in this instance, as it affects only the body, not the mind. As far as his mind is concerned, the villager took a mortal wound and is now dying. He will not recover from his state naturally and thus will die of thirst.

Alternately, the heroes can appeal to the man's subconscious, telling what little remains of his sanity that they are curing him. Again, no spell need be cast, but a Persuasion roll at –2 is required. Good roleplaying, such as describing how they are treating his injury, is worth a +2 bonus. This can be made as a Cooperative roll, but cannot be attempted by each hero in turn, nor can a retry be made.

If the villager is "saved" from the monsters or "cured" of his wound, he thanks the heroes and invites them back to his village, where he intends to reward them for their bravery (alas the reward is not the gold idol the man insists, but an ordinary turnip). Should the party fail to save or revive him, the group has little option but to carry on up the road. Whether they take the man with them or not is up to the adventurers.

AN AIR OF INSANITY

As the scene ends, the wind suddenly picks up. Carried upon it is a faint but discernible laugh. It isn't the laugh of a sane person, but rather someone whose mind has completely lost touch with reality.

Each character must make a Spirit roll opposed by a d8 (the heroes are far from the source and so the potency is lessened). Heroes with the Minor Hard of Hearing Hindrance roll at +2. Completely deaf characters are immune. Anyone inside an already active *negate arcana* spell needn't make a roll unless the area is breached (roll a d8 against the caster's arcane skill die to see if the magical effect is thwarted).

With success, the hero suffers a mild headache but is otherwise unaffected. Failure causes the character to go slightly mad. For the next hour, he is under the influence of a *confusion* spell (if the Spirit roll was a raise above the character's, then the effect is as if the spell was invoked with a raise). Victims also develop some side effect, such as uncontrollable drooling, hysterical laughter at inopportune moments, or a fascination with certain objects. These should be roleplayed, but they do not affect combat.

A critical failure causes the *confusion* to last for the

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WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

The insane laughter is heard once more before the characters start exploring the detailed locations. As they approach the first temple to Hoenir, the philosopher lets out another deranged howl. This time the wind's Spirit die is d10 (the characters are closer to the source).

During any combat in the first temple, the philosopher laughs when the deuce of Clubs is drawn as a character's used action card (as opposed to one of the extra cards from Level Headed or those rejected by Quick). Its Spirit die is a d12 on the upper level and d10 on the lower level.

Throughout the final part of the adventure, the exploration of the philosopher's lair, the laughter occurs as above but its Spirit die is d12+1. Note that if the philosopher laughs during the face-to-face encounter with him, it counts as a free action.

next eight hours *and* the hero loses a die in Spirit (to a minimum of d4) until the effect ends. True insanity, such as that exhibited by the villagers, occurs only after more constant exposure.

Ear Plugs: Stuffing one's ear with wax or cloth provides protection from the magical effect of the winds, but it also means the party *cannot* communicate silently. The only way they can hear one another is by shouting. To that effect, any conversations between heroes with ear plugs are deemed to be shouted, which have repercussions later. Similarly, any use of Leadership Edges requires loud voices.

THE VILLAGE OF FOOLS

A few miles up the road lies the small hamlet of Wychburgh. It comprises just two dozen houses and a large community hall—there are no temples, craftsmen, or shops. Every citizen is stark raving mad. Depending on the tone of your campaign, the locals may be harmless kooks or deranged lunatics.

For instance, if you elect to go the kook route then a villager may be trying to catch the sun's reflection in a puddle in a cup, running about flapping his arms pretending he is flying, digging "half a hole," dribbling, eating mud (believing it's a fine meal) or selling mud cakes, trying to wrestle his own shadow, and so on. A darker game might involve self-mutilation, people leaping from tall trees in a bid to fly, citizens rocking back and forth while screaming uncontrollably, and the like. Whatever happens, *no* citizen attacks the party.

The only sane person is a Sister of Mercy, an itinerant healer who happened to stumble across the hamlet after the madness began. She deduced the cause, but not the source, after having heard, and resisted, the insane laughter on the wind. When the characters enter the hamlet, she is trying to attend to the citizens, ensuring

they don't hurt themselves and making sure they ingest real food and drink.

THE SISTER OF MERCY

She doesn't hear the characters approaching, nor any calls of greeting—her ears are stuffed with beeswax plugs. For this reason, she speaks slowly and loudly whenever answering a question. The characters might assume she's also mad. Once communication is established, the heroes may pose questions to her. Possible lines of enquiry and the woman's answers are given below.

Q: Who are you?

A: *"I am Sister Guthwyne, a Sister of Mercy. Who are you?"*

Q: What are you doing here? (or What is happening here?)

A: *"I am tending to these people's basic needs. I arrived only yesterday. I was heading north and hoped to stay here for the night. When I entered the village everyone was acting strangely. I think they've gone mad, every last one of them."*

Q: Do you need any help?

A: *"I think these poor souls are beyond our help. I shall make them as comfortable as possible and apply herbs in a bid to quell their madness. None of them appear violent, so I don't require any bodyguards, thank you."*

Q: Are you hard of hearing?

A: *"No. I have beeswax in my ears." She points to her ears for added emphasis.*

Q: Why are your ears blocked? (or Do you know the cause?)

A: *"There's something on the wind. I heard it yesterday, a faint, insane laughter. I felt something tugging at my sanity, but I managed to resist it long enough to block my ears. I think it's got something to do with what is happening here, but I'm not entirely sure. The villagers certainly reacted badly to it."*

Q: What do you know about the local area?

A: *"Not much, I'm afraid. There's an old temple a day's journey to the east, but it has been abandoned for years. I saw it as I crossed the hills. Everything else around here is just fields and hills."* (This is not the temple inhabited by the soulbound philosopher, but a later one built after the original temple was sealed.)

The heroes have only one clue to go on—the temple to Hoenir. If they're interested in stopping the madness, that's their next goal. Sister Guthwyne won't accompany the characters—it's her sworn duty to stay in Wychwood and tend to the deranged villagers.

THE NEW TEMPLE

Constructed after the abandonment of the former temple, the structure stood for just a few decades before it fell to orc raiders. The inhabitants were slain, the gold

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and silver treasures stolen and dispersed, and the furnishings and precious books used as firewood.

Much of the temple has been systematically reduced to rubble over the years. Weathering and lack of maintenance have played their part, but the hand of man also contributed. Each time raiders are driven out sections of the temple have been destroyed, partly during the assault and partly to prevent the raiders making use of the building in the future. Then a new group comes along, sets up camp, and makes basic repairs so that the structure is defensible. The only truly intact section is the main temple, which the locals have refused to tear down for fear of offending Hoenir.

The current orc occupiers are just one of many orc and goblin bands that have used the ruins as a base of operations over the years. Unfortunately for them, they set up home shortly after the warding on the original temple was breached and are now suffering the effects of madness. Already savage and bloodthirsty, the insanity has affected the orcs differently to the humans.

Rather than displaying compulsive, obsessive, or hallucinatory tendencies, the orcs have been struck by erratic behavior. Though it has limited their tactical combat abilities, it has made them extremely unpredictable—where once they might have fled a heavily armed party or used Wild Attacks to bring down larger foes, they are now just as likely to try a Disarm attack against a hero holding no weapons or to use Defend when no one is actually trying to strike them.

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

Given there are no furnishings, traps, or other items of interest in much of the temple, only two rooms have descriptions. The rest of the ruins are devoid of anything

of value or interest, though the GM may choose to roll on the following table each time a new chamber is entered.

d10	Result
1	The orcs have piled about one face cord worth of firewood hewn from nearby trees.
2	Scorched paving slabs, cold ashes, and small animal bones.
3	Cracked tiles marked with Hoenir's holy symbol. These were part of an ornamental design.
4	A defaced and badly weathered mural of Hoenir.
5	Someone has carved a very graphic message in Saxa about what will happen to any orcs found in the temple.
6	An aged human skeleton. Many of the smaller bones are missing. The skull has been cleaved by an axe.
7	Unsanitary at the best of times, the orcs have used this chamber as a latrine.
8	Dark stains (ancient bloodstains) mark the walls and floor.
9	Soiled furs (the orc's bedding).
10	Mysterious scratches on the floor and walls.

COMMON FEATURES & MONSTERS

Lighting: Only the inner temple (Area 1) and the secret chamber (Area 2) have roofs. These areas had tiled roofs, while the outer areas were thatch. Lighting conditions elsewhere in the structure depend on the ambient conditions when the characters choose to investigate. Should they elect for a nocturnal investigation, lighting is considered Dark (–2).

Monsters: The only creatures inhabiting the ruins are orcs and their pet dire wolves. Orc priests are indicated

INSANE TACTICS

The orcs are mad and do not fight with sound tactics. Rather, their tactics are dependent on action card suits. Multiple columns are used to allow for greater variety.

Cross reference the orcs' card (down) against the suit of the first player card drawn (across). Don't draw attention to the player's suit—just glance at it and move on. If either card is a Joker, the orcs have a moment of lucidity and act as the GM determines is best for their current situation. If the players don't reveal their cards until their turn at your table, the GM should draw a second card for the orcs, using only its suit.

For added chaos, the GM could split larger groups so each has a unique action card. This will only add slightly to the time it takes to run the combat encounter, and it makes the orcs' attacks seem even less coordinated and predictable.

	Club	Diamond	Heart	Spade
Club	Bite attack	Wild Attack*	Called Shot (head)	Grapple
Diamond	Called Shot (limb)*	Grapple	Intimidation**	Agility Trick*
Heart	Smarts Trick	Called Shot (bypass armor)	Bite attack	Strength Trick***
Spade	Wild Attack	Disarm	Defend	Run away

* Spellcasters instead use a randomly determined spell. Similarly, the chieftain uses an alchemical device when this result occurs. If no alchemical devices are left, the standard result is applied.

** This is a Test of Wills.

*** With a raise, the victim is shoved back 1" in the orc's choice of direction instead of being Shaken. This does not count as Withdrawing from Combat.

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by a **P** on the map and warriors with a **W**. There is only one chieftain, who is found in the temple. Dire wolves are marked with a **D**.

📌 **Orc Priests:** See page 17.

📌 **Orc Warriors:** See page 17.

📌 **Dire Wolves:** See page 17.

Reinforcements: Due to the insane laughter carrying on the wind, other orcs have fled the surrounding countryside. Hence, the temple occupants have no hope of reinforcement. This allows the party to make successive raids over a period of time, if required, without having to worry about heading back into a nest of never-ending waves of orcs.

Tactics: The orcs are crazed, but not stupid. Sounds travel, especially explosions caused by fiery *blasts* and the like. Parties who make excessive noise attract orcs from nearby rooms to their position. As a rough guideline, normal speech carries to all neighboring areas, regular combat (the clash of steel) can be heard two rooms distant, and very loud noises carry up to three areas away.

Ceilings, Walls, & Rubble: The ceiling in the main temple is 18 feet high. Any broken walls or areas of rubble count as difficult ground. Broken walls stand 3 feet high. Unless otherwise indicated, all remaining walls stand 12 feet high and block line of sight.

1) TEMPLE TO HOENIR

Standing in a deep recess at the rear of the roofed chamber is a life-sized statue. The head is missing along with the left arm, and much of what remains is chipped and scratched. Vile orc symbols are carved deep into the torso. The walls, though aged and defaced, clearly depict scenes of temple life. The floor is covered in dark stains, though through the filth a large pattern resembling an open book with blank pages can still be discerned. Flickering torch light illuminates a number of bulking, brutish forms.

When the temple was in use for its intended purpose this room served as the main worship hall. A center of learning as well as a place of worship, the walls of the temple were once lined with wooden shelves holding important books. Successive waves of raiders have destroyed these valuable resources and stripped the room bare. All that remains now are the faded wall paintings and the broken statue. The dark stains are sites of old fires, fuelled by books and shelves looted from the temple.

Terrain: Burning torches provide good lighting.

Monsters: An orc chieftain and his bodyguards have made the former temple their lair. The chieftain is seated (treat him as being prone for the purposes of standing) in front of the statue, while the warriors are spread around the room.

📌 **Orc Chieftain:** See page 17.

📌 **Orc Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 17.

Treasure: The chieftain has four alchemical devices, as detailed in his stat block. Due to his insanity, he does not use them in a coordinated, or even efficient, manner.

Statue: Carved on the base of the statue in Classical Anari are the words, “Knowledge gives strength to the arm.” Inspection of the statue reveals the remaining arm is not fixed, but hinges at the shoulder. No amount of physical effort can move the arm, though.

Murals: Though faded, cracked, defaced, and covered in grime, the murals reveal scenes of temple life. A careful investigation reveals a dozen images of open books. Some have blank pages, while others contain wiggly lines indicating writing. All of them can be depressed. Pressing all those with “writing” on them and no others results in an audible click. The statue’s arm can now be extended with minimal force. Moving the arm so it is parallel to the floor causes the secret door to swing open.

2) SECRET CHAMBER

The dust of ages lies heavily in this small chamber. Within stands a small wooden table and a single chair. The chair is occupied by a figure in tattered gray robes, its body slumped across the table. Near to its withered left hand is a pool of hard wax, while the other tightly clutches a small gourd. The figure’s head rests on a heavy tome.

The desiccated corpse is that of a former Gray Sage. When the orcs raided the temple he sought sanctuary within the chamber. Knowing death could come by the sword or thirst, he prayed to Hoenir and sat at the desk, determined to devote what little remained of his life to completing the record of the soulbound philosopher. Though half-crazed with thirst after two days, he did not leave his post, for in doing so he knew the orcs would destroy the contents of the chamber, and all knowledge of the philosopher would be lost forever. The corpse is completely harmless, though the party may suspect it is undead.

The wax is the remnant of a burned out candle. The gourd is empty. Any hero examining it can tell it once held a pint of liquid, though no trace of the contents remains. Use of *insight* reveals it once contained beer.

Treasure: The visible tome is a book on riddles, entitled, *The Fool’s Road to Knowledge*. Written in old Saxa, it is a book of lore, granting +2 to Knowledge (Riddles) rolls. Kept bound (and not laid on by a corpse), the pages are slightly soiled around the edges but otherwise fresh.

Concealed beneath the corpse is a second book—a leather-bound tome laid open. The pages are brittle and dry, and crumble to dust if turned. A Common Knowledge roll made while visually inspecting the book reveals the extreme fragility. Fortunately, all the information the heroes need know is on the open pages. Give the group

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Handout #1 if any of them speak Classical Anari or use a *speak language* spell.

A Notice roll at -2 made while searching the corpse reveals a small incision on the tip of the left index finger. Any hero specifically checking the fingers finds the wound automatically.

Searching the corpse's robes reveals two balls of flaky plant matter. After an hour of study and experimentation a character can make a Knowledge (Alchemy) roll. Success reveals them to be a hydrating herbal remedy. The priest didn't take them because his dream vision told him his life was about to end. They are useless for their intended purpose, having been manufactured long ago.

The dead priest also sports a silver holy symbol (100 gs), a gold ring (25 gs), and a small, silver inkwell (50 gs) engraved with the Anari letters "B" and "A." The inkwell is a relic. When ink placed inside is mixed with a drop of blood and used to write a message, the words turn completely invisible. They reappear when the paper is wafted over a source of heat, such as a candle.

If a hero thinks to bring a lantern very close to the open book (so close that you'd only do it if you knew you were looking for something hidden), six words, written in large letters, appear at the end of the manuscript—"Sound arguments shall be his undoing!"

THE PHILOSOPHER'S LAIR

Constructed in the decades after the Blizzard War, the original temple of Hoenir was a subterranean affair, built to conceal it, and its contents, from raiders. All that stood on the surface was a simple, square building. Erected on the highest of seven hills, it resembled nothing more than a hunter's cabin. That structure is long gone. The clerics tore it down, and the stone was subsequently looted by villagers to construct their houses. Nature reclaimed the land, and, for long years, the entrance to the vaults lay obscured beneath soil and grass.

Two adventurers stumbled across an ancient tome in which the temple's location was revealed. Initial investigations of the hilltop revealed nothing. Rather than putting the tomb robbers off, it only reinforced their hope that treasure lay buried somewhere nearby. After weeks of fruitless searching, they finally struck solid rock.

Clearing away the soil, they uncovered a stone trapdoor engraved with the holy symbol of Hoenir. Without hesitation (or further research) they ventured inside, only to meet their deaths. In breaking the seal, they unleashed the madness of the soulbound philosopher into the world.

Read the following text to the characters when they arrive atop the hill indicated in the manuscript.

If there was a temple here, its stones have long since been removed. As you climb the steep incline you spy numerous pits, each several feet deep. Finally, near the summit, you spy one that is deeper

than the rest. A cursory inspection reveals a stone slab has been pulled aside to reveal a metal ladder descending into the darkness.

COMMON FEATURES

Empty Rooms: Rooms which contain no encounters or traps are not described in the text. Each has a tiled floor and stone walls.

Ceilings: The ceilings are a uniform 12 feet high at their highest point and are curved.

Doors: The doors that remain (many were taken when the clerics departed) are of reinforced wood. Locked doors have had the locking mechanism broken, forcing intruders to batter them down (Toughness 12).

Lighting: There are no sources of illumination within the temple except those the party brings with them. All areas are in Pitch Darkness (-4).

TRAPS

The Gray Sages left a number of traps to keep intruders out. All the generic rules you need to use the traps presented are explained here. Specific rules for each trap are presented in the text for the trap's location. Rules for randomly creating traps are presented in the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

Detecting: Detecting a trap requires a Notice roll. Unless a character has Danger Sense, searching for traps requires an action. A running hero rolls at -2. A single roll is made in a round, regardless of how far the hero moves. With success, he detects the first trap adjacent to him. A raise locates a second trap within line of sight, if such exists. The hero may halt his movement if he spots a trap (advisable if it's right in front of him).

Disarming: Disarming a detected trap requires a Lockpicking roll and takes a complete round (no other actions are possible, including movement). On a critical failure, the trap activates and automatically affects the unfortunate hero. *Glyph* traps cannot be disarmed by mundane means, but they can be *dispelled* or *negated*.

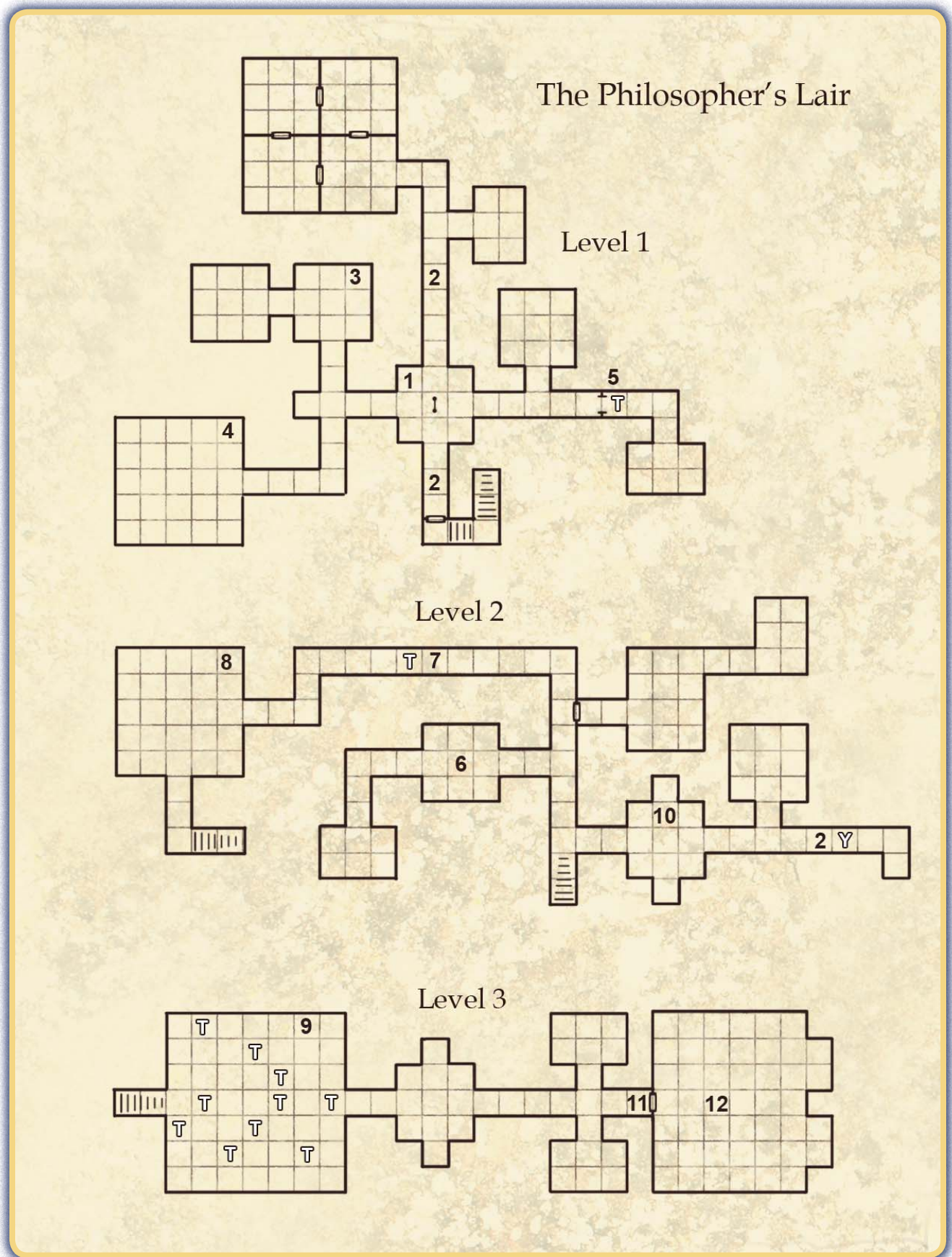
Initiative: Most traps activate with little warning. Outside of combat use the rules for Surprise. In combat, traps roll to interrupt. Traps have Agility d10 for the purposes of interrupting. A trap also has the Drop where applicable. Notice to avoid Surprise and Agility rolls to avoid interruption use the same modifier as for Detecting traps (see above).

Duration: Traps are one-shot devices. Once activated, they must be reset in order to work again.

Format: Traps are presented in the following format: Detect: +X; Disarm: +X; Avoid: +X; Fighting, Shooting, or Arcane; Range: x/y/z; Damage: xdy; any specific notes.

+X indicates a modifier to the appropriate roll. It may be positive, negative, or zero. The Avoid modifier applies to the Notice roll to avoid Surprise, or Agility

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roll to avoid interruption. In all cases, a negative modifier is bad for the hero.

Fighting, Shooting, or Arcane is specified as a die type, just like for monsters. Not every spell has this entry, and some have it only for the purposes of dispel or negate arcana.

Range is measured in inches, just like regular weapons. Not every spell has this entry.

WANDERING MONSTERS & RANDOM SOUNDS

Aside from those in its presence, the soulbound philosopher has created ten more manifested thoughts (see page 15). These roam the temple aimlessly in pairs, drifting as their whims take them. As such, they have no fixed locations. Another feature of the cleric's state of mind are the random sounds, audible echoes dragged up from the recesses of the philosopher's twisted mind.

Whenever the party enters a room (except for the Philosopher's Lair), draw a card from the action deck. If it's black, then there are manifested thoughts present. Otherwise, a random sound is heard.

WANDERING THOUGHTS

On a card with a numerical value, the party encounters a single pair of manifested thoughts. A face card means they must face two pairs. If the card is a Club, the creatures are already present in the chamber. A Spade means they emerge through the walls sometime between the party entering and leaving. Check for Surprise as the shadowy forms emerge.

There are a total of 12 wandering manifested thoughts loose in the temple. Once they have been slain, no further "wandering monsters" occur. As noted under the dream evil's bestiary entry (page 15), encountering these visions may cause the soulbound philosopher to dispatch more of his vile thoughts.

📊 **Manifested Thoughts (12 total):** See page 15.

THE SOUND OF MADNESS

Compare the value and suit of the card to the tables below. Sounds need not be heard the instant the party enters a room. If you do this too often, they'll quickly guess the noises are illusionary and cease paying them any attention. Perhaps one time the sounds are heard as they exit further down a corridor rather than inside the room, another time the noise occurs as they enter or just before they approach a distant chamber. You could also have just one hero (the one with the lowest Spirit is a good choice) detect the disturbance. If he alerts his comrades, they hear nothing unusual.

Value Sound

Deuce Total and utter silence. Aside from noises the heroes make, such as breathing or rattling armor, there is absolute silence. There aren't even any echoes.

3	Someone calling out. It could be a voice screaming for help, shouting a warning, or perhaps calling a hero by name. The voice could be that of a stranger, or someone the heroes know.
4	Childish giggling.
5	The scurrying and squeaking of rats, lots and lots of rats.
6	A door slamming.
7	A droning chant.
8	Metal scraping on stone (like someone running a sword along a wall).
9	Sounds of battle.
10	Footsteps.
Jack	Shouted threats.
Queen	Something heavy being dragged across the floor.
King	Heavy, labored breathing.
Ace	A repetitive whisper, saying "Tell me the answer!" in a threatening tone.
Joker	Insane laughter. The heroes have to roll to avoid going temporarily mad.

Suit: The suit determines from which direction the sound appears to emanate. The GM should alter the result according to the location in which the sound is heard. For instance, in a room with just a single point of entry, any direction other than "somewhere behind the party" will be a little odd.

Club: Somewhere ahead of the party and close by.

Diamond: Somewhere ahead of the party but distant.

Heart: Somewhere behind the party and close by.

Spade: Somewhere behind the party but distant.

ROOM KEY

1) ENTRANCE

The ladder ends after 50 feet. You stand in a small, bare chamber. Scratched onto the floor are two sets of writing, each in a different hand.

The first message is in Classical Anari. It reads, "*Death awaits those who would enter this sacred site unbidden.*" The second message is written in Engro and is much shorter. It simply says, "*Says who?*"

Ever the providers of knowledge, the Gray Sages debated long and hard about whether to warn intruders of the perils that lay ahead. In the end religious doctrine won out—the clerics knew about the traps, and thus they had knowledge. Concealing that knowledge would, they agreed, be a major sin. Of course, they were under no compulsion to reveal every tiny detail.

2) A SLICE OF THE ACTION

The spot marked "T" is a trap. A thin slit in the wall,

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designed to resemble a missing length of mortar between layers of stones, contains a spring-loaded blade.

Scything Blade Trap: Detect: +1; Disarm: -1; Avoid: +1; Fighting d10; Damage: 2d8; a long blade slices through the air at torso height on an average human (head height on a smaller hero). Any weight over 50 pounds activates the trap through a pressure plate mechanism.

This trap is not a one-shot device. When activated, the blade slices through the air (and any intervening flesh and bones) and disappears back into the wall. A hidden catch locks the blade in position, ready to release it again when the pressure plate is triggered.

3) SEEPAGE & SEWERAGE

Water has seeped through cracks in the roof and formed a small pool in one corner of the room. The opposite corner has been used as a latrine by someone or something. Mingled among the mess are chunks of rabbit, complete with fur.

The water is actually fresh, though the party is likely to avoid risking disease by imbibing it. Inspecting the rabbit carcasses reveals evidence of something having chewed them, fur and all. A Survival roll indicates the carcasses are only a few days old.

Terrain: Any hero entering the area of bodily waste risk slipping. If he runs and rolls a 1 on his running die, he slips and falls prone. The filth doesn't harbor any virulent diseases, but the stench lowers his Charisma by 1 until he bathes in at least a gallon of water.

Monsters: A small group of lunatics, drawn to the temple by the philosopher's mad laughter, has set up home in the neighboring room. They use this chamber for drinking and as a toilet.

(M) Violent Lunatics (2 per hero): See page 16, but armed with crude clubs (Str+d4). Each has the Berserk Edge, which activates when they are Shaken.

Tactics: Although not cursed with lycanthropy, these lunatics are homicidal toward outsiders. Any noise in this room alerts the maniacs, who immediately rush in to attack. Their efforts are not coordinated—each targets the nearest intruder, so any Gang Up bonuses are incidental rather than orchestrated.

4) THE WRONG ANSWER

Towering shelves stacked with books all bound in midnight-blue leather line the walls of the chamber. A figure cloaked in heavy gray robes with a deep cowl pulls a book from a shelf and carries it to a small table. It drops the book with a loud thump. The title can be clearly seen—"This is not truth." The robed creature then moves back to the shelves to pick another volume.

This is an illusion, a dream evil (see page 15). The imagery is a metaphor for the soulbound philosopher's failure to find the solution to the conundrum. The books represent its various lines of reasoning down through the ages.

If the heroes watch and wait, the cloaked figure takes another book from the shelf. It too bears an inscription, "Not Falsehood." The process is repeated over and over for ten minutes, before starting again with the first book. Although no written record of the conundrum survives, watching the dream evil at work provides the party with a clue as to its quest—the search for the meaning of truth.

If interrupted in any way (including picking a book from the shelf), the dream evil responds as indicated in its notes. As it vanishes, so do the shelves and books. All that remains is a bare chamber.

M Dream Evil: See page 15.

5) ROAD TO NOWHERE

A stone archway marks the entrance to a small, barren chamber. The first true architecture you have seen since entering the temple, it depicts two figures, both slightly larger than real life. One is clad in a cloak, while the other wears armor. The robed figure's left arm extends upward to form one half of the arch, while the armored figure's right arm mirrors it. The keystone is carved to represent an open book, the holy symbol of Hoenir.

While of interest as a curiosity (or a red herring), there is nothing remarkable about the archway. The spot marked "T" on the map, however, is a trap.

Teleport Glyph Trap: Detect: -1; Disarm: *dispel* or *negate arcana*; Avoid: -1; when activated, the victim is teleported instantly to the spot marked "Y." The victim detects nothing unusual. As far as he is concerned he has walked through the arch without effect—it is his comrades who have vanished. The rest of the party see the victim vanish into thin air.

6) FACE OF DEATH

Lying face down in the corridor is a corpse. By its size it is either a young human or an engro. Its left arm is outstretched, pointing to the west. The right arm is tucked beneath its chest.

The corpse is that of one of the tomb robbers. The engro (male) encountered a dream evil and suffered a fatal heart attack. Turning the corpse over reveals its face, permanently twisted into a mask of absolute terror. There is no sign of physical injuries. A successful Healing roll indicates the corpse is a month old, placing its de-

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mise not long before the first villagers began going mad. A raise reveals the engro died of fright.

There is no significance to the corpse pointing west—it's a red herring.

Treasure: All of the adventurer's gear is present. Its mundane equipment includes leather armor, a short sword, a dagger, a short bow, a quiver of 20 arrows, a backpack (empty), four candles, a grappling hook, a lantern, two flasks of oil, a pickaxe, 10' of hemp rope, three empty scroll cases, and a whistle. If the GM has set the adventure in spring or autumn, the figure also wears furs. In winter, it is equipped with winter clothing as well.

It also carries a number of alchemical devices: A thin disc of rose-colored glass, which contains *altered senses* cast with a raise. It is activated by wearing it as a monocle over the right eye. Potions of *bless* and *speed* are worn in leather loops on the corpse's belt. Also hanging from the belt is a yew wand imbued with *detect arcana*. Finally, worn around the neck on a cheap silver chain (1 ss) is a brass key. It contains a single use of *lock*, cast with a raise.

7) THE LONG CORRIDOR

This long corridor would seem quite ordinary were it not for the blackened corpse lying halfway along.

The corpse belongs to one of the two tomb robbers. A human Saxa in life, all that remains now is charred flesh and bones. He fell foul of a *burst glyph*, which set him alight.

Treasure: The corpse's long sword (Str+d8) is blackened but still usable. A metal shield boss and spear point lie near by, the wood having been incinerated. Any perishable goods have been cremated.

Attached around its left wrist is a buckled and partially melted copper bracelet, from which hang two small white pearls—both are alchemical *healing* devices. The first contains *healing* cast with a raise, and the second with a standard success. They must be swallowed for the magic to activate. The pearls pass out of the swallower's system untarnished 1d4 days later. Each is worth 26 gs as a mundane pearl (half that if the seller mentions it passed through his bowels).

The square immediately ahead of the corpse contains a second trap. The Saxa collapsed only a few feet away from it.

Dart Trap: Detect: +0; Disarm: +1; Avoid: +0; Shooting d10; Range: 12/24/48; Damage: 2d6; activating the trap causes a volley of stout darts to fly up the corridor from the far wall. Three darts are fired, all targeting the lead hero.

8) SCRIPTORIUM

Unadorned wooden desks form a neat grid measuring three by four. At eleven of the desks sit gray robed figures, their visages and hands completely bidden in the folds of their garments. Each clasps a quill in its right hand. In perfect unison, they scratch at a sheet of parchment in front of them, then dip their quills into ink pots, and repeat their scratching.

Nothing in this room exists in reality—it is all illusion, part of the philosopher's warped memories. Each scribe is illuminating a single, oversized letter, though painstakingly slowly. Together, the letters form the question, "WHAT IS TRUTH?"

If the heroes manage to view each page being illuminated without triggering the dream evil's transformation, they learn the letters in a random order. Viewing a letter takes one action and requires the characters to be adjacent to the desk. This dream evil has no loop. Rather, the scribes toil ceaselessly unless disturbed.

🕒 **Dream Evil:** See page 15.

9) DARK ROOM

Ahead lies a large chamber, completely clad in darkness. Carved crudely into the floor tile just inside the room is a message (written in Classical Anari)—"In darkness there is light."

The message was inscribed as a reminder to any visiting clerics of Hoenir of what lies ahead, for this room contains a number of deadly traps. Engraved in special dye invisible to the human eye are *bolt glyphs* with a fire trapping. Creatures with Infravision automatically detect the symbols, but only if there is no source of light (such as a lantern) illuminating the chamber. Stepping on a *glyph* activates the spell. The *altered senses* potion found on the corpse in Area 6 is of great use here.

Bolt Glyph Traps: Detect: special; Disarm: *dispel* or *negate arcana* only; Avoid: -2; Arcane 3d8; Range: 1 square; Damage: 2d6 plus chance of catching fire; each trap contains a triple *bolt* spell. Roll to activate and hit as normal (a 6' by 6' area is a large space to cover with just three small fireballs firing upward).

10) THE UNREACHABLE GOAL

A gray robed figure with a deep cowl struggles futilely against the heavy chains which bind its hands and ankles to the wall. Its cloth-covered bands stretch outward toward a lectern which is just out of reach. A large tome bound in pure white leather rests atop the reading stand. Its cover is closed, held fast by a silver clasp in the shape of a question mark. Written on the cover in gold letters is a single word—"Solution."

Just like in Areas 4 and 8, this scene is a phantasm metaphor. In this particular instance, the gray cloaked fig-

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ure is the soulbound philosopher. The book represents the solution the deranged Gray Sage seeks yet can never reach, while the chains are the philosopher's insanity, which now prevents him from completing his quest.

The scene has no beginning or end—it is an eternal struggle. Attempting to interact with the white tome causes the dream evil to manifest its true nature. When the dream evil fades, so do the book and the chains.

📖 **Dream Evil:** See page 15.

11) THE GREAT SEAL

Ahead, the passage is blocked by a massive, stone slab which fits into deep grooves in the walls and floor. To the right of the door is a small niche, in which there is a circular slot. A large holy symbol of Hoentir in bas relief dominates the center of the slab. Written on the "pages" of the symbol are words in Classical Anari.

When the words are translated they present a riddle—"My life can be measured in hours; I serve by being devoured. Thin, I am quick; fat, I am slow. Wind is my foe. What am I?" The answer to the riddle is "a candle."

Let the players try to solve it themselves before you call for die rolls. Because the characters are looking for an answer to a riddle, rather than creating one, they may use Smarts or Knowledge (Riddle) rolls. Most riddles are quite logical to those with the brains to understand the hidden clues.

Speaking the riddle does not cause the door to open. Rather, the answer is a clue. A candle must be inserted into the slot and lit. When it finally burns down (which takes several hours), the flame melts a wax seal hidden within the side of the slot. This in turn activates the lock which opens the doors.

12) THE PHILOSOPHER'S CHAMBER

The room is devoid of any furnishings. Were it not for the size it would resemble the starkest prison cell. Seated on the cold floor, surrounded by piles of books, is a gray-cloaked figure. No flesh is visible beneath the voluminous robes. Swirling, dancing, and flitting around the figure, which remains motionless as you enter, are skulls trailing wisps of black mist. Your presence has an affect on them, however, for they immediately swarm toward you.

The soulbound philosopher retreated to this chamber centuries ago to devote his life to solving the great puzzle. Here he has remained, wrapped in utter darkness, undisturbed and drifting ever deeper into a sea of insanity.

📖 **Terrain:** The slim pillars provide only Light Cover

(-1). Moving through a square containing a pillar is treated as difficult ground.

📖 **Monsters:** The seated figure is the soulbound philosopher. At least, it's his cloak. The flesh of the Gray Sage has long since withered away and even his bones are dust. All that maintains the cloak's shape is his formidable willpower, which holds vague memories of his former self. Swirling about him are a number of smoky wisps—the philosopher's manifested thoughts.

When the soulbound philosopher is finally defeated, his cloak crumples to the floor. A loud laugh of pure exuberance is heard, for in death the creature finally understands the nature of truth. All manifested thoughts and dream evils still active immediately disappear, never to return.

📖 **Soulbound Philosopher:** See page 15.

📖 **Manifested Thoughts (2 per hero):** See page 15.

📖 **Tactics:** The soulbound philosopher is immobile and cannot avoid attacks—not that he needs to worry, as he is immune to all regular forms of attack. He begins by casting *fear* at the largest group of heroes. Since his manifested thoughts are immune, he has no qualms about catching them in the area of effect. On the next round he invokes *puppet* against the nearest hero, forcing his victim to remain motionless and join in pondering the great conundrum. Any hero who tries to use logical arguments against him is targeted first with *confusion*, then *fear*, and finally *puppet*, until one of the spells takes effect.

Of the manifested thoughts, two remain beside the soulbound philosopher at all times. Should one be destroyed, the former priest uses his Create Thoughts ability to summon more.

The other manifested thoughts attack the heroes, seeking to protect the philosopher from harm by forming a barrier between the heroes and their creator.

📖 **Treasure:** The piles of books surrounding the philosopher contain two tomes of lore. The largest, entitled, *Puzzles of the Mind*, details Knowledge (Riddles) and has a +4 bonus (making it quite rare). The second is slimmer, and is a book on the laws of various realms. It provides a +2 bonus, but can be used with any Knowledge (Law) roll.

The other volumes are concerned with politics, warfare, history, various judgments made by nobles and other rules, morality, and philosophy. There are 30 texts, each weighing a pound. To the Gray Sages or Lorekeepers they are worth 100 gs per book. Other collectors offer only one-quarter that (as selling gear).

AFTERMATH

Slaying the soulbound philosopher ends the insane laughter threatening the surrounding countryside. Most of the lunatics recover from their affliction within the month, though an unfortunate few remain permanently mad. The temple of Eira duly pays the party on comple-

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tion of the quest, handing over a letter of credit for whatever value was agreed.

If the party speaks of their adventure (it's the only way to gain Glory, so it's very likely), they are approached a few months later by a priest of Hoenir. The Gray Sage questions the heroes extensively about the soulbound philosopher, though he does not use that exact term. Although the philosopher was dangerous, the Gray Sage is duty bound to record as much as possible for posterity and so others may learn from the philosopher's hubris.

BESTIARY



SOULBOUND PHILOSOPHER

The soulbound philosopher has no physical form. Beneath its drab gray cloak exists nothing tangible. All that remains of the former priest is its will and its desire to solve the conundrum. The creature cannot or will not move, nor will it physically defend itself from attack. Its only defenses are its manifested thoughts (see below) and its magical abilities. A creation of the philosopher's warped thoughts; these spells are not subject to the Si-phoning. Note that if a hero removes the philosopher's cloak there is absolutely nothing beneath it.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d12+1, Strength —, Vigor —

Skills: Notice d10, Spellcasting d10

Pace: —; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** —

Special Abilities:

- * **Create Thoughts:** As an action, the philosopher can create new manifested thoughts. It makes a Spirit roll, summoning 1d2 thoughts with success and 1d4 with a raise. In addition to its thoughts already in existence (those encountered in the temple), it can create a maximum of 20 more manifested thoughts during the course of the adventure. It uses this power only in two circumstances—if a dream evil (see below) is encountered or if the party attacks it.
- * **Defensive Thoughts:** Any manifested thought adjacent to the philosopher automatically intercepts incoming attacks. Any non-area effect attacks are made against the nearest evil thought, not the philosopher.
- * **Focused Thoughts:** Immune to Fear, Smarts Tricks, Tests of Will, and any mind-affecting spells (such as *confusion* or *puppet*).
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor versus arcane powers, and +4 to rolls made to resist arcane effects.
- * **Invulnerability:** Immune to all attacks except its Weakness.
- * **Powers:** *Battle song* (drives foes mad—they attack the *nearest* creature; determine randomly if there are multiple viable targets), *confusion* (temporary insanity), *fear* (horrifying images), *lower Spirit* (temporary insanity), *puppet* (forces victim to stand motionless

and contemplate the great conundrum).

- * **These Thoughts Are Mine:** The philosopher is master of its own thoughts, even those manifested. Its manifested thoughts have +1 to recover from being Shaken, +1 Fighting damage, and +1 Toughness when within 5" of the philosopher.
- * **Weakness (Logic):** The soulbound philosopher can only be slain by logical arguments. Instead of an attack roll, the character makes a Persuasion roll. A hero who states he is discussing the nature of truth gains a +2 bonus to his roll. This is opposed by the philosopher's Spirit die. Each success and raise inflicts a wound, just as if it were a physical blow. This form of attack can be Soaked using the creature's Spirit die.

MANIFESTED THOUGHT

The thoughts of the soulbound philosopher have taken on material form. They appear as pale human skulls trailing wisps of black smoke. From the mist extend two arms tipped with long claws.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6

Pace: 12; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- * **Borrowed Reasoning:** With a raise on the thought's Fighting roll, victims must make a Smarts roll or have part of their mind taken over and devoted to pondering the philosopher's conundrum. The character loses one die (minimum d4) to his Smarts *and* all Smarts-linked skills. Lost dice are recovered immediately the philosopher is slain. *Dispel* does not cure this condition. The effects can be offset, at least in part, through *boost* spells, though each spell affects only one Trait as normal.
- * **Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Focused Thoughts:** Immune to Fear, Smarts Tricks, Tests of Will, and any mind-affecting spells (such as *confusion* or *puppet*).
- * **Life Sense:** Manifested thoughts ignore all penalties for poor lighting.
- * **Semi Corporeal:** The thoughts are vulnerable to nonmagical attacks, but their attacks bypass all armor except *armor*. *Deflection* protects as normal as it is cover, not armor. They may pass through solid objects, like walls, at will.
- * **Size -2:** The thoughts are tiny creatures.
- * **Small:** Attackers are -2 to attack rolls due to the creatures' Size.

DREAM EVIL

Dream evils are created by the soulbound philosopher. Unlike his manifested thoughts, they are pure illusions. Some are actual memories of his former life, which have seeped out from his subconscious. Others are idealized versions of how he saw his life. They exist

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in a fixed loop, performing the same actions over and over again. In most cases the loop is short, perhaps lasting a few minutes. Other times they last for hours before restarting.

Dream evils interact with the heroes only in one way. If attacked, touched, conversed with, or otherwise made aware of the heroes' presence (they do not react if the heroes merely watch them), the illusions glide toward the characters. As they do they transform into nightmarish creatures before fading into nothingness with a hideous howl mere inches from the heroes. This causes all who see them to make a Guts roll to avoid Terror.

When a dream evil interacts with the party in this manner, the soulbound philosopher becomes instantly

aware of the characters' location. It uses its Create Thoughts ability (once per encounter with a dream evil) to summon manifested thoughts from its mind to attack the party.

VIOLENT LUNATIC

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Varies, but all suffer some form of Major Delusion

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Hands and teeth (Str).



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Special Abilities:

- * **Fearless:** The lunatics are immune to Fear and Intimidation.

ORC

The orcs are members of the Bone Gnawer tribe. They sharpen their teeth to fine points, and see any living creature as potential food.



CHIEFTAIN

When the chieftain's tactics call for him to use an alchemical device, roll a d4 and check the appropriate entry below. Reroll duplicate results until all the devices are used. He uses the device, even if it is of no immediate use (such as a *healing* potion if uninjured.)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Hold the Line, Sweep

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helmet (+3), great axe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, 2 hands).

Alchemical Devices: 1. potion of *healing* (cures one wound), 2. gem of *armor* (cast with a success), 3. figurine with *bodyguard* (cast with a success), 4. potion of *teleport* (20" range)

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4
- * **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

PRIEST

When the priest's insanity-driven tactics call for a spell to be cast, the GM must roll a d6. Each spell is numbered accordingly. The priests retain enough sanity to target the spell as intended, but they always attack the nearest enemy with offensive spells (*obscure* is considered offensive in this case), even if that means they or their comrades are caught in the area of effect. For *fear* and *obscure*, place the template over the nearest hero. During moments of lucidity, the priests cast spells as best suits the situation.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)

Gear: Leather armor (+1), long spear (Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands), furs.

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4
- * **Powers:** 1. *armor* (icy skin), 2. *bolt* (icicles), 3. *fear* (howl), 4. *obscure* (snow cloud), 5. *smite* (jagged ices

form on weapon), 6. *summon elemental* (ice).

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4
- * **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

WOLF, DIRE

Dire wolves are very large and feral wolves often used by orcs as attack dogs and by goblins as mounts. They may also be found roaming in packs in the deepest, darkest woods.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Tracking d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- * **Bite:** Str+d6.
- * **Go for the Throat:** Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
- * **Fleet-Footed:** Dire wolves roll a d10 instead of a d6 when running.

ICE ELEMENTAL

They look similar to earth elementals, but have cold-blue eyes, a mouth that, when opened, looks like the centre of an active ice volcano, and cracked, icy skin of the deepest blue.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +3:** Icy hide.
- * **Bash:** Str+d6.
- * **Burrowing (6"):** Ice elementals can meld into and out of the ground so long as it is snow or ice.
- * **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
- * **Ice Strike:** Ice elementals can spit a freezing blast of ice using the Cone Template. Characters within the Cone must beat the elemental's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage.
- * **Immunity (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Takes no damage from cold attacks.
- * **Weakness (Fire):** Takes double damage from heat or fire.

HELLFROST ADVENTURE #07

● HANDOUT #1 ●

My name is Bede Andersunn, and I suspect I am the last survivor within this holy site. I know I will die here, but such is the fate the Norns weaved at my birth. Let it be known that my last days were spent strong in my faith, recording this knowledge for those who come after me.

In the years before I was born, a priest of our order was presented with a conundrum. The exact wording of the puzzle is lost, for it appears to have been made casually and not as a formal challenge.

The priest at first thought little of the problem, but as the years passed it began to gnaw at him. With old age advancing, the priest retired from active temple life and spent his final years in seclusion. Every second of his time was spent seeking a solution.

The hand of Hoenir eventually reached out to the priest, whose allotted time in this world had ended. Yet so strong was his desire to solve the unsolvable that he refused Hoenir's welcome. Though his body was dead, his spirit remained bound to this world, fixated on finding the solution. Divinations revealed the spirit was not one of Hela's children, but something new, something unique. All that remained was his robe, held into human form by strength of will.

For decades we tolerated his presence, for his endless quest was, to our eyes, brought about by his unwavering devotion to Hoenir, but as the years passed his continuing presence weighed heavily upon us. We could not end his existence, yet we could not suffer his being.

So it was we departed the temple, leaving behind only our former comrade, whom we had termed a soulbound philosopher, for such description summed up his being perfectly. Wary of what might occur if the philosopher ever reached his goal, and fearful of what disturbing him might do, we abandoned our home, leaving behind powerful wards to guard the site.

Last night, I know in my heart to be my final night, Hoenir sent me a vision. I know now the philosopher must be slain, for his quest should have been passed to others at the appropriate time, as is the way of learning. Yet I am trapped here, blessed and cursed by this knowledge.

And thus my last words are a plea; seek the ruins of our former temple atop the highest of the seven hills to the east of my tomb, brave the wards, and do what we should have done decades ago.

Hoenir draws near, for the hour has come.

APPENDIX: TEMPLES OF EIRA



This section takes a brief look at a typical small temple of Eira, the sort found in most large villages or small towns. Bigger towns and cities generally have larger temples, though the basic functionality and healing rates remain the same across Rassilon.

STAFF

Small temples are staffed by clerics of Eira and lay worshipper volunteers. In general there is one Merciful Son or Daughter per five beds. The number of beds includes those for regular patients, lunatics, and orphans. Peacekeepers number one per priest, though in areas prone to trouble the garrison can increase by as much as five times this number.

The laity serves the temple in many ways—herbalists, assistant healers, porters, laundry workers, and even additional security are all examples of the roles they fulfill. Because temples to Eira rarely exist in isolation, most of the laity lives in the supporting village or town and commutes to work.

HERBAL BREWS

Magic isn't the only option available to the clerics of Eira. *Greater healing* and *regenerate* spells are not commonplace, and injuries older than the "golden hour" cannot be treated by lesser magic. To that end, all temples maintain an herb garden.

Types: Temple herb gardens are typically stocked with anti-anemia, anti-craving*, anti-inflammatory, antihistamine, calming, healing, healing (regenerative), hydrating, purgative, and restorative herbs.

* Indicates an herb found in the *Hedge Magic* free download.

Quantities: There are 2d6 batches of any of the above herbs available each month. These are fresh herbs. In addition, the temple maintains a stock of dried herbs for emergencies. For each type of fresh herb there are 4d6 batches of dried herbs available.

Rarity: The rarity of the herbs varies immensely, however. Some temples are blessed with rare, and thus more potent, herbs thanks to the efforts of their Peacekeepers or charitable donations, while others grow only the most common varieties. Generally, the GM needn't worry about the actual rarity, as NPCs needn't be burdened with making die rolls for producing herbal brews to order (unless time is of critical importance).

Should the rarity become important, the GM can always rule the plant has a +0 rarity modifier for convenience. For those who want more variation, a simple system can be used. For each type of herb, draw a card from the action deck and consult the table below. The value indicates the modifier to an herbalist's Knowledge (Alchemy) roll. Thus, a +4 bonus indicates the rarest herbs while a -4 penalty represents a very common and weak variety.

Value	Red Suit	Black Suit
Deuce	0	-4
3-10	+1	-3
Jack-King	+2	-2
Ace	+3	-1
Joker	+4	—

Prices: Dried herbs are sold at the standard rate of 5 gs per batch. Fresh herbs start at 10 gs per batch, plus an additional 10 gs per point of rarity bonus to the Knowledge (Alchemy) roll. Thus, a batch of herbs with a +4 rarity bonus costs 50 gs. Common herbs, regardless of modifier, remain at 10 gs per batch.

MEDICAL EXPENSES

Healing is a business. The temples must purchase food and provisions the same as anyone else, and thus the clergy of Eira charge for their services. Some leeway is available for those of little means, and charity is given to those truly destitute, but the clergy are above haggling over their expenses with those able to pay their way. For GMs who like to keep track of party expenses, the following charges can be applied.

HELLFROST ADVENTURE #07

Herbal Remedies: 50 gs per dose. This applies equally to those who wish to brew remedies and to patients on whom remedies are used as part of their healing.

Immediate Medical Attention: 5 gs per die type of the primary healer. After d12, the cost is an additional 10 gs per +1 bonus. Thus, a cleric with Healing d12+2 costs a total of 45 gs. *Wild Card:* A Wild Card healer costs double the base amount. *Devotee:* A healer with the Devotee of Eira Edge costs 1.5 times the base cost. *Assistants:* For each assistant aiding in a Cooperative roll an extra 10 gs is charged. Assistants always have a d6 Healing die.

For example, a hero who wants two healers, one a Wild Card with Healing d10 and the Disciple of Eira Edge and the other an assistant to tend his wounds, is charged a total of 110 gs (20 for the d10 die type, 40 for the Wild Card status, 40 for the Disciple Edge, and 10 for the assistant). It's expensive, but it's still cheaper than a *healing* potion and the healers may cure more wounds than a potion.

This service covers only mundane Healing within the golden hour only. Adventuring parties will rarely have access to such speedy services, but citizens within the supporting settlement do.

Long-Term Care: 20 gs per half-week. This covers food, drink, and basic medical supplies, such as bandages and medicine. This service grants a +1 bonus to natural Healing rolls. For an additional 25 gs, a cleric

with Disciple of Eira Edge tends the patient, raising the bonus to +3 in total.

Magic: All spells, whether cast by a cleric or in the form of alchemical devices, are charged at 100 gs per spell Rank. Alchemical devices cast with a raise cost an additional 100 gold shields per spell Rank.

ROOM DESCRIPTIONS

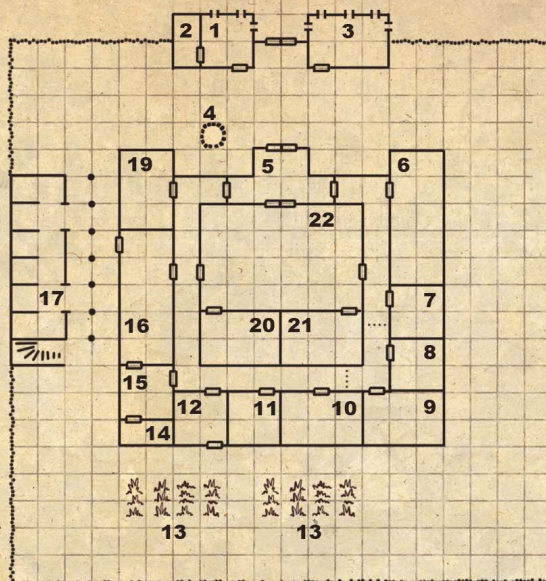
Only rooms and areas that require some degree of description are detailed here. GMs should furnish other areas according to their purpose.

Armory: Patients and visitors are allowed to carry only daggers while within the temple compound and must refrain from wearing armor. All armor and weapons are safely stored in the armory for the duration of the person's visit. Also kept here are a dozen short bows, 400 arrows, 40 short spears, 20 long spears, and 12 medium shields.

In the event of an attack, all ambulatory patients and visitors are expected to aid in the defense of the temple. Those who refuse are expelled from the temple for breaching the laws of hospitality.

Beds: The temple has nine beds in the infirmary and a further five in the lunatic ward. Added to this are cots for six orphans, bringing the total number to 20. As such, there are four priests permanently residing in the temple (two in each of the priests' chambers). In a standard

Temple of Eira



- | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| 1 Guard Room | 6 Infirmary | 11 Alchemy Lab | 16 Refectory | 21 Library |
| 2 Armory | 7 Priest's Chamber | 12 Herbalist Lab | 17 Stable | 22 Temple |
| 3 Paladin's Quarters | 8 Priest's Chamber | 13 Herb Garden | 18 Communal Accomodation | |
| 4 Well | 9 Lunatic Asylum | 14 Larder | 19 Orphanage | |
| 5 Vestibule | 10 Laundry/Stores | 15 Kitchen | 20 Conference Room | |

DESCENT INTO MADNESS

temple, there are also four paladins who have quarters near the main gate.

Communal Accommodations: Whether a traveler seeking shelter for the night or a homeless wretch looking for a roof over his head, those of good nature are never refused basic accommodations and a simple meal (see Refectory below). Guests may provide their own food and drink, but all meals must be eaten in the refectory. Alcohol is not permitted in the guest accommodations. This service is provided free of charge, though guests may stay a maximum of one half-week. After this, they must vacate the premises for an equal amount of time.

The communal room is situated above the stables (it has no fire, and the body heat from the horses is the only source of warmth). Outside is a veranda enclosed on three sides by a low, wooden fence. It can house a dozen souls comfortably, twice this number if the guests don't mind cramped conditions, and up to 50 in an emergency.

Conference Room: The clergy of Eira are not just healers—they are also diplomats. Aggrieved parties can approach the temple in a bid to reconcile their differences before the legal system becomes involved. Smaller temples are most commonly used to settle petty squabbles or marital problems. The temple charges 10 gs per day per party and arranges for a paladin to act as mediator. The rate is kept deliberately low to encourage citizens to use the service.

Laboratories: As well as providing for the temple's needs, the laboratories can be hired out at the rate of 20 gs per hour or part thereof. Each is outfitted with appropriate paraphernalia. Temple law is very strict, however—no device capable of causing harm may be constructed within the temple precinct.

Library: Temple libraries generally contain volumes on herbs and herbalism, medicine, politics, diplomacy, and Eira's faith, with only a handful of texts on other subjects. Most temples have at least one tome of lore concerning Knowledge (Alchemy; curative devices only) and Knowledge (Herbalism).

Orphanage: Every temple has at least a handful of beds for orphans. In cities and large towns, the orphanage may exceed the bed count for medical patients. Orphans are housed at the temple until the age of 13, at which time they must make their own way in the world. The orphans do not have an easy ride—they must attend school and worship, and help with the daily chores.

Palisade: Temples in rural communities are always protected by a sturdy palisade, even in relatively safe areas. As well as houses of healing, they serve the settlement as a last redoubt. After all, what better place is there to hole up and defend than a site full of healing supplies and healers?

Refectory: As well as feeding the clergy, workers, patients, and orphans, the kitchen serves weak broth and black bread to the homeless or those seeking charitable support. This service is free, though diners with money are encouraged to leave a donation. Meals are served only at lunch time—no breakfast or evening meal is provided.

Stables: Typically there is one mount for every two

paladins. Spare stables are used by visitors' and patients' mounts. The partition walls between stalls can be dismantled quickly, allowing for pygmy mammoths to be housed should the need arise.

SISTERS OF MERCY

The Sisters of Mercy are a second option for heroes who require healing. Few are clerics, and thus most of their healing is mundane in nature. Only a small number of Sisters carry *healing* alchemical devices, and such items are typically donations made by grateful patients repaying their debts.

As noted in the *Player's Guide*, the Sisterhood does not charge for its services, but requests favors as payment. The favor system is detailed in the free download entitled **Favors**, which is available from the Triple Ace Games' website. Unless the heroes have a permanent base near to a Sisterhood hospital, the chances of a passing Sister knowing they owe her organization a favor is extremely remote. As a result, Sisters in need of assistance are quite forward at asking strangers if they owe any debts. Those who deny their debt lose Glory as indicated in the **Favors** download—the truth has a habit of leaking out.

In all cases, repayment terms are always based on the former patient's wealth. A poor farmer might struggle to pay even 50 gs toward replenishing herbs, but he likely has time during the summer to lend his arm to erecting a new shelter for the poor. A rich noble might only owe a few gold scields, but his status and position mean the Sisterhood demands more from him. GMs should thus tailor any favors to the characters' specific circumstances. Saving a life, by the way, is always treated as a major debt.

Use the above prices to help calculate the scale of the debt to the Sisters of Mercy.

Healing which comes to 50 gs or less is repaid with a minor favor, something that won't take up much of the hero's time or resources. For instance, he may be asked to escort a Sister to the next village or buy one a meal and lodgings for a few nights. As a rough guideline, the service should take no longer than a half-week to perform or cost the hero more than 200 gs.

Between 100 and 199 gs the favor is moderate in scope. A character might be asked to make a donation of money or labor to help erect a new hospital or to escort a Sister searching for healing herbs into the forest. The service should never require the character to invest more than two weeks of his time or 500 gs of resources.

Services which come to 200 gs or more require a more substantial repayment. Rich patrons may be asked to fund a new hospital by providing all the raw materials for its construction. Warriors might be asked to escort a Sister on an extended tour of the region. Use a month of time and/or a maximum of 2,000 gs as a baseline for the sort of favor asked.

			Lunatic (Lycanthrope)				Manifested Thought
			Violent Lunatic				Manifested Thought
			Violent Lunatic				Soulbound Philosopher
			Orc Priest				Orc Warrior
			Orc Priest				Orc Warrior
			Manifested Thought				Orc Chieftain
			Lunatic (Lycanthrope)				Ice Elemental

			
			
Timber Wolf	Dire Wolf	Dire Wolf	Dire Wolf

			
			
Timber Wolf	Dire Wolf	Dire Wolf	Dire Wolf



MADNESS STALKS THE LAND

Insanity has struck the citizens of Rassilon!

Unable to cure the afflicted souls with herbs or magic, the cult of Eira hires a band of hardened adventurers to investigate the source of the insanity. From a village of fools to a more serious menace driven into the abyss of madness, the heroes must follow the path of lunacy and risk their own sanity. Only then can they truly descend into madness and face the true cause of the problem - a problem that has done nothing but think itself into insanity for five centuries.

This adventure also includes an appendix looking at the business of healing in Hellfrost.

Descent into Madness is a fantasy adventure for the unique Hellfrost setting for the award-winning Savage Worlds RPG system.



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