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HELLFROST

DEATH IN THE MIRE





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DEATH IN THE MIRE



● INTRODUCTION ●

This adventure is designed for a group of four Veteran characters, but can be run with larger parties. Most encounters are based on a number of antagonists per hero, and thus automatically allow for increased party size.

As written, the main villainous Extras are plague zombies and stone golems, though a few wraiths may also plague the heroes. For each Rank (or each 20 XPs after Legendary) the party is above Veteran, add one additional Extra of the appropriate type. For instance, if a party of four Legendary characters with 80 XPs faces two plague zombies per hero, the heroes encounter a total of 10 zombies (eight because of the party's strength and another two because the party is two Ranks higher than the scenario minimum).

This adventure can be set in any realm. Because the bog needs to be free of ice, avoid setting it at a time of year when the mire would be frozen solid. The GM should keep an eye on the characters' winter protection if such is required. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Player's Guide* for information about how the rules work in this setting.

A selection of pre-generated Novice characters can be found at our website, www.tripleacegames.com.

GM'S BACKGROUND

Three centuries ago, an Anari knight by the name of Lanval ap-Dragan was visited by a cleric of the Norns. The wise crone informed the knight that one day he would fight a terrible foe. Although Lanval would be victorious in battle, his opponent would return to trouble the knight's descendants. No more would the crone say, though Lanval pressed her with many questions.

Years later, Lanval fought an adult marsh dragon by the banks of an innocuous river. The ferocious beast tried

to make good its escape, for it was sorely wounded by Lanval's magic sword (which he had previously quested to find in preparation for this day), but it succumbed to its injuries. The creature fell from the sky, spiraling to earth, whereupon it crashed into the boggy soil. As if grasped by unseen, subterranean hands, the mangled corpse was quickly sucked down from view.

Remembering the cleric's words, Lanval had a manor erected on a hill overlooking the site, from where his descendants could keep a vigil over the dragon's grave. Soon a small village grew up around the manor. The villagers named it Draganton, "the enclosure by the dragon." As time passed, the name was corrupted to Drayton, the settlement's current name, and its original meaning forgotten. Today, the locals believe it is a bastardization of Draganton, meaning "the enclosure of the Dragan family."

As time marched inexorably on, the dragon's decaying corpse began to affect the landscape itself. The boggy ground expanded year after year, becoming a foul, mildly acidic mire inhabited by biting insects and sickly toads. Even away from the bog, the soil was corrupt and crop yields were poor. As a result, the village never grew in size.

For generations the descendants of Lanval, who had taken the family name Dragan, watched, and waited, but nothing happened, nor did it look like anything ever would. Vigilance turned to apathy and finally to ignorance. As the generations passed and the bloodline became tainted by marriages within the small community, so the familial line grew weaker and more degenerate. The last of the Dragan family (a raving lunatic) passed away a generation ago, and with him vanished the reason for Drayton's existence. The great manor now stands empty, a stark memorial of the extinct House of Dragan.

Several months ago, a cleric of Vali learned of the ancient prophecy and of the dragon's rotting remains. Making a deal with a paladin of Hela, the pair secretly traveled to the bog, arriving just a few days before the adventure begins. Here they conducted a dark and ter-

rible ritual to reanimate the beast as an undead plague dragon—the first of its kind.

Now possessed by the soul of an evil dragon, the marsh dragon's decaying corpse has been slowly working its way up through the dank muck and fetid waters, while its fell influence has tainted the very air around Drayton spawning a virulent plague!

GM NOTE

Aside from the introduction, two scenes, and the ending, which occur at defined moments in time, the remainder of the adventure has no strict structure. The party is not forced to investigate areas in any specific order, and thus may travel around the landscape as they see fit. Because of this open nature, the GM should ensure he has thoroughly read the adventure before play begins.

DEFINITIONS

The area around Drayton is bog, also known as mire. Bogs have acidic water at ground level. Around Drayton, that acid is a byproduct of the marsh dragon's inexorably slow decomposition. Marshes by comparison, are areas prone to frequent flooding and have less acidic soil. Before the dragon died, the bog was actually a marsh. Its expansion over time has left patches of reeds and even trees, something not found in most naturally occurring bogs.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Time plays an important role in the adventure, for in 48 hours from the time the adventure begins, whether the party is prepared or not, the undead plague dragon will burst from the bog to wreak revenge. How long it takes to journey through the landscape, how long the party spends sleeping and eating, and how long they spend tending to injuries is very important. The GM thus needs to track the passing of time. There is no need to note every single combat round or each minute that ticks by—recording time in blocks of 10 minutes (the time for a single Healing roll) and hours is enough.

LIGHTING CONDITIONS

The bog has a localized effect on the weather. Each dawn, midday, dusk, and midnight, the GM should draw a card from the action deck. A black card indicates there will be mist. This acts as Dim lighting (–1) during the day and makes the nights Pitch Darkness (–4). If there is no mist, then visibility at night is as per the rules for Dark conditions (–2). The mist covers Drayton and its surroundings until the next card is drawn, at which time it either slowly dissipates over an hour or continues as applicable.

The bog is perpetually swathed in a thicker mist. Here, the ambient visibility is always Dim (–1). If mist

forms elsewhere, visibility is Dark (–2) in the mire during the day, and Pitch Darkness (–4) at night.

There is automatically mist the morning the party arrives.

WHY ARE THE HEROES HERE?

Drayton is a small, isolated village. No major trade routes pass nearby, for the village has nothing to offer outsiders. If you are running a series of episodic adventures, the reason need not be important—the heroes are here because that is where the adventure takes place. In a campaign, it is left to the GM to determine the characters' reason for visiting Drayton, as shaped by events in his game.

It might be that the heroes are simply en route elsewhere, and Drayton falls along their path. Perhaps rumors of the plague have spread to other nearby villages, and the heroes are drawn here out of either mercy (suitable for clerics of Eira, Sisters of Mercy, and other healers) or curiosity. If the cult of Vali plays a part in your campaign, then any rumors of sickness are likely to be of interest to the adventurers. It could be that news of the last of the Dragan family has not spread, and a patron has asked the heroes to deliver something (a message or small token of esteem) to the lord of Drayton.

WELCOME TO DRAYTON

A weathered sign passed a mile back proclaimed the next settlement to be Drayton. Looking down from the ridge into a mist-filled valley, you guess the small collection of cottages must be the village bearing that name. Across from the village, on a patch of higher ground, stands a large manor house. Above it, on a ridge overlooking the bog, loom several standing stones. Further afield, a conical hill topped with a slender stone tower rises high over the landscape. And all around, barely visible through the mist, is endless bog. Why anyone would want to live here remains to be seen, but life cannot be easy, for the fields are scant and the crops sickly looking.

As the heroes near the village, a lone citizen, an elderly man, staggers toward them. The party can clearly see boils on his exposed flesh.

"Hail strangers!" he shouts. "What brings you to fair Drayton?"

Any answer is acceptable at this stage. Once the party has stated their reasons, the villager speaks again.

"My name is Luther ap-Trebor. I guess I'm the nearest thing to a headman since his lordship passed away a while back. Plague is sweeping our vil-



lage, strangers. We need help, for this is no earthly pestilence, but a terrible curse meted on us by the gods. Help us rid ourselves of this sickness. Help us out of pity for we are but simple peasants with no lord to protect us."

Whether or not the heroes wish to investigate further is now up to them. The villagers are far from wealthy. If pressed for a reward, they can muster a paltry 300 gs in total.

In terms of Glory, saving the villagers from the plague earns rewards as per rescuing innocents. The villagers number just 50 in total. Of these 15 are adult men, 20 adult women, and the rest children. All the families are related by marriage in a convoluted web stretching back many generations.

M Luther ap-Trebor: Treat as Villager (see page 20).

THE PLAGUE

The plague affecting Drayton manifests as extreme fatigue and unsightly yellow boils the size of pennies. A manifestation of the undead plague dragon's awakening, the illness is not contagious. Rather, it is a semi-magical effect, which anyone in the vicinity of Drayton can catch, regardless of whether they eat or drink local produce, or enter close proximity to a victim.

Throughout the adventure, the heroes and Laitia must make a Vigor roll every 12 hours. Those who fail gain a level of Fatigue. This can lead to Exhaustion, but not Incapacitation or Death. For ease, assume half the villagers fail each roll. *Succor* can be used to address the symptoms and alleviate the fatigue, but it does not cure the disease nor remove the boils. Serin ap-Burcan, the priest of Vali, is immune to the plague, and Eadhild the Dour, paladin of Hela, has kept away from the village since the ritual was complete.

If the undead plague dragon is slain, the spread of the disease is halted. The boils reduce in size over the next four days and one level of Fatigue is removed. At the end of a week, all symptoms are gone and the victims are returned to normal health.

INVESTIGATIONS

The heroes are now free to wander around the village and talk to folk as they see fit. Unless they do so, they likely will not gather enough clues to solve the mystery and deal with the perpetrators. Give the heroes a copy of the village map—there are no secret places. Note that not every location is important to the plot—the owner's occupation is listed merely for reference. The GM has free reign to create names for incidental villagers. The villagers are all of Anari stock.

Locales of specific interest are detailed below. Because of the open nature of the adventure, the locations

are listed alphabetically for GM ease. As such, certain sections refer to information the GM will find in other sections. In order to grasp the complete picture, the GM should thoroughly read each section prior to the game session.

Certain NPCs may have specific information they impart when questioned. When dealing with the general populace, the GM should draw a card, consult the Rumors and Opinions table (page 6), and roleplay the villager's passing on of information.

TIME CHECK

By the time the heroes are invited to investigate the mystery, it is 9 o'clock in the morning. Because the plague dragon rises at a fixed time, the GM needs to keep a rough track of time passing. Walking between locations in the village takes only a few minutes and need not be tallied. For ease, assume that talking to anyone takes an hour. Citizens do not just blurt out their rumor or opinion—there is the formality of overcoming suspicion of outsiders, then having something to drink, routine small talk, and lesser options and grumbles before the actual information the person has to share is made available.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

While the cause of the sickness and the activities of the two clerics are unknown to the inhabitants of Drayton, there are several additional useful facts that every villager knows. These are presented in the form of questions the heroes may ask and the answers they will receive. Information in parentheses is for the GM only. Additional information is handled through the Rumors and Opinions table.

Q: Who governs the village? Who lives in the manor house?

A: *"That would be the Dragan family. At least it was. The last scion, Sir Rodni ap-Dragan, died a generation ago and the manor has stood empty ever since. They largely left us alone, so we've coped without their leadership. His death just means we don't pay any taxes now."*

Q: What does Drayton mean?

A: *"It means 'the enclosure of the Dragan family.' It's a contraction of Draganton, see."* (This is false, though widely believed. As mentioned above, the original name of the village was Draganton, and meant "the enclosure by the dragon.")

A: What does the stone circle represent? Who built the stone circle?

Q: *"They're members of the Dragan family. Each time a son was born, a new statue was erected."* (While believable, the story is erroneous. The stone circle is actually a hiding place for one of Lanval's relics.)

A: Who built the tower? (This refers to the one on Watcher's Hill.)

Q: *"That was built by the Dragan family long, long*

RUMORS AND OPINIONS

None of the villagers knows the truth behind recent events, but they all have opinions. Draw a card from the action deck and consult the chart below whenever the heroes speak to a villager. Do not show the card to the players. The heroes may encounter key villagers during their investigation. Most have specific information to pass on, but some also gossip.

A (T) notation indicates the opinion or rumor is true, whereas (F) means it is false. Note that many rumors are part true and part false. In these instances the (T) or (F) are shown after the relevant text.

Duplicated rumors/opinions can be reused—just change the wording but keep the intent. For instance, instead of the fells spirits in rumor 7, perhaps the villager blames orcs instead. True information can also be reworded, but the basic facts should still be presented to the characters.

Naturally, the players should never be told which rumors are true and which are false—they must sort that out for themselves.

Card	Rumor/Opinion
2	"I saw a flickering light by the ruins of Watcher's Hill a few days ago (T). That place has always been associated with evil (F). Some fell ritual has been invoked and cast upon us! (F)"
3	"The old Dragan mansion is haunted (T). My father and a few other men went up there shortly after the last lord died, but they were driven away by fearful spirits (T)."
4	"I'll tell you who's to blame—those foreigners living on the edge of town! (F) You can't tell me it's coincidence the sickness started just after they arrived! (it is)."
5	"Up on yonder hill are tall statues of warriors and kings (T). Legend says they were folk who mocked the gods and were turned to stone for their sin (F)."
6	"Some fey dwelling in the water has been offended and now seeks to damn us all (F)."
7	"There's an old cave in the hills (T). My father told me that it leads to the underworld, wherein dwell fell spirits (F). One has no doubts some made their way into our world. (F)"
8	"Too many strangers around here for my liking, you included! No doubt they've brought this pestilence with them from other lands (sort of true)."
9	"Our cleric had the right idea—she fled as soon as the sickness started (F). A curse on all the gods for leaving us to our fate in our time of need."
10	"This sickness is a curse! (sort of T). Those foreigners tunneled into Dragan barrow (T), and have released a curse for their trespass (F)."
Jack	"The Dragan family was mad and inbred (T). This sickness has something to do with them (T)."
Queen	"Bah! All this talk about curses is nonsense. It's obvious where the sickness originates—some animal has fallen into the well and died, and now its rotting corpse is polluting the waters. (F)"
King	"We have fallen from grace and the gods have cursed us. It's our own damn fault (F). What we need is a cleric of Eira to bless the village (F)."
Ace	"With the last of the Dragan family dead I'd say it's obvious what's causing the plague—they want us to join them in the Afterlife (F)."
Joker	The GM may either draw two cards or invent one completely false, but plausible rumor as a red herring.

ago. They used it to watch over the approaches to the village."

Q: When did the plague start?

A: "Three, maybe four days ago. No one is quite sure, but it came on suddenly. It appeared in different houses, and spread like wildfire."

Q: Where's the inn?

A: "Ah, we don't have an inn in Drayton. There are a few empty houses you can sleep in. You'll need to supply your own food, but there's potable water in the well." (Drayton has two wells. The one marked "A" on the map is fresh water, while map "B" is tainted by the acidic water table.)

BARROW MOUND

The barrow, known locally as Dragan Barrow, is a

large, barreled grassy mound on the outskirts of Drayton. Although the villagers have named the barrow in honor of the Dragan family, they have no idea who is actually buried there. There are no stories regarding its occupants, and no one can recall anyone ever being interred there. The barrow is the last resting place of Lanval ap-Dragan, founder of the noble house and dragon-slayer.

1) ENTRANCE & TUNNEL

The solitary mound squats on a grassy meadow. A low, dark opening gapes like an open wound in its verdant dome. In front and to the side of the entrance lies a large, flat stone.

Until just two days ago, the barrow was sealed by a large, flat stone, devoid of any markings save for the holy

symbol of Tiw. After discovering Isabel the cleric was not home, Laitia the Lorekeeper and her diggers set to work excavating the barrow mentioned in the cleric's message (see Handout #1). After abandoning the dig for the day, they returned to Drayton, whereupon the mood turned ugly. Since then, they have not returned to the excavation.

However, there has been another visitor. Watching the strangers' arrival from hiding was Eadhild the Dour, paladin of Hela and co-conspirator in the dragon-raising plot. When the Lorekeepers left, Eadhild went to investigate. She discovered an interred corpse, which she set about animating using *greater zombie*.

The stone is engraved with a weathered holy symbol of Tiw, Lanval's patron, but it bears no name.

The tunnel is very low. Engro and Small characters may traverse it without difficulty. Others can only move forward by Crouching.

2) CRYPT

Because the barrow's occupant attacks very quickly, no initial descriptive text is provided for the heroes—they will not have time to examine the décor before melee ensues.

The tunnel eventually opens into a large, rectangular chamber. The floor and walls are stone clad, while the ceiling comprises heavy wooden beams. In the center is a funeral bier. Laid out against the walls are numerous mundane grave goods.

Terrain: The bier is 7' long, 4' wide, and 3' high. Treat movement through the square occupied by the bulk of the bier as difficult ground. Crossing over the bier uses an action. Moving through areas marked by grave goods is difficult ground.

There is no illumination inside the barrow—the only light is what the party brings with them.

Monsters: The newly awoken corpse, a royal hagbui, is under orders to destroy anyone entering the barrow—Eadhild does not want Lorekeepers snooping around at this critical time. The creature rests on the funeral bier, awaiting the opportunity to carry out its orders. Unless the party is totally silent, the hagbui automatically

detects their approach. If they remain quiet, adopting a stealthy approach, the hagbui must make a Notice roll opposed by each adventurer's Stealth.

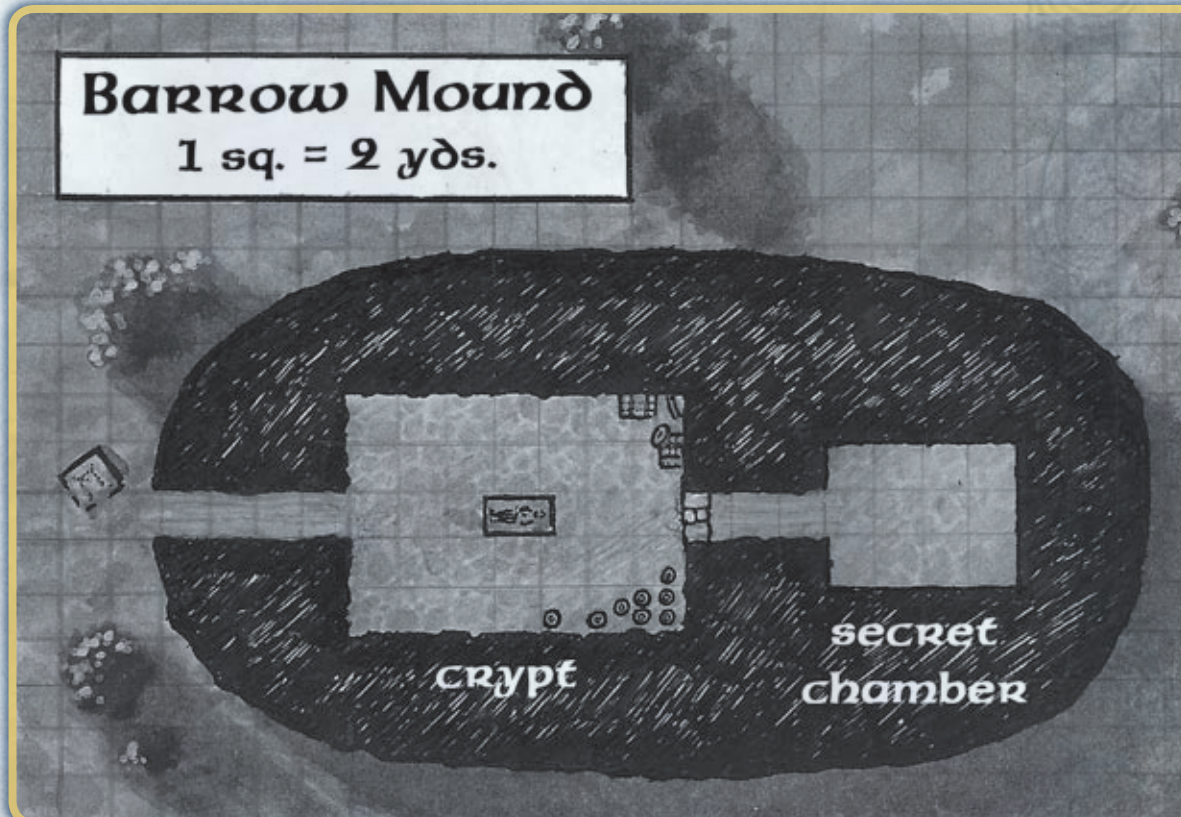
● **Royal Hagbui (1):** See page 23.

Tactics: The hagbui silently invokes *quickness* if it hears intruders approaching. Given the length of the tunnel, and the odds the party will be talking while outside the barrow (the noise is carried and amplified by the tunnel), it has ample time to do this. It then goes on Hold. As soon as the first party member enters, the hagbui leaps from the bier and rushes to attack with its long sword. Assuming *quickness* was invoked, it simultaneously casts *bladebreaker* on any weapon held by the first hero.

Because it delays attacking until the first character actually enters the chamber, the victim can maneuver so as not to be blocking the tunnel entrance. Of course, if the hero neglects to do this he is going to be facing a powerful undead opponent without any assistance from his comrades.

Do not forget, each hero must make a Guts roll when they first see the hagbui. This may occur at different times during the combat.

Once combat ensues, the hagbui continues to use its long sword. If *quickness* is being maintained, it weakens its foe by invoking *lower Vigor*. Only when that foe is slain, will it cancel the spell and recast on a fresh victim. Should the combat turn against it, the hagbui tries to cast *fear* in an attempt to scare away its opponents. It does



this whether or not its *quickness* is being maintained, incurring a multi action penalty as it continues to slash with its sword.

Bound to the immediate vicinity of the barrow by the magic that summoned it, the hagbui fights to the death.

Treasure: Lanval was, as befitting his station, buried with grave goods. While the mundane goods are largely intact, Eadhild the Dour has plundered all the valuables. Lanval's treasure is part of the wealth she carries.

The mundane treasure comprises two tarnished suits of chainmail, a rotting medium shield, a lute, two chests of clothes, eight jars of wine (gone to vinegar), and the equipment used by the hagbui. The suits of armor and weapons are worth half their usual price. Remember, this is then reduced down to 25% unless the heroes can find a suitable buyer.

Continuation: Once the hagbui is defeated, the party has a chance to explore more thoroughly. Any character investigating the back wall may make a single Notice roll at -2. With success, he realizes that part of the stonework has a slightly different hue to the other walls and flagstone floor. Should the party deduce the interior of the barrow is much shorter than the outside dimensions, the roll is made with no penalty—they will be looking for a secret entrance.

Do not worry if the party fails to detect the secret chamber at this time. Other clues in the adventure will lead them back here if necessary.

Further investigation of the discrepancy reveals that while the surrounding areas are comprised of thin stone blocks (about an inch thick), the different colored stonework is a plug of deep blocks, mortared together. Removing the stones takes four man-hours (so two hours if two heroes work together and one hour if all four characters share the burden).

Beyond the plug is a small, low tunnel (similar to the entrance to the main barrow) followed by a second chamber.

Using **Gravespeak**: Given the party has Lanval's corpse, one option open to them is to use *gravespeak* to contact his spirit and interrogate it. While Lanval is not opposed to aiding the party, he is not going to give them an easy time by simply blurting out all the answers they seek. He set up the security around his relics to ensure they did not fall into the hands of tomb robbers. His spirit has no idea what is happening on the mortal plane, and *gravespeak* is not a spiritual telephone—it allows for questions to be asked only. Hence, trying to inform Lanval's spirit of their quest is pointless, for the spirit will not hear their words.

The GM should devise answers to any questions not given below. Remember though, Lanval died three centuries ago and has no knowledge of the mundane world since the time of his death. He will not freely give away information, either—make the heroes work for their information by leading them to other parts of the adventure rather than giving them everything here.

Q: Where are you now?

A: "In Tiw's mead hall."

Q: Who was the cleric in the mural?

A: "A priestess of the Norns whose name I knew not."

Q: What did she reveal to you?

A: "That I would slay a dragon, yet it would one day return."

Q: Do you know when the dragon will return?

A: "The stone in the bog shall reveal the time." (See page 9 for details.)

Q: Where is your magic sword?

A: "Seek the clues in the place of knowledge, for here you shall find the answer." (The same answer applies if the heroes enquire as to the whereabouts of his shield.)

Q: Who made your relics?

A: "The sword is engraved with dwarven runes, and thus must have been forged by dwarves. The shield came from Scayle and was gifted to me."

Q: Why did you hide your relics?

A: "So they would not fall into the hands of tomb robbers between my death and the time they would be needed again."

Q: Where did the dragon die?

A: "Near to the river." (A vague answer, even more so since the river's course has altered over the centuries.)

Q: What does the eye over the manor in the mural mean?

A: "We are eternally vigilant."

Q: Vigilant for what?

A: "The return of the dragon, as foretold to me."

Q: How did you die?

A: "The length of my thread on the Norns' loom reached its natural conclusion." (He died of old age.)

3) SECRET CHAMBER

No grave goods litter the chamber floor; no bier dominates its center. The walls of the chamber has been smoothed with plaster and decorated with murals. Though faded and cracked through time and moisture, the imagery remains discernible.

The murals comprise a number of panels. These tell the story of Lanval ap-Dragan, his slaying of the marsh dragon, and the founding of Drayton. Lanval had the murals painted for two purposes. First, as a permanent reminder for any of his descendants clever enough to work out the puzzles he left, and second, they were self-aggrandizement, designed to show the gods his deeds in mortal life.

The panels are described below. Beneath some descriptions are one or more skills the heroes can use to help make sense of the imagery. If the players deduce the meaning themselves, then there is no need to roll the dice.

Panel 1: Lanval is shown sitting on a wooden stool. In front of him is knelt an old crone. She appears to be gazing at a number of small objects

in front of Lanval's feet. Her cloak is tattered, the threads of the hem trailing away.

Knowledge (Religion): The stones are rune stones, used in divination. The woman is thus most likely a cleric of the Norns or Maera, for they are most adept at divination. On a raise, the hero deduces the figure is a cleric of the Norns—the trailing threads of her cloak are symbolic of the Norns' loom.

Once the party deduces the woman is a seer, it should be obvious that Lanval's future is being foretold. They have no way of knowing whether this is allegorical or factual.

Panel 2: *Lanval is depicted in a dark cave. He is on his knees, his arms extended with palms up. In front of him stands what appears to be a dwarf. It is handing Lanval a sword, around which is a glowing aura.*

Common Knowledge: The glowing aura is a typical way of showing a relic, and is used in imagery across the continent.

Panel 3: *Lanval is shown standing in a reed bed. A bearded man is handing him a black shield. In the background are several houses with black roofs, each seemingly built atop wooden piles.*

Knowledge (Area): The scene depicts Scayle, which lies in the Borderlands, to the north of Drake Marsh. Apply modifiers as necessary depending on the Knowledge (Area) skill being used. No roll is required if the heroes have visited Scayle—it is a distinctive settlement. Success reveals the settlement is Scayle, as evidence by the unusual design of the houses and the black roofs. On a raise, the hero can deduce the shield is in fact a marsh dragon scale.

Lanval was in the region of Scayle (then known as Marshstown) shortly after Sir Aethwald ap-Herrith slew a marsh dragon. On hearing the news, Lanval went to investigate. Recognizing Lanval's quest as a worthy one (not unlike his own), Sir Aethwald gifted the visiting knight a scale from the slain beast.

Panel 4: *Lanval is shown locked in mortal combat with a green-black dragon. His sword is biting into the beast's neck. From its mouth, the dragon spews green liquid or gas, but this is being deflected away from Lanval by his shield.*

Knowledge (Folklore) at -2 or Knowledge (Dragons): This roll is passed automatically if the party has encountered a marsh dragon before. Success reveals the creature is a marsh dragon, a species capable of vomiting a stream of caustic acid.

Panel 5: *Lanval is shown standing in the foreground holding his glowing sword and black*

shield. In the background stands a manor house, above which floats an eye.

Common Knowledge: Success reveals the manor is that of the Dragan family. Unless the party has already visited the manor and seen the inscription over the door, the meaning of the eye cannot be deduced by a die roll, but by all means allow the heroes to speculate.

BOG

Much of the bog comprises mossy clumps, which form relatively stable islands floating over the acidic water. Between these clumps is freestanding water. Much of the water is knee deep, though there are areas where it comes up to one's waist. The core areas of the bog, near to where the dragon died, are devoid of grasses and trees, the acidic water killing off the vegetation. Further out, where the water and soil are less acidic, reeds and even trees still grow, though they are gnarled and sickly.

Whereas in some bogs edible berries grow, nothing harvested in the mire around Drayton is edible. Toward the fringe, the berries and tubers taste foul. Further in, the acid is so strong it causes mild mouth and stomach burns. The same applies to the natural wildlife, such as bog toads and insects.

Exploring the bog is handled in four-hour periods—any shorter duration and the party will not have time to travel far enough to find anything of interest. Each period the party may make a Group Survival roll to traverse the mire. A -1 penalty applies because of the mist. On a failure, they must make Vigor rolls to avoid a level of Fatigue. This is recovered after resting for half an hour. With their first success, they locate a corpse (see **A Dead Cleric**). Subsequent successes reveal nothing. With a second success, they find a standing stone (see **The Warning Stone**). This means the party must spend at least eight hours in the mire.

Once the characters have visited each locale, they can return to either one from Drayton in about two hours. The distance between the sites takes an hour to traverse once the party knows their location.

A DEAD CLERIC

In a small clearing amid a tangle of weeds lies a naked female corpse. The body is covered in blood and numerous stab wounds are clearly visible through the gore. Scorched into the mossy soil surrounding the corpse is the crude outline of a clenched fist—the holy symbol of Hela!

This is the site where the two evil clerics conducted their lengthy and bloody ritual. Isabel ap-Bran believed she was stalking the pair through the bog, but in fact they had already detected her presence. At an opportune moment, they ambushed and captured her. After torturing her just for the sake of it, she was slowly killed, stab

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wound by stab wound, as part of the ritual. As her blood flowed into the earth, the clerics invoked their terrible spells, giving the dragon's corpse new life.

Gravespeak: If the characters know of Isabel ap-Bran, they may correctly deduce that this is her body. Her name and corpse are enough to use *gravespeak*. As with questioning Lanval's spirit, the interrogation is handled through likely questions and the cleric's answers.

Q: Where are you now?

A: *"In the endless fields of Eostre's realm, with others of the faithful."*

Q: How did you die?

A: *"I was captured by a man and a woman. They slew me as part of a dark ritual."*

Q: Do you know their names?

A: *"One is Serin ap-Burcan, a priest of Vali. The other is Eadbild the Dour, a paladin of Hela. They delighted in telling me who they were so I might speak their names to the gods and quake the foundations of the heavens with their intended crime."*

Q: What do they plan to do? What was the ritual for?

A: *"Beneath this bog lie the rotting remains of a marsh dragon, slain long ago. It is the corpse of this dragon that caused the bog to form. They seek to animate it, not as an undead dragon, but as something far more revolting and terrifying—a plague dragon."*

Q: When will the dragon awaken?

A: *"Four or five days after my death. I am unsure of the exact timing and my killers were vague."*

THE WARNING STONE

Situated on a small island of solid ground is a solitary megalith. Carved into the north face of this stone, about a foot high is a deeply engraved holy symbol of Rigr, Watchman of the Gods.

Unfortunately, the heroes will not be able to check the stone quite yet. The two evil clerics have already discovered it and deduced its purpose. One of them is waiting for the party when they arrive.

Terrain: Areas of deep bog count as difficult ground and no character can run. Shallow bog is also difficult ground but characters may run. The warning stone is 6 feet high, fully occupies one square, and blocks line of site.

Monsters: Concealed in the deep bog are a number of plague zombies. These were raised several days ago by Eadbild and placed under Serin's control (though Eadbild can override them should Serin try to turn against her). Serin ordered the zombies to conceal themselves in the deep bog near the standing stone and await his signal. Serin, alerted to the party's presence by rats (loyal servants of Vali to the last), has used one *potion of burrow* (he has a spare) to hide nearby.

Ⓜ **Serin ap-Burcan:** See page 22.

Ⓜ **Plague Zombies (2 per hero):** See page 24.

Tactics: Once the characters reach the standing stone,

Serin erupts from the boggy soil. Check for Surprise as normal. On the first round of combat, Serin gains +2 to attack and damage against anyone caught by Surprise. He simultaneously commands the zombies to rise, though they do not appear (and so do not draw an action card) until the second round of combat.

The zombies swarm toward the nearest target, using Gang Up only if they happen to be attacking a foe being assaulted by other zombies. Their attacks are relentless.

On the second round, Serin casts *fear* at the largest group of heroes. He then invokes *lower Vigor* on the nearest heroes, maintaining his spells until his foes are slain or he is disrupted. Once these spells are cast, he uses *obscure*, placing the spell between himself and any foes.

Should he suffer two wounds, the priest blows his enchanted whistle as an action, summoning forth a Medium Burst Template swarm of rats. He sets these on the party. Assuming he has not been subject to *dispel*, he then *burrows* back into the soil (his potion lasts an hour) and flees. Serin does not reappear in this adventure if forced to retreat from this battle. However, he should return at some point to plague those who defeated him.

If the party is particularly strong, Serin can use an unorthodox tactic. If Shaken, he uses his *burrow* Pace to slip into the soil, remaining there until he unShakes. He then maneuvers adjacent to a hero while still concealed. Once there, he rises up and attacks. His victim must make a Notice roll opposed by the bog man's Stealth. If Serin wins, he gains +2 to attack and damage that round, +4 with a raise.

Treasure: Serin carries a number of alchemical devices. If he is slain and these not used, they are available to the heroes.

Continuation: Four identical runes were carved on each face. One of the runes was then filled in with plaster. From top to bottom, the runes are the letters "EV" (which stand for Eternally Vigilant) in the Anari script, the holy symbol of Eira, the holy symbol of Tiw, and the holy symbol of Rigr.

The north face clearly displays all four runes. On the east face, Tiw's symbol is missing; the area where it should be is blank. On the south face, the space where the holy symbol of Eira should be is blank. On the east face, the letters EV are missing.

The stone registers to *detect arcana*. It was imbued with four *glyph* spells, each containing an *elemental manipulation (earth)* spell. The spells were woven by an arkhwisard, who was paid handsomely for their creation, for the *glyphs* had to remain enchanted long after the mage's death. Treat each *glyph* as having an arcane die of d10 for the purposes of resisting *dispel*. Should a *glyph* be *dispelled*, the symbol it hides is not automatically revealed—the heroes have just cancelled the spell that would do that!

Each spell triggers as the dragon's corpse moves upward through the soil. As it triggers, it destroys a layer of plaster (now the same color as the rock thanks to staining) and reveals all four symbols.

The first *glyph*, on the north face, has already triggered, hence all four symbols are visible. 12 hours into the adventure, the second spell triggers, and the symbol of Tiw is revealed on the east face. After 24 hours, the third rune, the symbol of Eira, appears on the south side. The final *glyph* reveals the letters EV, which appear after 36 hours. 12 hours after that, the dragon rises.

The heroes may chip away at the stone to reveal the other runes, but doing so destroys the purpose of the stone—it was created as a timer, allowing the Dragan family to be aware of when the dragon would awaken. Each day just after dawn and shortly before dusk, a member of the Dragan family staff would venture into the bog and check the stone for signs the beast was returning. At least, they did for the first century or so. After this, the chore was forgotten and no one visited the megalith.

One way of revealing the stone's purpose is to juggle time slightly so a *glyph* activates while the party is present. Hopefully, this should give the heroes an early warning system they can use to determine the time left to them.

CAVE

A dark opening cuts into the mist-soaked surface of the rock face. A small stream of water slips lazily out from the interior, following a narrow channel cut by running water over many centuries.

Superstitious to the core, the villagers believe it leads to the underworld, a land of monsters and evil spirits. Lacking the curiosity and fighting spirit of great heroes, they give the cave a wide berth. The cave is a red herring—nothing here has any relevance to the adventure.

Have the characters make Notice rolls at -2. Success reveals a dank, musty odor emanating from the cave. On a raise, the smell is identified as being that of some sort of animal.

A Tracking roll may be made outside the cave mouth, but only if a hero asks to make one—do not volunteer this option. The cave's occupants have not been outside in the last day, so a -2 penalty applies. With success, the character identifies bear tracks and spoor. On a raise, he realizes they are the tracks and droppings of a cave bear.

The interior comprises two adjoining caverns. The larger cavern contains a small pool, constantly fed by water dripping through a crack in the ceiling. This is the bear's water source and wading pool (she does not use it as a toilet). The smaller cave is the beast's actual lair. Aside from a pile of grass and reeds, hauled in over time by the bear, there is nothing here of interest.

Terrain: The pool is deep enough to count as difficult ground. The stream is only a few inches wide and less than an inch deep, and has no effect on movement.

There is no illumination inside the cave—the only light is what the party brings with them.

Monsters: Contrary to any reports the party may have

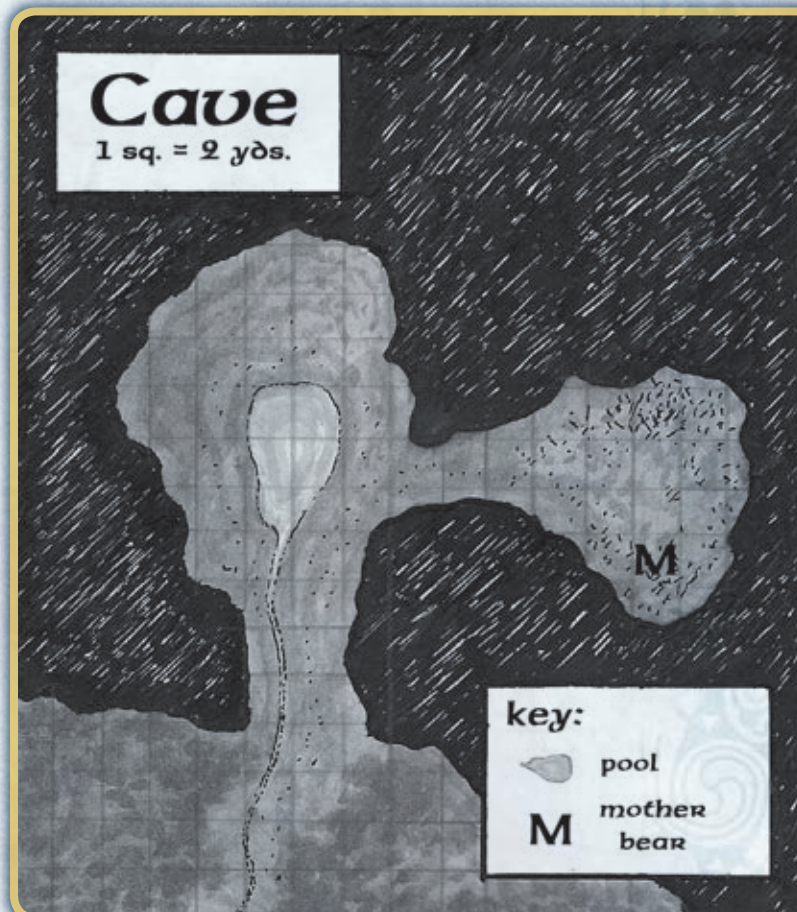
LOSING A FIGHT

If the characters lose the fights against Serin or Ead-hild, the clerics **will** use Finishing Moves against the adventurers. Their corpses are then dragged to the village graveyard (a place of death) and then animated as plague zombies. An ignoble end, but such is the price of failure.

The plague dragon arises at the end of the ritual. Without the heroes to defeat it, the beast quickly destroys Drayton and its inhabitants. While the characters may have failed, those who follow in their footsteps have a ready-made first adventure—defeat the plague dragon!

heard, evil cultists or fell spirits do not occupy the cave. Rather, it is the lair of a female cave bear. Having a bad reputation, the cave and its vicinity are shunned by the villagers of Drayton, and thus no one has ever spied the beast.

If the party is higher Ranked or contains more than four members, the mother cave bear has one or more cubs with her. Although described as bear cubs, they stand as tall as an adult human male. Any cubs begin



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around the pool, resting before their next forage for food.

Ⓜ **Mother Cave Bear (1):** See page 22.

Ⓜ **Bear Cubs:** See page 22.

Tactics: Cave bears are territorial creatures quite willing to fight to defend their lairs. The occupant(s) of this cave is dozing lightly and easily awoken by any noise above a whisper. If disturbed by noises outside the cave, the bear comes to investigate. On seeing the heroes, it rises to its full height and emits a fearsome roar. This is the heroes' cue to leave. If they do not, or if they attack the bear, it charges forward and mauls them.

CIRCLE OF STONES

The circle comprises 12 standing stones, each carved to resemble a human figure. Two of the stones are taller than the others. In the eastern position, the stone represents a woman, perhaps a queen or noble. Her right hand rests against her cheek, and her countenance is one of concern.

Opposite her is a kingly figure, his crowned face strong and bold. Clutched in his hands across his lap is a sword.

Completing the circle are smaller figures. Flanking the king and queen are berserks, swords held upright, and their stone teeth biting into colossal kite-shaped shields. Elsewhere, the statues are traditional warriors, with shield and sword held ready as if to defend their lieges from harm.

When Lanval decided to hide away his relics in order to protect them for future generations, he invested huge amounts of money in elaborate security systems. One such hiding place is the circle of stone statues situated on the ridge overlooking Drayton. Each statue is carved from a single stone, hewn in a quarry many miles distant, and shipped and erected here at great expense.

If a hero should check, the gaze of the queen figure is focused directly on the king's sword.

Terrain: The standing stones are Toughness 20. If used for Cover, they provide +8 Heavy Armor. Each statue completely fills a 1" square and blocks line of sight. The two taller statues are 18' high (3") while the smaller ones are 12' (2") high.

Save for a few tendrils snaking along the ground, the mist never rises high enough to cover the ridge. It thus has no affect on play regardless of conditions elsewhere.

Monsters: The four berserker statues are in fact stone golems. Lanval spent a fortune on their creation, which was done in great secrecy. Whereas many golems were the work of mages, Lanval had the cult of Tiw construct these. Their orders are simple—attack and kill anyone breaking the sword of the king (see below).

Ⓜ **Stone Golems (1 per hero):** See page 22. If extra golems are required to challenge the party, then any of the other warriors are also golems. These additions lack the Berserk ability.

Tactics: Thanks to the enchantments of Tiw's clergy, these golems are more tactically astute than regular stone golems. They have enough intelligence to recognize armored warriors and spellcasters as the greatest threat, and thus harass them first. This single-minded approach to combat is also a weakness, for they ignore other foes until the strongest opponents are incapacitated.

Leaving the stone circle or dropping Scale Splitter has no effect on the near-mindless automatons—they are relentless in the pursuit of carrying out their instructions. Should the party flee, the golems give chase.

Treasure: The long sword carried by the kingly figure is actually a hollow plaster cast, now aged and weathered to be indistinguishable from the rest of the statue's hard rock. The plaster has Toughness 6. Inside is a long but flat object wrapped in an oiled leather sheet.

Grabbing the object requires an action, as does unwrapping it. The concealed object is a long sword, its blade slightly tarnished and pitted, yet retaining a sharp



edge. Engraved on the blade in dwarven runes are the words, “Scale Splitter.” This is the blade Lanval used to slay the dragon three centuries ago. It is a permanent relic and thus must be attuned before it can be used.

The sword acts as a regular long sword against all foes except dragons. Against these foes, and only these foes, it grants +2 to Fighting rolls and inflicts +2 damage (for Str+d8+2). A raise on the Fighting roll ignores the dragon’s Armor rating.

CLERIC’S HOUSE

This small cottage is the home of Isabel ap-Bran, a cleric of Eostre. Isabel was raised in the nearest town to a well-off farming family. On reaching adolescence, she decided to follow her mother’s example and joined the cult of Eostre as a priestess. She was sent to the village after completing her studies to serve the then incumbent priestess. When Eostre finally came to collect the old cleric’s soul (she died of old age 27 years ago), Isabel took over her role. Being small (and hardly an agricultural center), Drayton has no formal temple. Ceremonies were instead held in the fields as and when required.

The cottage door is unlocked (there has been no recorded crime in Drayton for many generations). Searching the house thoroughly enough to uncover all the information below takes 10 minutes.

The interior is divided into two rooms. The larger is a communal area, containing a hearth, three benches, kitchen equipment, and a table and two chairs. The smaller room, which is accessed through another unlocked door, is Isabel’s bedchamber. It contains a simple cot with a straw mattress and fur covering. There is a small chest under the bed, which is also unlocked.

Examination of the house reveals that no one has been home for at least 24 hours and likely much longer. The ash in the hearth is cold, a cup of milk has begun to curdle, and the produce, bread, and cheese on the table have hardened through exposure to the air.

Treasure: Inside the chest are a diary, two clay pots sealed with wax, a bundle of three, long thorns, and 113 gs. The coins are donations made to the temple of Eostre, though the party has no way of knowing this. The diary is detailed in Handout #1, and should be given to the players at this time, only if they read Classical Anari. Otherwise, they must get the text translated, such as through *Speak Language* or by asking someone who understands the script.

The two jars are alchemical devices—one *potion of wilderness step* and one *salve of healing* (a thick paste which cures one wound when smeared on an injury). The bundle of thorns is an alchemical *barrier*. When thrown to the ground (an action), a spiky hedge springs up. The *barrier* is 3” long, and is shaped as the user desires. The latter is achieved by where the user throws the three thorns. Anyone trying to climb the *barrier* takes 2d4 damage from the long, sharp barbs.

GM Only: Isabel, with the aid of a passing skald, learned of the history of Drayton, at least in part. She

learned of the dragon-slaying knight and of the prophecy, which roused her curiosity. Then, while exploring the mist-saturated bog, she accidentally stumbled across the two evil clerics planning their great ritual. Unable to wait for her friend, the Lorekeeper Laitia ap-Cuthbert, she returned alone to the bog. Unfortunately, the clerics saw her first. Isabel was captured and sacrificed as part of the ritual. Her corpse lies in the mire (see page 9 for details).

COTTAGES

All the cottages are single storey wooden buildings with thatched roofs. Once whitewashed to protect the wood against the constant acidic mist, most are in dire need of repainting. At night, wooden shutters are firmly locked into place. The inhabitants are insular and suspicious of outsiders, but quickly warm to those willing to share food.

M Villagers: See page 20.

DRAGAN MANOR

The manor house is of typical Anari design, built over two stories and constructed from wood and stone. Its walls and roof show signs of disrepair; for slates are missing, paint is peeling, and the wood is crumbling and rotten. No lights can be seen emanating from the windows and no smoke drifts up from the chimneys.

Built by Lanval ap-Dragan, the house served as the ancestral seat until the last scion of the noble house died a generation back. Since that time it has been visited only infrequently by villagers, and not in the last ten years.

If the heroes approach the front door, they notice the words “Eternally Vigilant” carved on the lintel in Classical Anari. This is the Dragan family motto.

All the windows are boarded up from the *inside*. The family, paranoid and degenerate through inbreeding, all but isolated themselves from the outside world in the last few generations. By the time of the last family member’s death, they had not been seen by anyone in the village in over five years. The doors are securely locked as well.

Outside of combat, only a few minutes effort is required to gain entrance. Should the party need to flee in a hurry through a different portal, the window boards have Toughness 8 and the heavy exterior doors Toughness 10. Interior doors are Toughness 8. All the locks can be picked.

Only one room is important to the scenario—the library. The GM should fill in the details of the other rooms according to their description. No one has lived here for the best part of a generation, so everything is in a state of decay.

Monsters: While the Dragan family has not physically dwelt in the house for a generation, members of the family are still present in the form of wraiths. The

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wraiths instantly and automatically become aware of any outsiders the instant they enter the house. They appear only as shadows or moving objects at the corner of one's vision, vanishing when one looks directly at them, and as whispering voices on the wind.

Ⓜ **Wraiths (1 per hero):** See page 24.

Tactics: The ancestral spirits are not overly malicious, but they are protective of their former home and dislike uninvited guests. They spend a while watching the heroes and trying to determine their reasons for being in the manor.

This is not a combat encounter, the wraiths being immune to all attacks, so play up the spooky old manor house inhabited by ghosts. If the heroes are being loud, have one cast *silence*. If they break anything, have a

wraith use *telekinesis* to pelt the heroes with crockery or knives. You can also use the wraiths for some comic value. For instance, if the heroes discover an important book, have a wraith snatch it from their hands using *telekinesis*, thus forcing the party to chase it through the house. Similarly, heroes not involved in the Investigation rolls can be subjected to all manner of minor attacks designed to frustrate and frighten them.

The "attacks" should not be overwhelming—the manor serves as a source of information vital to the completion of the adventure, and the party should not be distracted from this goal in an elaborate ghost hunt.

However, once they learn clues 1, 3, and 5 in the library, or if the heroes begin looting the ancestral treasure (whichever comes first), the wraiths should unleash their



full powers. They mistakenly believe the party is tomb robbers out to steal ancestral items. Let loose *fear*, *lower trait*, *obscure*, *panic*, and *telekinesis*. Hit them with a *puppet* spell and let the party battle each other or take their own lives. Once the relevant information is gained, the party should feel they need to make a quick escape.

Fortunately, the wraiths are as mad as they were in life. If the party returns after six hours, the wraiths have forgotten them and the process begins again. Returning before this time, and the wraiths waste no time in giving the characters a very unwelcoming reception.

Treasure: The Dragan family was never truly wealthy, but they were prosperous. Scattered throughout the house are many valuable objects: coins, jewelry, and silverware, which can easily be sold and amount to 2,500 gs. Locating them requires a Notice roll and an hour's search. Each success nets 500 gs worth of treasure. The heroes can search separate rooms simultaneously.

Less easy to sell items, but no less valuable, such as tapestries and rugs, come to 5,000 gs. For each 500gs, the objects weigh 10 pounds. The GM and players should come up with suitable descriptions.

Two further objects of value can be found in the library (see below), but require an Investigation roll to locate.

LIBRARY

The number of books and scrolls stacked baphazardly on rickety shelves indicates this room is a library. A thick layer of dust lies on every surface.

The works are not sorted by category or author, but have been placed randomly on the shelves. Many of the books lack covers and all are missing tables of contents and indexes. In order to learn the nature of the contents, the party has no choice but to open and scan the books and scrolls. All texts are written in Anari.

For each hour spent searching, the heroes may make a Cooperative Investigation roll. With success, they find a tome they believe to be of interest in their search. Roll a d6 and consult the table below. Each piece of information can be found only once. Reroll duplicate results.

d6	Information
1	The party happens across a picture of a knight clad in a plate corselet and holding a glowing long sword. Beneath him are written the words, " <i>The bane of scales I hid, preserved by noble hands; under gaze of worried maiden; watched o'er by eternal guardians.</i> " This refers to Lanval's magic sword, which is hidden in the stone circle (see page 12).
2	An alchemical scroll of <i>energy immunity (acid)</i> . Lanval had the scroll prepared in readiness for the dragon's return. He had no way of knowing it would return not as a marsh dragon, but as an undead plague dragon. Thus, while valuable and generally

useful, it has no use in this adventure.

- 3 The party finds another picture of a knight clad in a plate corselet. This time he holds a black shield. Beneath him are written the words, "*In the eye that only sees the heavens; 'neath water still and dark, behind immortal warrior, lies arrow bane dark and glistening.*" This refers to Lanval's marsh dragon scale shield, which is hidden in the well (see page 17).
- 4 The heroes discover a valuable tome of lore entitled, *On Matters of Marsh Drakes*. Unfortunately, it is very specific, granting +2 to Knowledge (Marsh Dragons) rolls only. Its value is half the normal price for a tome of lore, except in Scayle, where it can be sold for the princely sum of 2,500 gs.
- 5 An old diary in which the same words are written over and over again: "*What did the crone mean by 'Eira's boon shall be my descendants' greatest weapon'?*" This refers to the undead plague dragon, which is damaged by *healing* and *greater healing* spells.
- 6 The deeds to the manor. Presenting them to the nearest local authority gives the heroes claim to the manor house, as there are no living Dragans left to claim the title. Drayton is a dump and the manor house needs extensive repairs. If sold in its present condition, the manor would fetch a mere 7,500 gs.

GENERAL STORE

Drayton's general store is an adventurer's nightmare. Visited by merchants only twice a year, Drayton's only store has very little of interest to an adventuring party.

There is one leather shirt that has been hanging up for years and stinks of mold as well as enough daggers, hand axes, and short bows for one per party member (but only a dozen arrows). And while there are normal clothes and furs available, these too reek of mildew. Of common goods, anything with a Village Availability can be found here, but only in small quantities. For items with a base value of 10 gs or less, 1d4 items can be found scattered across the shelves. For more expensive items, only a single object exists. No animals, tack, unusual goods, or food can be purchased here.

Other goods can be ordered, but the timeframe for delivery prohibits the heroes making use of the service. When a merchant calls, the owners place their order. The goods are then delivered six months later, when the second merchant caravan passes through.

The owners, Mungo ap-Godbert and his wife, Mathilda ap-Galbrith, are honest enough folk. However, they have to pay a premium for goods to be shipped to Drayton, and that premium is passed onto the customer. All goods cost 150% of the standard list price. This increase does not affect availability as described above—it is applied after determining how many of a certain common item are available.

Mungo and Mathilda are renowned gossips. Each knows one rumor, which they happily pass on to the characters. Unfortunately, both of them are going deaf, so the heroes will have to shout quite loudly to make themselves understood. The couple similarly shouts when speaking.

M Mungo ap-Godbert: Treat as villager (see page 20).

M Mathilda ap-Galbrith: Treat as villager (see page 20).

GRAVEYARD

The graveyard holds the earthly remains of deceased villagers and members of the Dragan family. The former are buried in simple graves marked by stones engraved with names. The latter lie in stone mausoleums, richly decorated with intricate carvings. The family motto, "Eternally Vigilant," is engraved on each mausoleum.

If the party investigates the graveyard before the zombie attack (see page 18), they notice a number of graves are open (equal to two per hero) and the contents missing. If the villagers are questioned, they shrug their shoulders and reply, *"Now that is odd. Nothing like that has ever happened before, although these are strange times."* The corpses were in fact taken by Eadhild the Dour, who has animated them as plague zombies.

After the zombie attack, the number of open graves is equal to six per hero.

Should the party enquire about the burials, any villager can tell them the corpses are interred intact with a few grave goods. There have never been undead in Drayton, and the villagers do not bother with cremation, corpse binding, or hacking off limbs to prevent the bodies rising as undead.

LONE HOUSE

Located on the edge of the village is a solitary house. Rundown and ramshackle, the house has been empty for years. It is currently occupied by Laitia ap-Cuthbert, a Lorekeeper, and her team of diggers. Laitia, an old friend of Isabel ap-Bran, the local priestess of Eostre, was invited here to investigate the barrow. Isabel had intended to fill the Lorekeeper in on other facts she had discovered, but unfortunately, she has been killed.

Any knock at the door is answered by a human woman in her late thirties, with short, dirty brown hair framing a not unattractive face. She leans on the door, her right arm hidden from view (she is holding her sword). She speaks quickly and curtly in fluent Anari.

"Who are you?" she asks. "And what do you want with us?"

The party needs to convince Laitia they mean her no harm before she will allow them to enter the house. Mentioning the barrow, Isabel, or investigating the Dragan family is enough to allay her worries.

Once inside, the heroes discover a single room warmed by a small hearth. Lying on furs and woolen blankets are four men, each showing symptoms of the plague. Laitia offers the heroes rabbit stew from a cast iron pot simmering over the fire.

Laitia has nothing to hide from the heroes and is happy to converse with them. Rather than a lengthy monologue, Laitia's information is presented as a series of answers to likely questions posed by the heroes.

Q: Who are you?

A: *"My name is Laitia, ap-Cuthbert. I am a Lorekeeper. These men are diggers, paid by my order."*

Q: "What are you doing here?"

A: *"I was invited here by an old friend, Isabel ap-Bran. She believed an old barrow on the edge of Drayton was built by the same family that owned the manor house. With the last of the family long dead, Isabel believed it would be acceptable for the Lorekeepers to investigate the tomb and recover any documents before time claimed them."*

Q: Where were you before you came here?

A: The answer to this question will vary from campaign to campaign. Pick any large town within 200 miles walk of Drayton. Laitia uses this as her headquarters, a fact Isabel knew well through correspondence.

Q: Have you been to the barrow?

A: *"Yes, we were there two days ago. When we arrived we headed straight for Isabel's house, but there was no reply. The villagers, a surly bunch and no doubt mistrustful of strangers, said she has not been seen for days, nor could they tell me where she went. So we went to the barrow to begin our work. We managed to remove the outer stone blocking the entrance and performed a brief examination before night fell."*

Q: What did you find in there?

A: *"A corpse in armor carrying a sword laid out on a bier, grave goods, both mundane and valuable. Everything remains in place, for we are not tomb robbers. The villagers are superstitious and will not enter the barrow out of fear, and Drayton is too far isolated for anyone to learn of our expedition before we can complete our work and reseal the entrance."*

Q: Why aren't you there now?

A: *"Some sort of sickness affects Drayton. The locals blame us, but they were sick when we arrived. My diggers are also ill, and there is little point making sick men work. That barrow has been there for three centuries, and it will be there a few days more. I have seen the looks the locals have given us, and while not afraid of violence, I have no wish to engage in combat with superstitious peasants. So, until matters resolve themselves, we shall wait here."*

Q: Have you visited anywhere else in the village?

A: *"Only the general store. The manor is deserted, and Drayton has little else of interest. I intend to visit the stone circle on the ridge, but that will have to wait for now."*

Q: Will you help us in our quest?

A: *"My place is with the diggers. I will not leave their*

side. But I will gladly act as a translator if required, for I know several languages. In return, I ask that you also investigate the disappearance of Isabel. She is not one to go wandering off on a whim, especially since she knew our arrival was imminent."

Ⓜ **Laitia ap-Cuthbert:** See page 21.

Ⓜ **Diggers (1 per hero):** See page 21.

WATCHER'S HILL

On the distant outskirts of Drayton rises a tall, conical hill. Situated atop it is a slim stone tower, the slender spire rising some 30 feet above the summit. Even from a distance, it is obvious some disaster befell it, for the top section is shattered and open to the elements.

The summit of Watcher's Hill extends far above the extent of any mist. Unfortunately, the mist below is impenetrable from this vantage point. This means it is impossible to see details in the bog from here.

The tower was raised by Lanval's great-great-grandson, partly as a means of watching over the expanding bog and partly to keep an eye on the only road into town. Its name indicates its dual purpose, though the occupants of Drayton believe it is named solely for the latter reason.

A gravel track once led to the summit, but this is now concealed beneath the grass. The spiral path it took up and around the mound is still visible, for the track was cut into the earth. A few minutes spent scraping away at the soil reveals small chips of gravel.

Outside the tower's open entrance (there was never a door) is a burnt patch of ground littered with charred wood. A successful Tracking roll indicates the fire is two or three days old at most. There is nothing sinister about the fire. Several days ago a hunter from a neighboring village needed shelter for the night. Knowing of Drayton and its insular inhabitants, he elected to spend the night in the tower. He lit the fire outside to protect himself from wolves and other predators. The hunter will not be back again during the timeframe of the adventure, so the remains of the fire will remain a minor mystery.

The interior of the tower is hollow. A narrow staircase spirals up the inside wall. In days of yore, the tower had a wooden roof, from where watchmen could survey the surrounding landscape. Four generations ago the roof collapsed after being struck by lightning. By this time the Dragan family was already in the advanced stages of senility and madness, and no repairs were made. Ever since the lightning strike, the tower has a bad reputation.

WELLS

Drayton has two wells. The original well (marked A on the map) is now disused, although it is still partly filled with water. As the bog grew, so the water became tainted. The second well (marked B) was dug 50 years ago on higher ground and supplies the villagers with fresh water. Lanval's poem in the library refers to the original well, which he had built. During the construction process, Lanval has a secret area built at the base of the well. In here, he placed his marsh dragon scale shield for safety.

EXPLORING

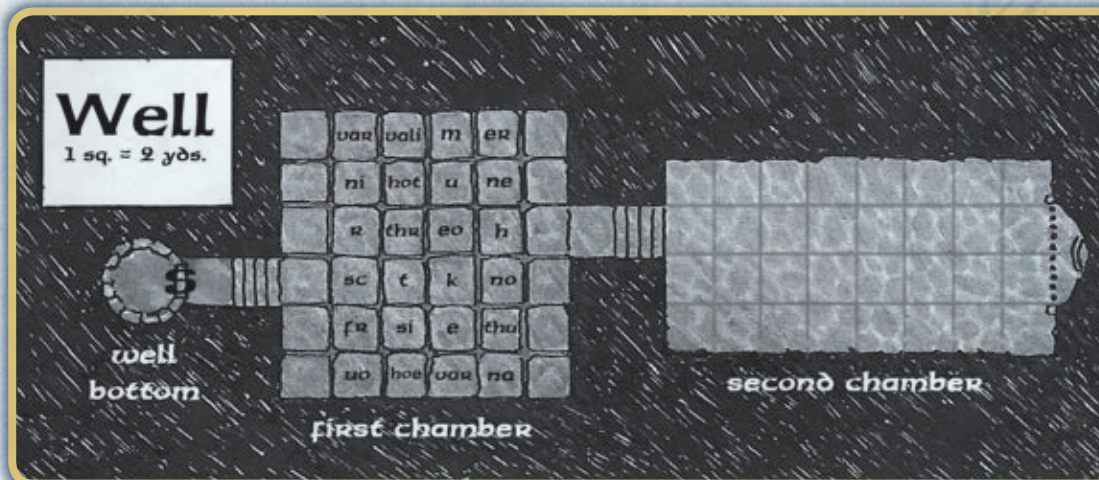
The well shaft is 6 feet across and 40 feet deep, though only 30 feet is filled with water. If the heroes have *environmental protection* spells allowing them to breathe underwater, they can enter the well with the water still present. If not, they are going to have to drain the well first.

This is a total volume of 848 cubic feet. A large bucket holds two cubic feet and takes one minute to lower, load, raise, and empty. Emptying the well thus takes a fraction over seven hours without rest breaks.

For every hour a lone hero works the bucket, he must make a Vigor roll. Each continuous hour after the first incurs a cumulative -1 penalty. Failure causes a level of Fatigue, which is recovered only after 15 minutes rest. A critical failure means the character has pulled a muscle, which results in a level of Fatigue as if from Bumps and Bruises. The well replenishes only slowly. Assume it re-fills at the rate of 10 cubic feet per hour.

The party may come up with ingenious ways to hasten their work. One obvious option is to use *quickness*, which effectively allows the target to perform two hours of work in an hour. Other methods are left to the players to devise. GMs should not work against the players—if their plan seems sound, allow it to work.

THE WELL BOTTOM



Once the water is drained, all that remains is three feet of thick sludge. All movement through the slime is halved. The shaft walls are coated in thick slime. This conceals the shaft's stonework.

On investigating the bottom of the well, the heroes must make a Notice roll. If the slime is not scraped clear (this takes an hour), the roll is made at -4. If the characters used *environmental protection* to enter the water-filled shaft but lack a source of illumination capable of functioning underwater, such as a *light* spell, the roll is made with another -4 penalty.

Hidden behind the slime at the base of the well is a square stone slab. The door descends into the sludge at the bottom of the shaft. It has no obvious handles. Feeling around in the thick, cold mud reveals two handholds. In order to open the door, all one need do is lift—the slab is hinged to slide up like a garage door. Those who favor methods that are more destructive find the slab is hard to shift. It has Toughness 14 and counts as having Heavy Armor.

THE FIRST CHAMBER

The floor of this rectangular chamber is covered in large flagstones. Except for a stripe six feet wide at each end, every stone is marked with a holy symbol of one of the gods. On the far side of the chamber is an archway.

This chamber is a giant trap. Beneath the floor is a spiked pit some 40 feet deep. Three of the flagstones, those shaded on the map, are safe to walk on—these sit on tall pillars of natural rock. The other flagstones are a thin stone veneer. Anyone applying more than 60 pounds to one of these drops into the pit, suffering 4d6+4 damage when they land. Due to the many spikes, damage is applied to the least armored location.

The three safe squares are marked by the runes of Rigr (R), Tiw (T), and Eira (E). Clues that these are the safe stones can be found on the warning stone in the bog (see page 9).

Note that the last line of flagstones has **no** safe square—this is deliberate, a cunning secondary trap for those who have guessed luckily so far but have not visited the warning stone. Because they do not have the opportunity for a run up, the heroes are going to have to make Strength rolls in order to leap the last line of marked flagstones.

THE SECOND CHAMBER

This stone-lined chamber is smaller than the previous one. At the far end is a recess. In here, protected by a lattice of thick iron bars, is a green-black medium shield. In the wall around the recess are small red bricks, each engraved with one of four different symbols.

The heroes should be able to deduce that this is Lanval's dragon scale shield. On the off chance they have stumbled across it before discovering any other clues, a successful Common Knowledge roll at -2, or a Knowledge (Dragons) roll reveals it is a marsh dragon scale. The adventurers can touch the shield through the grille, but the shield will not fit through the small gaps. The grille has Toughness 14 and counts as Heavy Armor.

The red bricks are engraved with symbols of Rigr, Tiw, Eira, and the letters "EV"—the latter stands for "Eternally Vigilant," the Dragan family motto. A cursory examination reveals the red bricks depress into the wall. Once one brick bearing a symbol is pressed, others bearing the same mark will not depress. Hence, only one symbol of Eira can be pushed, for example. Nothing happens until one of each symbol has been depressed. Since any of the red bricks can trigger the trap, *detect trap* illuminates all of them.

The symbols are duplicates of those found on the warning stone. By studying any remaining blank areas on the stone, the party should be able to deduce the order reads from bottom to top, not top to bottom. Do not correct any incorrect deductions!

Pressing the symbols in the order Rigr, Tiw, Eira, and EV causes the iron bars to retract into the walls—the party can now grab the shield.

Any incorrect order activates a concealed trap the instant the final brick is pressed. The entire ceiling begins to descend rapidly into the room. Deal each hero action cards as normal. Any character still in the room at the end of the round is *automatically* crushed to death. The trap does not reset—the shield cannot be reached now without tunneling through solid rock.

There are ways to circumvent the grille, but all require the use of magic. One option is to use *teleport*, the caster touching the shield while he casts his spell. *Shrink* can also be used to temporarily reduce the size of the shield. Removing the shield without first pressing the buttons in the correct order still activates the trap (but at least the party has the shield).

ZOMBIE ATTACK

Run this scene the first time the party leaves the bog after exploring it for 4+ hours.

The village is under attack by a host of plague zombies. Alerted by the screams of the first victims, the others fled en masse toward the store, but were ambushed by a second wave of the undead. After a brief skirmish, the villagers fled. This time they were herded to the banks of the river. Entering a *plantiecrub* (a low-walled enclosure designed to protect crops from sheep and strong winds), they prepared to make their last stand.

The heroes hear shouting and screaming as they emerge from the bog. Should they immediately go to investigate, the party arrives 24" behind the zombie horde and the situation is as per the map. For each round of

delay, play out one round of combat between the villagers and the zombies. Too long a delay, and the party may well be facing more zombies than before, as villagers slain by the plague zombies rise as similar creatures.

Terrain: The plantiecrub walls are three feet high and provide +8 Heavy Armor if used as Cover. Anyone standing adjacent to the wall has Medium Cover from attacks from the opposite side. Crossing the wall is an action.

The walls are a foot wide and can support a hero. However, any roll of 1 on an Agility or Agility-linked skill roll made while atop the wall causes the character to fall and become prone (no damage). In addition, the hero must make an Agility roll with a target number equal to the damage he takes or fall prone.

Areas of shallow bog count as difficult ground.

Monsters: Eadhild the Dour is personally leading the attack, albeit from the back. Eadhild grew bored waiting for the plague dragon to awaken. During the hours the heroes were off exploring the bog, she was at work in the graveyard, summoning zombies. Thanks to the contagion in the air, these have arisen as plague zombies. Shortly before the heroes returned to the village, she unleashed her zombie horde on the unsuspecting settlement.

Ⓜ **Eadhild the Dour:** See page 21.

Ⓜ **Plague Zombies (4 per hero):** See page 24.

Ⓜ **Villagers (3 per hero):** See page 20. A total of 46 villagers are present, but only the men are fighting. The remaining women and children are huddled together at the back of the plantiecrub. They will be easy pickings for the zombies if the heroes fail to stop the attack.

Tactics: The villagers are controlled by the players, as normal for Allies. The GM should ensure that while the villagers fight to save their kith and kin, they do not act in a suicidal manner—these are peasants, not hardened warriors.

The zombies have only one goal—to kill as many of the villagers as possible and thus create more of their own kind. By the time the heroes arrive on the scene, Eadhild has cast her *aura* spell. When she first spies the party, she launches *fear* at them (once within range, of course).

Whether that succeeds or fails, she then moves adjacent to the nearest plague zombie and casts *strength of the undead*, gaining the Undead special ability. This has the effect of granting her +2 Toughness and +2 to recover from being Shaken, as well immunity to disease and no additional damage from Called Shots. Once suitably powered up, she engages in melee combat. If a cleric or follower of Scaetha identifies themselves, Eadhild singles them out and slashes at them using Frenzy.

Other actions she undertakes depend on the number of wounds she has taken. Since she has Improved Nerves of Steel, Eadhild suffers no penalties until she takes her third wound.

One wound: She grabs the rat skull from her neck and crushes it as an action. This bestows *deflection* on her with a success.

Two wounds: She invokes *armor* to augment her *deflection* and worn armor. She then switches to making single attacks only rather than using Frenzy.

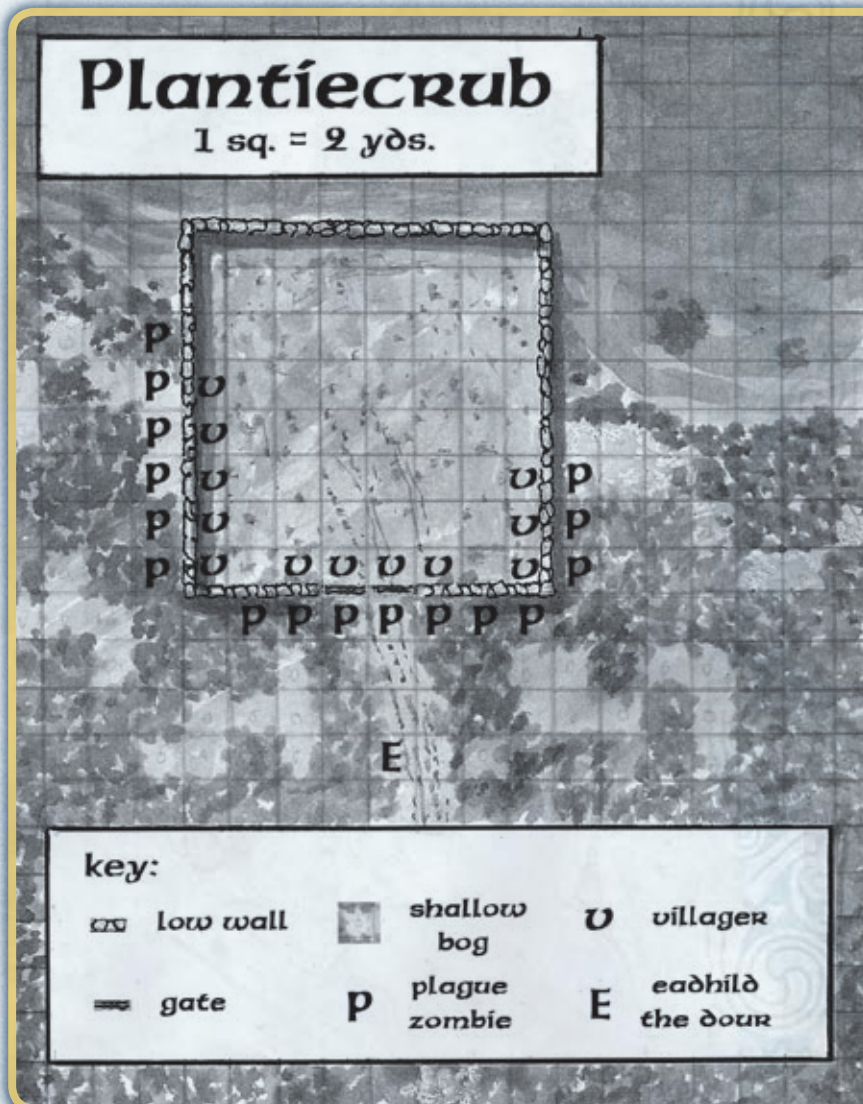
Three wounds: She first tries to cast *fear* to delay her foes. She then flees at best speed. As with Serin in the marsh, if Eadhild manages to escape the adventurers during this fight, she will *not* return in this adventure.

Treasure: Eadhild has her equipment and any remaining alchemical devices. The zombies have a total of 57 gs worth of petty jewelry, all grave goods interred with them.

THE WISE CRONE

This scene is optional. It can be run anytime after the adventure begins, but is best saved for if the party is having difficulty solving the various puzzles or if they lack combat prowess.

The next time the heroes return to their lodgings, an old woman in a gray robe is seated outside. The characters have not seen her around the village before, and



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she shows no signs of sickness. She greets each hero by name. The crone asks nothing of the heroes, nor does she make introductions. However, the party may have questions for her:

Q: Who are you?

A: *"I am a Fatespeaker, a priestess of the Norns. My name is Freda, though that helps you little."*

Q: How do you know of us?

A: *"I hear many things on the wind; see many things in the stars. Your names are whispered by many things."* (Depending on what introductions the party has made elsewhere in the village, her knowledge is either via astute questioning of the locals or a result of her divinations.)

Q: What are you doing here?

A: *"I came to warn the last of the Dragan family that the time of prophecy had come, but it appears the Norns did not intend for the Dragans to ever see the prophecy come true. They are gone, but you are here, so the fulfillment of fate now rests with you."*

Q: How do you know of the prophecy?

A: *"It was a distant ancestor of mine who gave Sir Lanval ap-Dragan the prophecy, so many centuries ago. As his family waited, so did mine. When my divinations told me the time was nigh, I came here to warn them. The passage of time can addle the minds of a family line, and what was once known can easily be forgotten."*

Q: Can we stop the dragon rising?

A: *"No more than you can stop Sigel waking each morn. That the dragon will rise has been woven already, for that prophecy is made. What is not known is what will happen once it awakens. That you are here, now, is no coincidence. It too was woven long ago."*

Q: Will you help us?

A: *"Fate binds me to your quest. I am a servant of the Norns, and we are bound by oath to combat creatures unborn. Your foe has lived past its allotted time and cannot be allowed to exist. When the time comes, I shall be with you."*

Freda is a Disciple of the Norns, and thus can perform powerful divinations. She will not offer the service, but gladly reads the runes should a hero ask (and offer up a benny). The outcome should be left to fate.

Freda will not accompany the heroes on their investigations—she is far too old for adventuring—but she will use her spells to aid the party in their final encounter with the dragon, so long as the fight occurs within or in the immediate vicinity of Drayton. She will begin by casting *analyze foe* to gauge the dragon's powers. Once that is done, she will use her other spells as best fits the situation. Remember, Freda can only maintain four spells at once, so she has to be selective. Her philosophy is it is better to aid one mighty hero than waste energy trying to support multiple mediocre ones.

THE DRAGON WAKES

Exactly 48 hours after the start of the adventure, the undead plague dragon rises from its boggy grave.

Since the party could be anywhere in and around Drayton come the morning of the second day, the final battle against the plague dragon does not occur in a specific locale and so no unique map is provided. The beast breaks free of the bog, rises into the morning sky with a fearsome roar, and heads straight for the village.

Ⓜ **Undead Adult Marsh Dragon:** See page 23.

Tactics: While en route to the village, the dragon casts *deflection*. As it nears, it swoops down, strafing the village with its corrosive pus vomit. The villagers, scared witless, run screaming for cover. If the heroes have not yet spotted the dragon, the pandemonium should be enough of a clue that something is wrong.

The dragon remains airborne while fighting the adventurers, staying as high as possible to avoid counterstrikes, and using its pus vomit attack. While the dragon is capable of flight, its wings are fragile and weak. As it takes wounds, there is a chance its wings will be damaged and the dragon will be forced to land to continue the battle. Draw a card for each wound the dragon takes and check the table below. If the dragon suffers two wounds at once, draw two cards—one for the first wound and one for the second. For three wounds in the same attack, draw three cards. Once on the ground, the dragon uses its bite/claws, breath, tail swipe, and wings as best suits the tactical situation.

Wounds	Forced to land on...
One	Any black Jack through Ace
Two	Any Spade suit
Three	Any black card

Continuation: Slaying the plague dragon ends the adventure. If any reward has been promised the heroes, it is paid at this time. The grateful villagers throw their saviors a feast—It is nothing special, but it is the best they can lay on given their poverty. If the party holds the deeds to the manor and lets it be known, the villagers ask the characters to assume leadership of Drayton. If the party accepts, Drayton nets them a profit of just 500 gs per year in taxation and produce sales.

BESTIARY

VILLAGER

The inhabitants of Drayton eke a pitiful living from the sickly soil. Unless a citizen has a unique stat block, use the following. Individuals the GM may wish to expand into more fleshed-out characters can have higher Traits or a few Edges and Hindrances. Do not forget to roll on the Allied Personalities table as well.

All villagers are Fatigued by disease when the adventure begins.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Knowledge (one Craft) d6, Notice d6, Throwing d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5/6; **Toughness:** 5/6(1)

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Languages: Anari (dominant language). The storeowners speak Trader as well.

Gear: Farming implements (Str+d4 if one-handed or Str+d6 if two-handed).



LAITIA AP-CUTHBERT

Born of a Saxa father and an Anari mother, Laitia, proud of her dual heritage, took her father's name but used the Anari prefix. Her parents spent a fortune putting her through school after discovering her gift for languages, and Laitia did not disappoint. After graduating, she joined the Lorekeepers as a junior scribe. Over the years, she has worked her way up through the ranks and is now a field agent.

Although very much a scholar at heart, she has the appearance of an adventurer. She has survived several field trips in which her less-able colleagues fell to traps and dark beasts, and she is capable of looking after herself in a fight or while exploring a crumbling, trap-laden tomb. She lacks the haughtiness of many Lorekeepers, though she despises ignorant people.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Knowledge (History) d12, Knowledge (Folklore) d10, Knowledge (Heraldry) d10, Lockpicking d6, Notice d8, Streetwise d8, Survival d6, Swimming d6

Charisma: +2, **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Order, Quirk (despises ignorance)

Edges: Charismatic, Connection (Lorekeepers), Lorekeeper, Linguist, Scholar (History & Folklore)

Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Classical Anari, Dwarven, Saxa, Selari, Trader, Vindari

Gear: Leather shirt (+1), long sword (Str+d8), bag of scrolls, writing gear.

DIGGERS

Laitia has a team of four diggers working with her. Lorekeepers are primarily scholars, and hire others to do any excavation work. These men are hardy souls, accustomed to physical labor and wary of traps after long years aiding the Lorekeepers.

The diggers are Fatigued by disease when the adventure begins.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Notice d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Gear: Shovels and picks (Str+d6).



FREDA

Since Freda's distant ancestor foretold Lanval ap-

Dragan's fate, the two families have been intertwined. Though there was no further contact between them, knowledge of the prophecy was passed down the generations of the seer's family. The time has now come for Freda to fulfill her part. Freda's body is old, but her spirit is strong and she remains in good health despite her advanced years. While she would rather be at home, she knows there are but a few years left to her before she passes over. Because of that, she is trying to avoid sinning—and since she knows the dragon will soon return from the dead, not helping kill it would constitute a major sin.

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

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d4, Guts d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (History) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +0, **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Elderly

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Disciple of the Norns

Languages: Auld Saxa, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Blessed robes (+1), rune stones.

Powers: *Analyze foe* (studies fate), *boost/lower trait* (manipulates fate), *deflection* (foresight), *precognition* (rune stones)



EADHILD THE DOUR, PALADIN OF HELA

Eadhild serves Hela out of fear. Not fear of the dark goddess, whom Eadhild loves, but of physical death. As a child, Eadhild had big dreams. She wanted to marry a king and be rich. Her father mocked her, telling her that material goods were passing things, and that spiritual wealth was more important to secure a place in the Afterlife. As she grew older, Eadhild became more fixated on her eventual death, for in death there was no chance for power. Finally, after talking with a cleric of Scaetha, she understood the truth—there was a way to remain mortal forever and accrue unlimited power. That other gods hated Hela was out of jealousy, for she alone could offer this gift.

Eadhild has served Hela for two decades. In that time, she has gained considerable power, but still she is driven to accumulate more. Having an undead plague dragon at her beck and call would, she feels, elevate her to the next level, and ensure her immortal existence not as a mindless undead but as a liche.

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

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Mean, Quirk (refers to others as "mortals")

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Block, Champion, Combat Reflexes, Disciple of Hela, Gravetouched, Frenzy, Hard to Kill, Improved Nerves of Steel

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Languages: Black Tongue, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Blessed armor (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), 2,000 gs of jewelry plundered from the barrow

Alchemical Devices: A rat skull containing *deflection* (crush to activate, cast with a success), two teeth containing *stun* (must be thrown)

Powers: *Armor* (bone), *aura* (necromantic energy), *fear* (touch of death), *greater zombie* (ritual), *smite* (object is shrouded with necromantic energy), *strength of the undead* (cadaverous appearance), *zombie* (dirge)



SERIN AP-BURCAN, PRIEST OF VALI

Ravaged by disease in infancy, Serin turned to food for comfort as he grew older and the teasing of his peers grew more personal. By the age of ten, he was already obese, and his size only ballooned from there. One night a stranger came to the village. He spoke to Serin in private, and offered him power in return for a simple task. The next morning, half the village lay dead, their lips still stained with the poison Serin had slipped into the wine vats.

Serin's devotion to Vali's cause is unwavering. No task is too obscene for the portly, scarred priest, and no price too high to pay for power. Now teamed up with Ead-hild the Dour, Serin intends to honor Vali with a special gift—the creation of a plague dragon.

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

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

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

Hindrances: Obese, Ugly (disease-ravaged skin)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Disciple of Vali, Strong Willed

Languages: Aspirian, Chalcian, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Blessed robes (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), spiked mace (Str+d6+2)

Alchemical Devices: Silver whistle imbued with *summon beast* (Medium Burst Template rat swarm), *potion of burrow*, *potion of shape change* (changes drinker into a giant rat).

Powers: *Boost/lower trait*, *disease* (black boils), *fear* (victims see flesh melting), *obscure* (cloud of flies), *smite* (corrosive slime)

BEAR



MOTHER CAVE BEAR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d12+6, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d8, Swimming d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12

Special Abilities:

* **Bear Hug:** Bears do not actually “hug” their victims,

but they do attempt to use their weight to pin their prey and rend it with their claws and teeth. A bear that hits with a raise has pinned his foe. The opponent may only attempt to escape the “hug” on his action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll.

* **Claws:** Str+d6.

* **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls against these creatures, due to their size.

* **Size +4:** These creatures can stand up to 12' tall and weigh over 2,500 pounds.

BEAR CUBS

These are the offspring of the cave bear. They stand as tall as an adult human stands, but are far brawnier. They only appear in this adventure if the party is exceptionally strong.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d8, Swimming d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

* **Bear Hug:** Bears do not actually “hug” their victims, but they do attempt to use their weight to pin their prey and rend it with their claws and teeth. A bear that hits with a raise has pinned his foe. The opponent may only attempt to escape the “hug” on his action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll.

* **Claws:** Str+d6.

GOLEM, STONE

Stone golems are the traditional animated statue. These particular ones were placed here to watch over the ancestral Dragan family long sword. They did not answer the call to arms that summoned other golems to the Golem War simply because they were in an isolated part of the continent. Weathered and worn, they have stood patiently; waiting for the conditions to arise that will cause them to fulfill their programming. Their weapons and shields are part of their construction, and cannot be Disarmed or dropped.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Gear: Stone medium shield (+1 Parry, +6 Armor vs. missiles), stone long sword (Str+d8)

Special Abilities:

* **Armor +2:** Weathered stone.

* **Berserk:** When Shaken, the golems go Berserk, as per the Edge of the same name. This grants them +2 to Fighting and Strength rolls, but reduces their Parry to 5. Toughness increases to 12 (3).

* **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

- * **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Size +1:** These golems weigh 4,000 pounds.



HAGBUI, ROYAL

The hagbui is the withered corpse of Lanval ap-Dragon, who was interred here shortly after his death. Like all hagbui, the spirit is not that of the living person, but an evil spirit sent by Hela to animate the earthly remains.

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

Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12 (3)

Gear: Plate corselet (+3), long sword (Str+d6)

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 to Trait rolls to resist magic and +2 Armor against damage-causing arcane effects.
- * **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Bound:** A royal hagbui may not move further than 200" (400 yards) from its burial place.
- * **Fear (-2):** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Guts roll at -2.
- * **Numbing Touch:** Any creature touched by a hagbui (including its weapons) must make a Vigor roll. On a failure, the victim suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to Agility rolls and skills linked to Agility. One point of penalties is removed per hour.
- * **Powers:** A royal hagbui know the following powers: *bladebreaker* (weapon rusts), *fear* (unearthly scream), *lower trait* (curse), *obscure* (mist), *quickness* (supernatural reflexes).
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. No wound penalties.
- * **Weakness (Sunlight):** A hagbui is weakened by the sun. Each round in sunlight it must make a Vigor roll or become Exhausted.

RAT SWARM

Rat swarms fill a Medium Burst Template.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Swarms inflict hundreds of tiny bites every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
- * **Infection:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by a rat swarm must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from infected bites. Cumulative bites can lead to Incapacitation, but never to Death. One Fatigue level is recov-

ered every 24 hours or with a successful Healing roll.

- * **Split:** Some swarms are clever enough to split into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Templates) should their foes split up. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is lowered by -2 (to 5 each).
- * **Swarm:** Parry +2. Because the swarm is composed of scores, hundreds, or thousands of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round.



UNDEAD ADULT PLAGUE DRAGON

The first of its kind, the undead plague dragon is neither a marsh dragon nor an undead dragon, but some unearthly hybrid. Its putrescent flesh hangs loosely from blackened bones, stained by the peaty bog in which it has lain for 300 years. Its eyes are baleful green, its wings tattered shreds (yet it can still fly), and its maw filled with black, rotting teeth.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Spell-casting d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 16 (3)

Edges: Arcane Resistance, Concentration, Hardy, Improved Frenzy, Level Headed

Powers: *Deflection* (cloud of flies), *obscure* (cloud of flies).

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +3:** Thick scales.
- * **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- * **Breath:** Undead plague dragons breathe corrosive pus using the Cone Template. Every target within this cone may make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d10 damage (AP 2) and have a chance of catching fire. A dragon may not attack with its claws or bite in the round it breathes.
- * **Disease:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by the dragon's claws or teeth must make a Vigor roll or contract black lung.
- * **Fear -2:** Anyone who sees the dragon must make a Guts roll at -2.
- * **Flight:** Pace 10.
- * **Infravision:** Halves darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
- * **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls due to the dragon's size.
- * **Size +4:** The dragon measures 25' in length.
- * **Tail Lash:** The dragon can sweep all opponents in its rear facing in a 3" long by 6" wide area. This is a standard Fighting attack. Damage is d12+1.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. No wound penalties.
- * **Weakness (Healing):** A *healing* spell cast on the dragon causes 2d6 damage, 3d6 with a raise. *Greater healing* causes 2d10 damage, or 3d10 with a raise.

HELLFROST ADVENTURE #18

Both spells requires a Touch Attack (+2 Fighting) and ignore the dragon's armor. *Healing potions* thrown at the dragon inflict similar damage.

- * **Wings:** A wing buffet can only be used in a round in which the dragon makes no other attacks. Place a Cone Template facing forward from each wing. Every creature in a Template must make an Agility roll with a penalty equal to the dragon's Size. The target's Size also modifies this roll. On a failure, the victim is blown back 1d2" and falls prone. If the Agility roll is a 1 (regardless of Wild Die), the creature is Shaken, as well.

WRAITH

Wraiths (known in Anari as specters) are spirits that chose not to venture into the afterlife, but to remain in the mortal world. They are guardian spirits, lurking unseen and unheard in the darkest recesses of towns, cities, temples, and castles. Bound to their chosen haunt, wraiths cannot move beyond its confines under any circumstances. Wraiths are rarely found alone—castles may boast a score, and large cities as many as a hundred. Only when intruders make home in their lair do they rouse. Usurpers and conquering armies are their preferred prey, though the more aggressive of their kind target thieves and guests who breach the ancient laws of hospitality.

Completely immaterial, wraiths are more akin to sentient memories than ghosts. They can only be harmed through the *banish* spell, which forces them to move on to the afterlife for judgment. The only way to placate a wraith is to leave its home.

Wraiths are sometimes known as shadow wights. It is important to note the word wight simply means "person" in Auld Saxa—any human, living or dead, may be referred to as a wight without supernatural connotations.

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

Skills: Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d12+4, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- * **Immaterial:** Wraiths can pass through solid matter.
- * **Invulnerability:** Immune to all forms of attack except their Weakness.
- * **Powers:** *Fear, light, lower trait* (no boost), *nightmare, obscure, panic* (no bless), *puppet, silence, telekinesis, voice on the wind*.
- * **Unusual Sense:** Wraiths instinctively know when someone who should not be present enters the territory they guard.
- * **Weakness (Banish):** The only way to rid oneself of a wraith is via *banish*.

ZOMBIE, PLAGUE

These walking dead are plague victims reanimated by the clerics of Hela and Vali using a combined ritual invoking *disease* and *zombie*.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- * **Claws:** Str.
- * **Contagious:** A victim slain by a contagious zombie rises as a contagious zombie at the start of the next round. Contagious zombies can be created through the *greater zombie* spell. Faith rolls to create these zombies are made at -2.
- * **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called Shots do no extra damage (except to the head). Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Weakness (Head):** Called Shots to a zombie's head work as normal.

HANDOUT #1: CLERIC'S DIARY

Much of the diary details routine village and cult matters. Only the following entries are of interest to the party:

(26 days ago) I have sent for my old friend Laitia, a renowned Lorekeeper. I am certain the barrow is occupied by a member of the Dragan family, and with the line now dead, I feel it is acceptable for the Lorekeepers to conduct an investigation. Any treasure shall be donated to the villagers, to either reinter or sell, as they wish.

(18 days ago) A skald passed through our village this day. We have no inn, and so I offered him hospitality for the night. As a gift, he sang a story of old. Could it really be Drayton of which he sang? The villagers are ignorant of their heritage, and asking them would be fruitless. Dare I enter the manor house, so long abandoned by the living?

(7 days ago) While collecting herbs from the bog I spotted two strangers. Curse this eternal mist, for I could only make out forms and not faces, but their voices were unknown to me. One is most definitely of such corpulent frame as to be recognizable in an instant, were I to see him again. I say he, for I am sure of his sex. His companion was female, strong in voice yet with a tone of utter menace. I could not make out the bulk of their conversation, but they spoke of something buried beneath the bog.

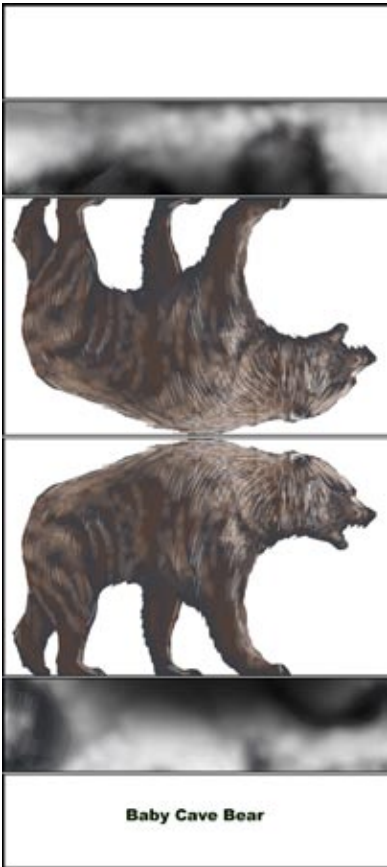
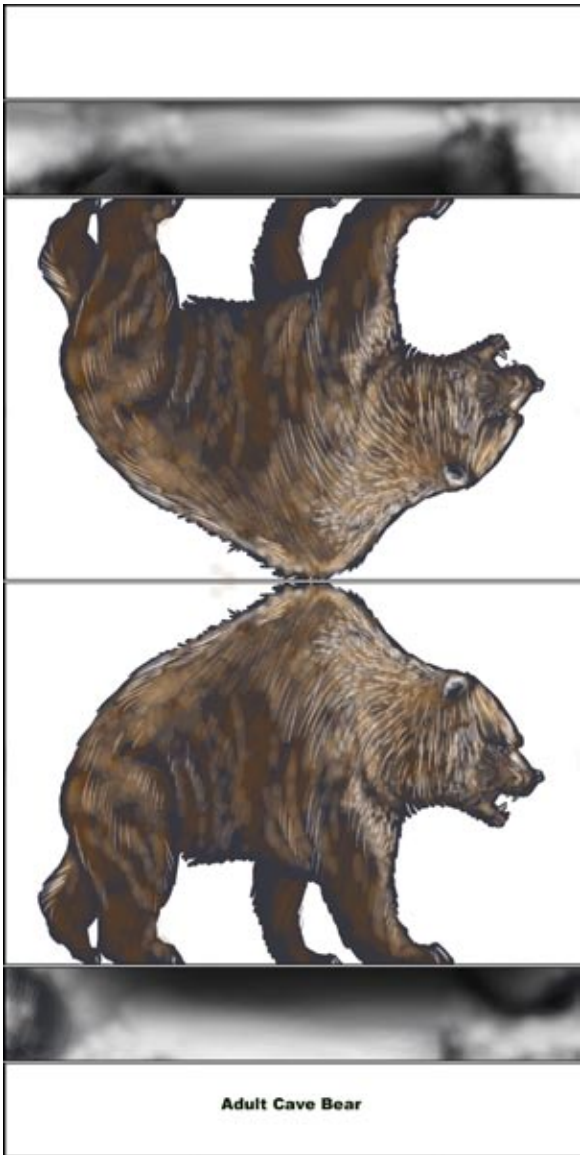
(4 days ago) I have sought out the strangers but with no luck. No one in the village has seen any outsiders, and my duties prohibit me from devoting much time to my search. Could they be searching for what the skald claimed was buried beneath the bog? If so, it would spell disaster for us all. Laitia will help me when she arrives.

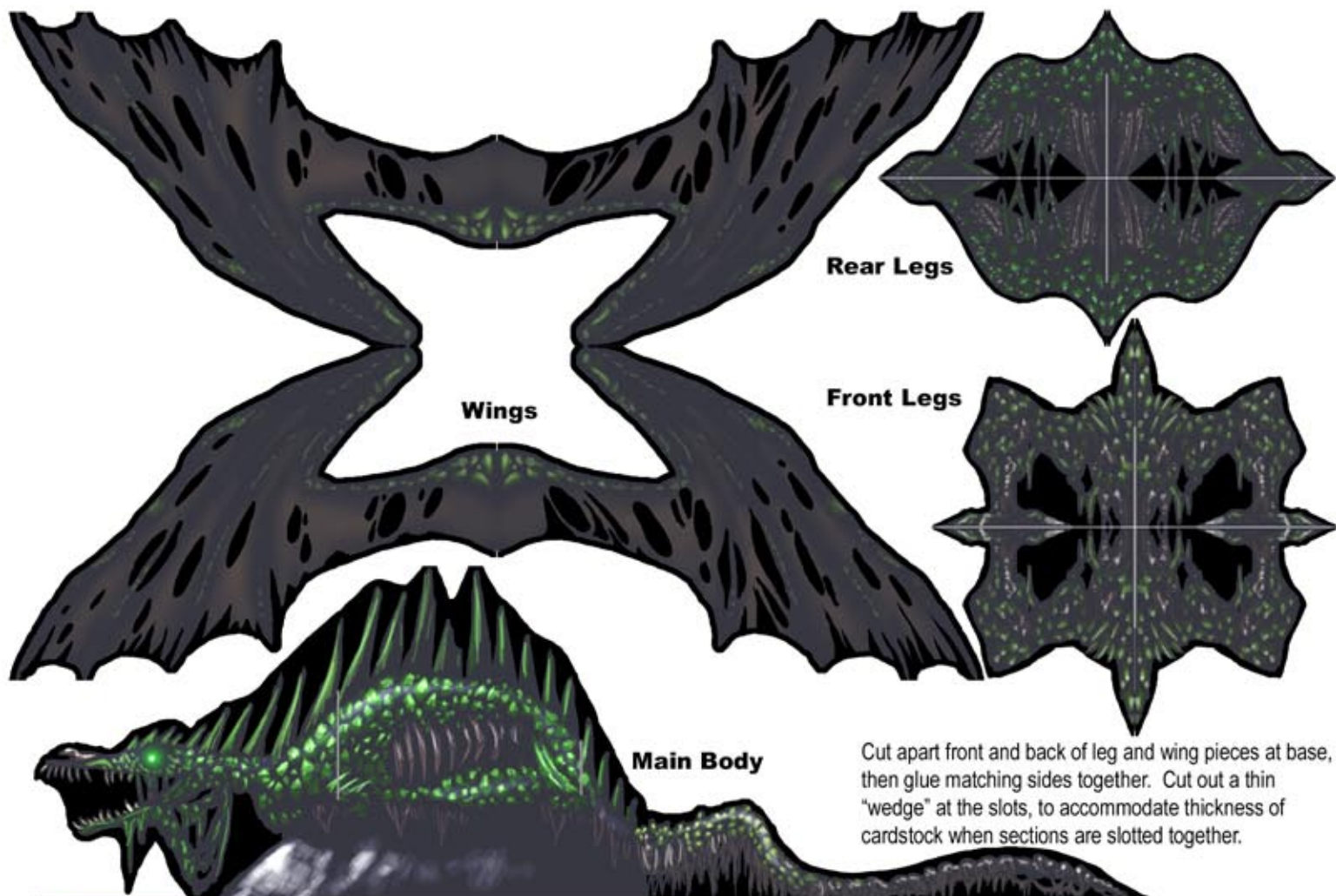
(3 days ago) No sign of Laitia yet. I fear she may not reach us in time. I have solved the riddle, at least in part, and know now what the strangers seek. I must venture into the bog to thwart them or doom shall fall across the land.



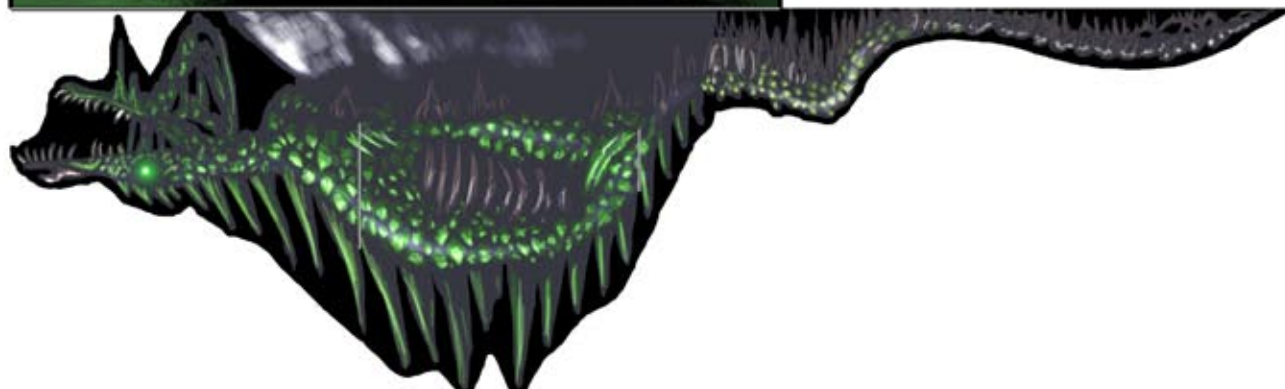
			Stone Golem Berserker
			Laitia ap-Cuthbert Lorekeeper
			Lorekeeper Digger
			Eachrid the Dour Paladin of Hela
			Serin ap-Burcan, Priest of Vail
			Freda, Norn Cleric
			Villager
			Plague Zombie

			Villager
			Petty Hagbui
			Petty Hagbui
			Unarmored Petty Hagbui
			Royal Hagbui King
			Royal Hagbui Queen
			Plague Zombie
			Plague Zombie





Sample Assembly



Undead Plague Dragon

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Artwork and design by T. Jordan "Greywolf" Peacock.

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DEATH IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

The village of Drayton is beset by plague. Seemingly abandoned by their healer, the villagers now turn to strangers for help. But there is more to the illness than appears, for the hand of the Norns is at work.

Three centuries ago they laid down a prophecy to the lord of Drayton, a prophecy that spelled disaster for his descendants. That time has come, and death now stalks the mire around Drayton.

The adventure is designed for Veteran characters. It contains all the monster stats, maps, and Figure Flats required for play.

Triple Ace Games present *Death in the Mire*. A Hellfrost adventure for the award-winning Savage Worlds RPG.



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